

REFLECTION**Making Lemonade****By Guillermo de Carndonagh**

In recent years the parishioners of many dioceses in the United States have been reminded again and again about the "vocations crisis". This nomenclature refers to the fact that these dioceses have been unable to create a situation where young men hear the call to the diocesan priesthood. Through the centuries saints have pointed out as did St. John Chrysostom that the Holy Ghost is always calling young men to service at the altar in sufficiency but that in some communities conditions preclude the call being heard. As a result a number of dioceses are engaged in major reorganizations to try and compensate for the dwindling number of priests in the diocese.

During the same period of time a small percentage of the faithful in the United States have exercised their right to continue to celebrate the Mass according to the Traditional usage. Pope John Paul II has recognized these communities as exercising their "just aspirations" and he has decreed that they may use the missal in use in 1962 the year that the Vatican Council II opened. Only a few communities have members from the social elites. In general these communities are made up of average Catholics, working people, the poor and the middle class. Interestingly these very average communities have produced a significant number of vocations relative to their size. These men have been educated to be priests in the seminaries of new religious orders founded for the purpose of preserving the Traditional Mass. The financial cost of these new orders and their seminaries has been borne by the faithful of the Traditional communities. Unlike long established orders there is no investment trust of long standing nor are there rich and power benefactors bearing the cost, rather the Traditional orders and their seminaries are supported by the pennies of the poor and the working class.

Recently it has been reported that a Curia bureaucrat has decreed that these young men educated at such great sacrifice to offer only the Traditional Mass may disobey the rules of their orders and use the new missal. These men joined the traditional orders knowing that the rules of these communities limited their members to using the Traditional Missal, in the same way that almost all of the established orders require their members to use the new Roman missal.

The logic seems to be that any western priest can celebrate any authorized western Rite and that their superiors cannot limit this right. If this is the case, how can the restrictions of both the established religious orders and most diocesan bishops on the celebration of the Traditional Mass be justified? I'm an engineer not a Canon lawyer but logic seems to require that if you say A you must also espouse its logical corollary. That is, if the priests of the Traditional orders cannot be bound by the rules of their communities to celebrate only the Traditional Mass, then the proscription against the celebration of the Traditional Mass by the other orders and dioceses cannot be upheld either.

Actually I suspect that Canon law says no such thing. We have an unfortunate example of an autocratic act by an individual in a position of power against an opponent viewed as being weak and vulnerable. This is hardly a new situation, something similar is graphically described in 2 Samuel 12 (2 Kings 12 in older bibles).