

THE CATHOLIC WORLD REPORT

Finding What Should Never Have Been Lost: Priests and the Extraordinary Form

Four post-Vatican II priests discuss how they came to know and love celebrating Mass in the Extraordinary Form.

🕒 August 19, 2014 👤 Jim Graves 📁 Special Report 💬 2

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After Pope Paul VI introduced the Novus Ordo Mass in 1969, the older form of the Roman rite—sometimes known as the Tridentine Mass, the Old Mass, the Traditional Latin Mass, and, more recently, the Extraordinary Form—virtually disappeared from many dioceses. Its celebration was severely restricted, if not banned outright, and became a source of controversy.

A yearning among some for the older form of the Mass, coupled with decisions by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, led to its wider use and to a de-stigmatizing of its celebration over the years. The most significant of these decisions was Pope Benedict's 2007 *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, which declared that any priest may celebrate the older form of the Mass on his own without special permission from a bishop. Today, attendees of Extraordinary Form Masses are often younger Catholics, as the number of older Catholics who remained devoted to the pre-1969 Mass dwindles.

Catholic World Report spoke to four priests who regularly celebrate the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, each of whom has spent most of his life attending, and most of his priesthood celebrating, the Novus Ordo.

“Both forms can coexist”

Father Mark Mazza served for many years as pastor of Star of the Sea Church, near the Golden Gate Bridge in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, and as chaplain for the Traditional Latin Mass Society of San Francisco. He recently began a six-month medical leave.

Ordained a priest in 1980, Father Mazza had celebrated the Novus Ordo for more than 30 years when San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone asked him to begin a regular Extraordinary Form Mass at the parish in 2012. He agreed, and spent several months learning its precise rubrics.

From an early age, Father Mazza lamented the end of the celebration of the older form of the Mass in many dioceses after the Second Vatican Council. "I always thought it was a great loss, even when I was a child," he said. "We had celebrated it for so many centuries, and it went into eclipse. It's a beautiful part of our faith life that we never should have lost."

He's quickly become comfortable celebrating the Extraordinary Form, and plans to continue celebrating it privately while on medical leave. "I really like it," he explains. "It has a mystical, contemplative, and mysterious quality, with its use of Latin, the gestures, the position of the altar, and the prayers, which are more ornate than we have today. I find myself saying the traditional Mass more often than the Ordinary Form."

Father Mazza noted that according to Pope Benedict, the "Old Mass" is not a separate rite, but part of a single rite with two forms, the Ordinary and the Extraordinary. "I believe it doesn't have to be either-or, but that both forms can coexist together," he says.

The Extraordinary Form Mass at Star of the Sea draws as many as 200 attendees on weekends, of all ethnic groups. The high cost of living in San Francisco has been a drawback, Father Mazza noted, as few young families can afford city life. He said, "We have a lot of churches in the city but we need people to fill them."

The reaction of Father Mazza's fellow clergy in the city to his promotion of the Extraordinary Form has been mixed. Many are supportive, he says, but others oppose it as "contrary to the Second Vatican Council." "They'd like to see it banned," he says. Archbishop Cordileone has been a big supporter, he noted, and will come to the parish on September 14 to celebrate a Pontifical High Mass.

Two priests of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri now staff the parish and have pledged to continue offering Mass in the Extraordinary Form.

Father Mazza is grateful for the opportunity to learn and regularly celebrate the older form of the Mass, which he finds "refreshing." "I never get tired of it," he says. "I look forward to going to the altar and celebrating it every day. In fact, saying Mass is the highlight of my day."

More baptisms than funerals

Father Paul Beach is pastor of St. Martin of Tours Church in Louisville, Kentucky. The parish was founded in 1853, and served a German immigrant community. It is a beautiful, historic church in a tough downtown neighborhood that has experienced a bit of a revival in recent

years. The parish was first permitted to revive the celebration of the “Old Mass” in 1988. Today, it is one of three parishes in the archdiocese that regularly offers the Extraordinary Form Mass.

Father Beach, age 38, is quick to point out that he celebrates the older form of the Mass by choice, not out of a sense of nostalgia. “I was born 10 years after the end of the Second Vatican Council, and several years after the liturgical changes were implemented,” he says. “My only memory is of the Ordinary Form, beginning in the late 1970s into the 80s.”

He was born in Louisville, and attended a Xaverian Brothers high school. The all-boys school required students to take a foreign language; choices typically were Spanish, German, and French. Latin was offered, but out of a class of 350 students, only Father Beach and six other boys chose Latin. No one on the staff taught Latin, so 83-year-old Brother John Joseph, who was living in a Xaverian Brothers retirement community, agreed to teach the class. “It was an influential experience for all of us,” Father Beach recalls.

Brother John Joseph used texts from the Old Mass in his instruction. Father Beach unwittingly learned the prayers of the Old Mass before even realizing where the prayers were from.

In 1988, the pastor at St. Martin of Tours, Father Vernon Robertson, joined with parishioners to ask Louisville Archbishop Thomas Kelly to allow the return of the Tridentine Mass to the parish. The archbishop agreed. Brother John Joseph took the future Father Beach and his teenage classmates to the St. Martin’s Tridentine Mass. Father Beach recalled, “I was a lifelong Catholic, and I’d never experienced the Mass in that way. I didn’t imagine such a Mass existed. I was enthralled by it.”

He founded himself attracted by the peaceful, meditative atmosphere of the older form of the Mass. He liked its “God-centeredness,” and that it was *ad orientem* (with the priest facing East, in the same direction as the people). “The prayers are oriented to God, with the priest speaking on behalf of the people,” he explained.

For Father Beach, celebrating Mass *ad orientem* was the single biggest difference between the two forms. He says celebrating *ad orientem* resulted in a diminished focus on the priest. “When I celebrate the Mass, it has less to do with me, the priest, and is more about God,” he says. “The cross is the image we see, which gives it a sacrificial feel as we approach the hill of Calvary.”

Father Beach asked his parents to take him to St. Martin’s regularly, and he began serving at the Tridentine Mass. At age 17, he entered the seminary, and he was ordained at age 25 in 2001. During his time in seminary, he noted, he had to deemphasize his interest in the Latin Mass, as demonstrating too strong of an attachment to it could have become an impediment to ordination.

A rotation of older priests celebrated the St. Martin's Tridentine Mass, but over time only one such priest remained. Father Beach asked Archbishop Kelly in 2005 if he could celebrate the St. Martin's Mass. The archbishop agreed, eventually Father Beach was made pastor at St. Martin's.

He had to learn to celebrate the older form of the Mass on his own, he noted, as before *Summorum Pontificum* there were no training workshops, such as can be found today. Having served at the Old Mass as a teenager and being familiar with Latin helped him, he noted.

Today, the majority of the Masses Father Beach celebrates are in the Ordinary Form, and he celebrates the Extraordinary Form on weekends. About 250 attend the St. Martin's Extraordinary Form Mass regularly, and most of these are his age or younger. "People are surprised that we attract so many young people," he says. "They mistakenly think people are coming to the Extraordinary Form for nostalgic reasons."

He does far more baptisms and weddings than funerals at the parish, he noted, "with lots of screaming babies."

St. Martin's is one of the archdiocese's most beautiful parishes. Interior features include a magnificent marble center altar, colorful stained glass windows, traditional statuary, and relics of St. Magnus and St. Bonosa. The church is open 24 hours a day, with security guards on duty. There are seven hospitals located within the parish boundaries, Father Beach said, so someone can be found praying in the church at all hours of the day.

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz has led the Louisville archdiocese since 2007. One of the nation's higher-profile bishops, he is also president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Although Archbishop Kurtz does not celebrate the Extraordinary Form Mass himself, he has been a good friend to the parish, Father Beach said. He's visited multiple times, and has been supportive of his priests who wish to learn the Extraordinary Form.

Father Beach believes some of the tension that once surrounded the celebration of the Old Mass has eased. Among his brother priests in the archdiocese, in fact, he's observed an interest by priests his age and younger in celebrating it.

"Catholics who wanted Mass in the Extraordinary Form were once looked at askance; they were viewed as being schismatic or not accepting the Vatican II teachings," he said. "But there has been a normalization of the Extraordinary Form, a recognition that is a part of the richness of our Church tradition."

A sacrifice, not just a memorial

Father Peter Carota is associate pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Phoenix, Arizona. He celebrates both forms of the Mass at the poor, mostly Hispanic parish.

“The Tridentine Mass has changed me,” he said. “I like its reverence, and it’s helped me see the Mass as a sacrifice, not just a memorial.”

Father Carota grew up near Santa Cruz, in northern California. He is one of 19 children, 13 of whom were adopted. The family attended the “extremely progressive” Resurrection Parish in Aptos, California, and much of his Catholicism had a “social justice focus.” “We’d have wild liturgies,” he remembers. “You’d see women up at the altar, breaking the consecrated Host.”

Father Carota says he was “very liberal” in his youth, including being “pro-choice” on the issue of abortion. He wanted to be a priest when he was a boy, “but the world sucked me away.” He became a successful real estate broker, but maintained an active interest in the Catholic Church. For nine years he operated the St. Francis Catholic Kitchen, which fed the homeless.

He read extensively, and eventually “converted” to traditional Catholicism. Ultimately, he decided to sell the properties he’d acquired and enter seminary for the Diocese of Stockton, California.

When he became pastor of St. Patrick Church in Ripon, a small rural parish in the Stockton diocese, Father Carota would spend his day off studying books on liturgy, Vatican II, and related topics he says he “had never known anything about.” He began celebrating the Tridentine Mass at St. Patrick’s.

With the support of his bishop, Father Carota came to Phoenix in 2013 to assist a priest-friend, Father Alonso Saenz, pastor of St. Catherine Parish. Father Saenz wanted a priest willing to celebrate Mass *ad orientam*, and Father Carota wanted to regularly celebrate the Extraordinary Form Mass and offer the sacraments in the older liturgical form.

Father Carota hopes to found a new community named for Pope Pius V, which would foster “the beauty of the Latin Mass, the beauty of the sacraments the way they were previously celebrated, and the beautiful art that is part of our Catholic tradition.”

“Ninety percent of Catholics today have had no experience of the Church before Vatican II,” he explained. “They don’t know about its traditional art, architecture, or liturgy. I want to start an order to spread our wonderful tradition throughout the world.”

Most in his Latin Mass community are poor Mexican immigrants, he said, who have been receptive to the “Old Mass” and his traditional perspective. He devotes two-to-three hours daily to his blog, www.traditionalcatholicpriest.com.

Among his acquaintances was Fraternity of St. Peter priest Father Kenneth Walker, who was stationed at a nearby parish and murdered by an intruder on June 11. Father Walker would celebrate the Extraordinary Form Mass at St. Catherine's when Father Carota was away.

Father Carota admits it was hard for him to leave the beautiful Northern California landscape for an inner city parish environment that is "ugly, noisy, and filled with drug addicts and prostitutes," but "I've found that serving this parish has given me great joy," he says.

From Christian rock music to the Latin Mass

Carmelite Father Mark Kristy resides at the Oakville Carmelite House of Prayer in the Diocese of Santa Rosa, California. He celebrates the Extraordinary Form Mass at the Carmelite House of Prayer and other locations in Northern California.

Father Kristy grew up in Whittier in Southern California. In the 1970s, he was a drummer for the Christian rock band Shalom, which provided music for Novus Ordo Masses. He met a Carmelite priest who suggested he consider joining the Carmelites. Around the same time he read *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross, a Carmelite friar, which also influenced him to enter the Carmelites.

"I visited the Carmelite community in Oakville, and decided to enter," Father Kristy said.

He was ordained a priest in 1985, and became a psychotherapist. He worked in parishes in Tucson and the Los Angeles archdiocese before going to Oakville. He still offers counseling to clients professionally.

While in Northern California he attended a Latin Mass offered by Father John Rizzo of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, whose members celebrate the older form of the sacraments exclusively. Father Kristy recalled, "After seeing him celebrate it, I loved the Latin Mass. He asked me, 'Why don't you learn it?'"

Father Rizzo trained him, and Father Kristy has been saying Mass in the older form for the past decade. "The traditional Mass is directed to God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ," Father Kristy said. "It also has an emphasis on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ."

Some of Father Kristy's fellow Carmelites don't understand his attachment to the Old Mass, he says, but the support he's received from his superiors has allowed him to continue saying it daily at the Carmelite House of Prayer. Much has changed in the Church in the past 50 years, he said, "But one thing has refused to change, and that is the Latin Mass."

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