

REFLECTION

"Nobis donet in pátria"

by Guillermo de Carndonagh

The two men sat quietly, idly sipping their drinks and nibbling on a sweet. Young children scampered about and mothers chatted as the coffee hour got underway. The Traditional Roman Mass had ended only a little while before and people were still coming in.

The men came to the Mass for very different reasons. For one this Rite is the heart of his relationship with Christ. After a period of attempting to sustain his faith in other ways he knows that this is his true home. During a portion of that time he had sought shelter in a Byzantine parish; he can remember hearing himself and some others being referred to as Roman refugees. He accepted that status and attempted to be a good guest, helping out where he could without getting in the way, and not intruding on the community with his problems. During this period he studied and prayed and concluded that if it became possible he would return to the Rite of his youth. When he heard from his Byzantine pastor the news that the local Roman ordinary was going to permit the celebration of the Traditional Roman Rite, he was ready. He attended the first authorized Mass and has been a member of the Traditional Roman community ever since. Occasionally he still attends the Byzantine liturgy, rather the way one visits a well loved aunt, but his heart is in his Traditional Roman home.

The second man is a different case altogether, it is hard to know where his spiritual center lies. He comes to the Traditional Mass to escape a long list of things he finds wrong with the other diocesan parishes. He is a refugee, one senses he has no commitment to the growth of the traditional community, but rather sees it as a place he can go where he does not have to deal with the people and practices on his list of wrongs. From time to time he disappears for a few weeks associating himself with this or that parish where "things are supposed to be better" but returns when he finds they have transgressed against one of the items on his list.

This would be sad enough, but he is not a good guest. He is intent on dragging as many people as possible into his quarrels and crusades. He subscribes to all sorts of gloom and doom periodicals filled with clerical gossip and angst and uses every opportunity he finds to introduce clippings and quotes from them into conversations.

The first man believes that the best thing he can do to bring people to Christ is to help build up a strong Traditional Mass community where the faith is taught whole and entire and the liturgy is offered with reverence and beauty. He has watched with sadness and suppressed anger as the social period leading up to a community business meeting has drifted into a gossip session dominated by topics introduced by the second man and his companion refugees. The thought has crossed his mind more than once, that despite their loudly professed commitment to the faith, the refugee's actions sap people's moral and deflect their energies away from the tasks that will build the community up, allowing it to become a parish by being a parish. From his study of the one hundred and fifty years of the Byzantine presence in North America he knows communities must first act like parishes before they can truly be parishes; and he views the actions of the refugees as imperiling that transition.

The first man has found his own true native land while the second is wandering in a spiritual desert and lacks the wit to see it. Hopefully they will both someday reach the true native land that the author of "*O salutáris*" was alluding to.