

Question: Is the Novus Ordo a valid Mass? Some say the Novus Ordo is not valid and that we ought to attend only the Tridentine Mass. Is this correct?

Answer: The Roman Missal was revised on a number of occasions after 1570, that is, after the Tridentine Mass, i.e., after 34 years, Pope Clement VIII made a general revision, as did Pope Urban VIII 84 years later. Other Popes added new feasts or made other minor adjustments. It was not until the twentieth century, however, that work began on a renewed liturgical scale culminating in the Novus Ordo, which Pope Benedict XVI stated on numerous occasions is a valid Mass.

While I love to celebrate the Tridentine Mass on account of its edifying and rich prayers, hymns, musical instruments, chants, reverence and decorum, it is unfortunate that some look only to it as the sole valid form of liturgical worship. This attitude is at variance with history and Church teaching. Some ignore the fact that the oldest recorded form of worship is the Liturgy of St. James, which originated in Jerusalem during the late fourth-early fifth century, and is celebrated in Byzantine Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. The St. James Liturgy influenced other forms of the Mass, e.g., the Liturgy of St. Basil and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. I also love to celebrate this form of the Mass with my brother Ukrainian Byzantine Catholic priests, as I have been granted faculties to say Mass in both of these western and eastern rites of great reverence. I admire its exorcism and universal prayers, sacred polyphony, profound bows, reverential signs of the Cross, rich iconography and incense.

It is noteworthy that not only before but after the 1570 Roman Missal of Pius V, issued after the Council of Trent, and often referred to as the Tridentine Mass, changes were made to the Mass. Otherwise put, the 1570 Roman Missal (Tridentine Mass) did not fall from the sky into the hands of Pope Pius V in 1570, but was borne in large part from the eastern and western liturgical traditions, bearing the 8th-century Gelasian prayers (*Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae*), the Leonine low Mass post-liturgical prayers authorized by the Holy See that span from 1884-1965, and more. The purpose of Pope Pius V was to collate the existing text of the Mass with ancient manuscripts and writings in order to restore it to the original form and rite of the holy Fathers. However, on account of the limited resources available to his scholars, this aim was not fully realized. Despite the commission's work of liturgical restoration under Pope Pius V, numerous ancient liturgical manuscripts and sources of the eastern and western churches were later discovered and published. That the Mass is an expression of worship to God in its highest form and may assume various expressions of worship (rites) is abundantly evident throughout the Church's liturgical history.

For this reason, in his letter to bishops which accompanied his 2007 motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that "*the Missal published by Paul VI and then republished in two subsequent editions by (St.) John Paul II, obviously is and continues to be the normal Form – (Forma ordinaria) – of the Eucharistic Liturgy.*" Since then, the term "**Ordinary Form**" is often used to distinguish this form of the Roman Rite of the Mass from the Tridentine form, the 1962 edition of which Pope Benedict declared in his motu proprio to be an authorized "**Extraordinary Form.**"

Also Pope Pius XII, who had a particular interest in the liturgy, wrote in his 1947 encyclical *Mediator Dei* that “*the use of the mother tongue in connection with several of the rites may be of much advantage to the people,*” though he stated at the same time that only the Holy See had the authority to grant permission for the use of the vernacular. This is precisely what St. Pope Paul VI did.

Pope Pius XII moreover decried those who would go back to ancient liturgical rites and usages, discarding the new patterns introduced by disposition of divine Providence to meet the changes of circumstances and situation. He affirmed, “*obviously unwise and mistaken is the zeal of one who in matters liturgical would go back to the rites and usage of antiquity, discarding the new patterns introduced by disposition of divine Providence to meet the changes of circumstances and situation. This way of acting bids fair to revive the USA exaggerated and senseless antiquarianism to which the illegal Council of Pistoia gave rise.*”¹

I sum, both Masses are valid are to be deeply revered - the Novus Ordo (*Ordinary Form* of the Mass) and the Tridentine (*Extraordinary Form* of the Mass).

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¹ Pope Pius XII, Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy, *Mediator Dei*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1947, nn. 63-64.