

## **REFLECTION**

### **Facing East**

**by Guillermo de Carndonagh**

A young friend writes. "Since the start of the Seminary Year, I have not attended the Divine Liturgy, but on Tuesday 20 Dec. I got a treat, the Arch-Priest of SS. Cyril and Methodius and his twenty member choir came here to the seminary to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in Old Slavonic. It was totally AWESOME"

Like so many others this Roman seminarian has discovered the beauty of the Byzantine Rite. For many Roman Catholics who are fortunate enough to live where the Byzantine Catholic Churches exist they have become places of refuge and spiritual nourishment in troubled times. No balloon or clown Masses are found here, and no tedious musings on the latest psychological fad from the pulpit. The Mass of the Byzantine Rite, the Divine Liturgy, is like the Traditional Gregorian Rite of the Roman Church a form of sacrificial worship of great antiquity, beauty, and grace. Students of liturgical development are often struck by the way that each of the codifications and revisions of the Byzantine Liturgy seem to have occurred in close temporal proximity to those of the Gregorian Rite. A Roman Catholic who regularly worships at The Gregorian Rite Mass often comes away from a celebration of the Divine Liturgy with the thought that this Eastern Mass is more like his own than the Novus Ordo.

The directions for movement in this Liturgy like those of the Gregorian Rite are given in terms of the cardinal points of the compass. It is presumed that the church is built on an East West axis and that the priest and the people will all face East towards Jerusalem as the Holy Sacrifice is offered. No musical instruments are used and the result is a wonderful sonorous Chanting and singing by the people and the choir. The prays and Chants are overwhelmingly Trinitarian with many actions and prays said thrice. Christ's blessed mother and our holy Pontiff the Pope are called to mind numerous times. The church building's interior is lovingly decorated with mosaics and Icons. Three dimensional statuary is not technically permitted though occasionally seen. Bells and Candles, Incense and colorful vestments all add to the splendor of the Byzantine Liturgy.

Some Roman Catholics either; out of ignorance, or perhaps sadly bigotry, do not consider the Byzantine Liturgy really "Catholic" and so deprive themselves of the totally "AWESOME" experience of my young friend. The hubris required to think that these churches of martyrs are not fully Catholic is awesome! If you are fortunate enough to live where there is a Byzantine Catholic Church do yourself and your soul a favor and celebrate a Divine Liturgy with our Eastern brothers and sisters in the faith.

From the Divine Liturgy: Priest: Especially, for our most holy and immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary. Choir: It is truly right to bless you, O God-bearing One, as the ever-blessed and immaculate Mother of our God. More honorable than the cherubim and by far more glorious than the seraphim; ever a virgin, you gave birth to God the Word, O true Mother of God, we magnify you.