



# The Twelve Ways

(To Instantly Improve the Novus Ordo)  
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Serious changes are about to take place that will affect the way Catholics in English speaking countries celebrate Mass. These changes have to do with the actual translation of the prayers of the Mass itself—a translation more faithful to the original Latin and intended to infuse the Liturgy with a spiritual solemnity and organic connectedness to the history of the Roman Rite. Before I continue with the subject of this article I think that it needs to be said: the Novus Ordo, at least as it is celebrated in English-speaking countries, is in need of serious reform.

It is fair to say, that while there exists something called the “Roman Rite,” in practice the Roman Rite is a non-entity. At the practical level, the Rite is treated as a general template that is more or less followed by the celebrant and the congregation. There exists such a wide-range of personal liturgical styles, literally from one parish to the next, even from one priest to the next, that the Roman Rite, as such, doesn’t exist. The Roman Rite-general template-is the “order of the Mass” in terms of the Opening prayers, Kyrie, the Gloria, the readings, the homily and so forth. Many priests, liturgists and laypeople believe that as long as this order is respected, all that is required for a proper celebration of the Roman Rite has been fulfilled.

This article does not intend to take issue with the Novus Ordo. The author may certainly be called “a Vatican II Catholic.” I accept the New Rite, though I sympathize with those many Catholics who prefer the Old Latin Rite or what is commonly called the Tridentine Rite. Nonetheless, we need to take a very long, very hard and very honest look at the way the Novus Ordo is celebrated. Many years ago I wrote an article for the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* entitled “The Models of the Mass.” In that piece I discussed what continues to be a problem, namely the imposition of the priest-celebrant’s own personal style on the public prayer of the Church. It is not only a matter of the priest whose personality dominates the Liturgy, but even more egregious, the priest who tailors the Mass to reflect his own theological opinions and quirks. This imposition reduces the universal prayer of the Church to the priest’s own private possession that he may, on his own authority, manipulate to reflect his personal bias. Vatican II’s *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) taught that the regulation of the Liturgy depended upon the authority of the Church—that is the Apostolic See, the local, bishop or various kinds of bishops’

conferences. "Therefore, no other person, not even a priest, may add, remove or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority." This is may be the most ignored teaching of Vatican II.

I am not going to spend time here reciting the litany of liturgical horrors that the Novus Ordo has been subjected to since Vatican II. They are far-reaching, they are vast, they are everywhere. For the purposes of our discussion, this article is focused on perfecting the Mass that is already celebrated more or less with respect to the rubrics and not Masses corrupted by serious liturgical abuses.

### **The *Versus Populum* Debate**

In his well-known book, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, Benedict XVI discussed the problem of the Mass stamped with the priest's personality. The Holy Father traces this cult of personality to the common post-Vatican II practice of the priest celebrating Mass "versus populum"—namely the priest facing the people. The Pope very clearly articulates the negative liturgical consequences of this Mass style. The "versus populum" position emphasizes the Mass as a meal and suppresses the Mass as a sacrifice, a liturgy in which the priest "presider" becomes the focus and center of the ritual in a kind of new post-Vatican II clericalism. In addition, the congregation becomes a circle closed upon itself, rather than a people, including the priest, who face God together in an act of worship. Benedict XVI leaves no doubt that he favors the "ad orientum" position of the priest and the people—in other words—that the priest and the congregation together face the altar, perhaps even "face east" in liturgical worship.

I believe the Holy Father would like to mandate the "ad orientum" or what is also called the "ad Deum" position as a way to instantly reform liturgical practice in the Roman Rite. With this liturgical gesture, coupled with the re-introduction of kneeling for Communion, nearly all abuses affecting the Church's worship would be swept away.

However, while we hope for and wait for a formal and official reformation of the Liturgy, there are quite a few things that a worshipping community can do *right now* that will *instantly* improve the Sunday Mass. The items that I discuss below can be implemented *immediately* without a "moto proprio" from the Pope, without a bishops' conference mandating changes. My hope is that this article will be duplicated, sent out, reprinted, given away and copies distributed far and wide to priests and Catholic lay people everywhere. With it I hope to provoke, thought, debate, and discussion on what constitutes "good liturgy." I hope to

influence priests and regular Mass-goers and perhaps even bring about a change in the whole way we think about and conduct Sunday Mass services. What is at stake is the very quality of the worship that we as a Church offer to God.

I call these items “The Twelve Ways”—in other words, the twelve ways that next Sunday the Mass, celebrated in your local parish, can be elevated and perfected—in short, made a more beautiful act of liturgical worship. These “Twelve Ways” are certainly not an exhaustive list. Many who read this article may wonder why I neglected certain issues. Certainly, this list could be longer. But making the list longer is not the goal. The goal here is to at least begin a discussion of liturgical issues that could instantly lead to better Catholic worship.

### **The First Way—The Mass is Ritual Prayer**

The first item on the list has to do with a foundational principle. This principle in some ways governs all the subsequent points that will be discussed. As Catholics we need to rediscover the very nature of liturgical worship. We need to again appreciate that the Mass is a *ritual*. As ritual prayer, as a divine ceremony, it is meant to take the participant into another world. Every gesture, every step has a meaning that is designed to draw the worshipper into the mysteries of God. The rite itself should lift the worshipper out of the ordinary. A real shift of dimension ought to be facilitated by ritual worship. In short—we leave behind the profane world and enter a sacred realm. This means that nothing should intrude into the rite of worship that is in any way banal, vapid, insipid, frivolous, pedestrian or silly. Whatever is casual, informal, or sloppy has no place in divine worship. Unfortunately, in many cases, these are the very things that characterize Sunday liturgy.

We need to re-discover that the Mass is *real prayer*—thus as prayer and as ritual, the ceremony of the Mass should be seamless. The Mass should be celebrated from the opening song to the recessional hymn as a seamless unbroken *rite*. The 2000 year-old spiritual tradition of the Church teaches that when a Christian enters private prayer, distractions are to be fought, distractions are to be overcome—they are not to be encouraged, they are not to be deliberately indulged. Anything that diverts attention away from a prayerful focus on God and unity with God is to be avoided. This important spiritual principle applied to private prayer, also applies most certainly to the universal, public prayer of the Church. Whatever disrupts the seamless flow of the divine liturgy must be excluded. This will be discussed further in the Second Way.

### **The Second Way—Eliminate Folksy Remarks**

Very frequently Masses begin with a greeting from the priest such as “Good morning, I hope you are all having a good day.” This “good morning” usually comes right after the Sign of the Cross. Thus, the opening hymn has been sung, the Sign of the Cross made and then the ritual prayer of the Church veers off course by the intrusion of non-liturgical jargon. Nothing sets the tone of banality more than such useless and liturgically irrelevant vocabulary. The Introductory Rites of the Mass are to prepare the worshipper to enter into God’s presence. Folksy greetings and other sorts of welcomes very subtly draw attention away from God and shifts it to the priest and the congregation. I have even been to masses where, not only is the liturgical action tainted by this particular banality, but priests add such comments as: “And how about those Packers—weren’t they somethin’ last night?” Sorry, but such remarks have absolutely no place in a sacred rite of worship. Always be mindful that the Mass is ritual *prayer*.

### **The Third Way—No Announcements**

This is a big one. It is also a tricky one because the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* allows for announcements to be made during Mass. The very document by which the Novus Ordo is regulated permits it. Article 166 states very simply: “When the prayer after Communion is concluded, brief announcements to the people may be made, if they are needed.” It is important to note that this is permission and not a mandate. Moreover, the permission for announcements is granted “if they are needed.” The Roman Missal allows this as a kind of concession. Certainly this concession doesn’t mean that each and every Sunday Mass will be should be subjected to announcements. If we are looking to enhance worship and perfect the liturgy, this will be greatly accomplished if, despite the permission, we come to an awareness that announcements really have no place in the celebration of the Eucharist. Indeed, maybe article 166 needs to be seriously rethought.

Catholics today actually expect that announcements will be made during Mass. Following the Prayer After Communion, the priest, faithful to the Sacramentary, will offer a prayer such as: “ Father guide us with your light. Help us to recognize Christ in this Eucharist and welcome him with love for he is Lord forever and ever.” The congregation replies “Amen.” Then, before proceeding to the Concluding Rite, the priest will stop the Mass—indeed the Mass is brought to a halt— and a list of items having to do with parish

business will be announced either by the priest or by a lay person who strides to the lectern. Of course, sometimes what is announced involves very important parish business, such as “the heating system is in need of repair, please don’t forget to make your contribution.” Or “raffle tickets are on sale in the rear of the church today to help raise money for the school band,” or “Don’t forget that next week is the annual parish festival, tell your friends and family and volunteers are still needed for the dunking booth.”

Sometimes these announcements are accompanied by witticism and jokes. Then once the announcements are finished the Mass suddenly resumes course:

“Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing.”

(Prayers of blessing are pronounced to which the people respond: “Amen.”)

“The Lord be with you.”

“And Also with you.”

“And may almighty God Bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Mass is ended, go in peace.”

“Thanks be to God.”

What has just happened? The connection between Communion and the Concluding Rite has been wrenched. The prayer of worship has been set aside and the attention of the congregation diverted to affairs that have nothing to do with the sacred liturgy. The celebration of the Eucharist has been thrust out of whack and we are suddenly hijacked into the world of raffle tickets and school band uniforms. What makes this wrenching so obvious is that when the Mass is put back on track we are told: ‘The Mass is ended—go in peace.’ The announcements in the middle of liturgical worship have been artificially thrust into the Mass, almost as if they are part of the Mass when in fact they are not. What has occurred is an anti-liturgical gesture absolutely contrary to the meaning of a sacred and holy rite.

Announcements made during Mass, interrupt liturgical structure. The Prayer After Communion marks the end of the Communion rite and is directly followed by a dialogue between the priest and the people, a sacred language to spiritually prepare them for the Dismissal. But when announcements are inserted into the Mass at this point, the congregation must spiritually re-orient itself—as it has been jerked in one direction and now is jerked back.

Maybe it's all just a question of liturgical integrity—an integrity that is, in fact, broken by the often numerous non-liturgical intrusions that trivializes our sacred conversation with God. Again, we must remember that the Mass is a prayer and our attention to prayer, whether private or communal, should not be diverted by distractions.

Announcements can be made before the Liturgy begins. Perhaps, they could even be made by the priest before he delivers the homily—though this is hardly ideal. The homily should immediately follow the Gospel proclamation. But whatever we do regarding this apparent necessity we should not stuff a non-liturgical action into, again, what is meant to be, by its very nature, a seamless gesture of worship.

The need to make announcements at Mass comes from a kind of anxiety—a fear that the practical business of running a parish will not be accomplished unless important (and often not so important) parish messages be imparted to a captive audience. Announcements made during the liturgy comes from a failure to appreciate that the Mass is an arena of sacred time and sacred space dedicated wholly to the worship of God. That announcements routinely intrude into the Mass is a sign that we have lost respect for the Holy Eucharist as sacred time and sacred space. Thus no realm, not even time reserved for the worship of God, is free from the invasion of practical business—business that now competes with time that the Church designates for God.

### **The Fourth Way—No Extra Speakers**

Similar to announcements, as discussed above, is the common habit of stopping the Mass just before the Concluding Rite to permit a speaker to deliver a message on a special issue that is of interest to the congregation or that will affect the congregation in some way. The congregation is invited to “please be seated.” Someone then approaches the lectern and delivers a 5 to 15 minute speech. This post-Communion talk ranges from a summary of parish finances, concerns an important special event or may be about the issue of school enrollment. In any case, the subject is considered so essential to the life of the parish that it must be granted some special articulation during the celebration of the Eucharist. These speeches are delivered during the Mass because, again, the parishioners are a “captive audience” and it is believed that it is imperative that they hear what the speaker has to say.

The problem with this entire approach is that the liturgy is exploited for a practical, even utilitarian purpose that has nothing to do with the nature of worship. It is a misuse of the time that is supposed to be specifically set aside (consecrated if you will) to focus on sacred mysteries and not parish business, whether finances or school enrollment issues. Moreover, such abuses are the result of a common misconception, namely: that once Communion has been distributed, Mass is really over anyway. With this mindset comes the notion that the time after the Communion Rite is now somehow free, open, non-liturgical space that may be filled with practical business before the Dismissal. These moments after the Communion Rite have become a kind of liturgical dumping-ground—a hole in the fabric of worship where nearly any kind of business may be shoveled in.

It is the Mass that prepares the congregation to attend to practical business in a spirit of Faith—but it is not the place itself for such business.

### **The Fifth Way—No Applause Please**

In *The Spirit of the Liturgy* Benedict XVI treats of the subject of applause during the Liturgy in the same section he treats of liturgical dance since applause usually follows performance. He provides a negative appraisal of both. Within the context of dance performance the pope states: “Whenever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of the liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment.”

While liturgical dance is quite rare, applause during Mass is quite common. Indeed, in some parishes it occurs during almost every Sunday liturgy—even more than once during the liturgy. While the pope’s negative conclusion regarding applause had to do with dance, I believe his comment can apply to the issue of applause in general. The congregation is usually led by the priest to applaud some achievement of parishioners. Sometimes parishioners spontaneously break into applause after listening to one of those non-liturgical announcements.

Often the parish choir is applauded for providing some special music—music more complex or beautiful than is the norm. Sometimes we applaud parishioners who have celebrated fifty years of marriage or couples who have just married. It doesn’t matter. People do all sorts of good things that provoke applause. The list is endless.

However, applause in most cases, if not all cases, is completely out of place in sacred worship. The Mass is not about us. The ritual itself exists to draw our attention away from ourselves. The Mass is the worship of God. It is the realization in history of man's unity with God, it is the realization of the covenant between Christ and the Church. Christ himself feeds His people with His very Body and Blood. The only one who should be applauded is Jesus. Applause for anything less than this great gift of God in our midst takes worshippers from the heights of the sublime and plunges them into trivialities that have nothing to do with worship.

On the subject of applauding the choir for instance—yes the parish choir has just rendered a service, but so has the priest, the altar servers, the readers, and even the congregation. Whoever has rendered service has done so for the sake of worship—a gift of self to God. To applaud ourselves in worship is a contradiction of worship.

Applause, if given at all during Mass, should be quite rare—rather than a frequent and even expected practice.

### **The Sixth Way—Read the Readings**

The proper way to present the readings for Mass is to read them, not dramatize them. Lectors often approach their duty as if Mass readings were a readers' theatre presentation. Readings from Scripture should be articulated with proper inflection so as not to be read in a monotone voice. However, when the reader takes on the role of actor, the readings become stamped with his or her personality—and perhaps even his or her own personal interpretation. The reading of Scripture is *not a performance* of Scripture. The Word of God should be left open, not hemmed in by a reader's need to make it interesting or compelling. The Word of God should be presented by the lectors in such a way that the congregation is permitted, even forced perhaps, to use their own imagination. Reading the Scriptures, as opposed to dramatizing the Scriptures, allows the Holy Spirit to be free to move in the hearts of the gathered faithful, rather than the faithful being led where the lector thinks they should go. The Sacred Word is to be set free by the lector (or priest when he reads the Gospel) and not limited by their dramatic interpretation.



### **The Seventh Way—Hymns Should Not Be Announced**

Seamless, integral worship should not be interrupted by the verbal announcement of the hymns. In most parishes the actual name of the hymn and its page number in the hymnal will be declared throughout Mass. These are minor tears in the seamless robe of the Liturgy—almost hardly noticeable. Yet they are needless punctures in a sacred rite perfected by their elimination. This problem is easily remedied by well placed postings of the hymn numbers and perhaps even worship aides in which the list of the hymns are printed and made available in the pews.

### **The Eighth Way—Select Hymns with Doctrinal Content**

A great deal of music written for the Mass after Vatican II is quite beautiful. And a great deal of it is vapid, even silly. Much of what passes for hymns sung during Mass sounds like music written for small children in both lyrics and melody—yet it is music intended for mature Christians. An example of such a song is “Glory and Praise to Our God” by former Jesuit priest Dan Schutte. “Sing A New Song”, another Dan Schutte composition, is another example of a song without depth, without doctrinal content, and sounds like a song only a child would sing. “Sing to the Mountains” written by Bob Dufford, S.J. is another example of this genre—filled with light melodies and simplistic verses.

The reader may have noticed that hymns I mention so far are part of the *Glory and Praise* songbooks—songbooks that have been the staple of most parish music for the last forty years. This is not to say that every hymn in this series is light, airy and without depth. Some of the hymns are quite good such as “God and Man at Table Are Sat Down,” “The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor” and “Emmanuel.” However, let’s examine one of the most popular hymns sung in hundreds of parishes each Sunday, namely: “On Eagles Wings.” written by Michael Joncas. It is based on Psalm 91, but lacks the seriousness and gravity of that psalm. The well-known refrain “And he will raise you up on eagle’s wings, bear you on the breathe of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.” is not part of the psalm.

This hymn is focused on the human being, as much as it is focused on God. But this hymn is hardly the most banal. Another Michael Joncas hymn entitled “I Have Loved You” tells us “I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have called you and you are Mine. I have loved you with an everlasting Love. I have

called you and you are Mine. Seek the face of the Lord and long for Him. He will bring you his light and his peace.”

These lyrics are not doctrinally wrong, they are simply too light and thin. Nothing is really said about God except that God is love and he cares deeply about the human race. Gone is any sense of God’s glory, majesty and beauty. The great mysteries of Faith are not taught. Compare the lyrics of a song like “One Bread, One Body” to the sophisticated ideas articulated in such songs as “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence,” “O Lord With Wondrous Mystery” or “O Merciful Redeemer.”

Worship will be perfected by hymns that speak the central doctrines of the Faith—hymns that contain theological substance and content, hymns that contain more weighty spiritual ideas.

### **The Ninth Way: The Case for Why the Piano is Not a Liturgical Instrument**

The piano is a beautiful instrument that, in the hands of a great player, can produce musical sound that is profound and deeply moving. However, when the piano is used to accompany songs of worship, more often than not, the musical tone that fills the church sounds thin and trite. Unless we are listening to a grand performance of one of the great concertos, the piano played at Mass is incapable of bringing the needed gravitas, beauty and elegance to the celebration of the Eucharist.

It is important to appreciate that the piano is essentially a percussion instrument designed to produce notes from a hammer striking a wire. And so hymns are punctuated by the ever-so-obvious thin and trite noise of “clink, clink, clink”—as the piano cannot help but draw attention to itself. One of the primary objections to the use of the piano as a liturgical instrument is the fact that, unlike the organ, or even the flute, the violin or the trumpet, the piano is incapable of sustained sound. Notes cannot flow or blend into one another. The piano cannot, like the organ, be real musical background to the singing of hymns. It is significant that the organ, especially of course the pipe organ, is by nature, an instrument that produces sound from the passage of air. In this way, it is breath or wind that gives life to sound. In this way the instrument is symbolic of the breath of the Holy Spirit who gives life to the soul.

Let's also consider that there's something about the piano that is just too familiar. This familiarity, combined with its thin accompaniment, keeps the liturgy earthbound. It's not that the sound of the piano is ugly—it's just that the sacred liturgy deserves better. This article is about how we can improve the celebration of the Mass and not just settle for what is mundane and mediocre. The fact is, no piano played in church can ever compete with the glorious rich sound of the pipe organ. Many churches, even churches constructed after Vatican II, are equipped with a pipe organ—but the piano seems to be favored because it produces sound less complex, more contemporary and trendy. Thus hundreds of glorious pipe organs remain silent and abandoned.

Please note that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* teaches (Art. 120): "The pipe organ is to be held in high esteem in the Latin Church, for it is the traditional liturgical instrument, the sound of which can add a wonderful splendour to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lifts up men's minds to God and higher things."

### **The Tenth Way: Pay Attention to Details**

The world famous architect Mies van der Rohe once stated: "God is in the details." Think of the Mass as a special dinner party. Anyone who has planned one knows that attention paid to details and the quality of the dinner service separates such a meal experience from a mere supper. Here we will set out the best china the best silverware, the finest table linens. Cloth napkins will be used instead of paper ones as well as the better wine glasses, the nicer candle holders. Moreover, these items will be placed on the table with care, with a sense of symmetry and balance. When your guests enter the dining room they will know that this meal is special because of the obvious, deliberate attention to detail. They will know that an extraordinary meal is about to be served.

The Mass deserves no less attention to detail and the details should signal that something special is about to happen. I will offer a perfect example of what this means. Even before the sacred meal begins, certain gestures take place in preparation for Mass. These preparations are usually made by the altar servers. One duty often performed by the servers is the lighting of candles on the altar and in the sanctuary. By now several parishioners have arrived and are seated in the pews. The lighting of the candles, the placement of altar cloths, the setting of cures for the water and wine, etc. should not be approached as if they were

mere practical tasks in preparation for the real thing. The way in which these tasks are carried out tells us something about our attitude toward the real thing.

Preparations for liturgical worship should be conducted with care, formality and reverence. The lighting of the sanctuary candles—even before the Mass begins—is itself a liturgical gesture. Notice that there are specially designed liturgical instruments for the lighting and extinguishing of candles. When altar servers light sanctuary candles this should be a spiritual gesture that helps anyone who observes it cultivate an attitude of reverence for the rite that is about to take place. Not only is the altar being prepared for sacrifice, but the faithful are being prepared to offer that sacrifice.

I once attended a parish where a member of the congregation walked to the altar carrying a Bic-barbeque lighter. Soon I heard “click-click, click-click, click-click.” The candles were lit with no sense of ceremony or reverence—as if lighting candles on the altar of sacrifice had no more meaning than lighting charcoals for cooking hotdogs at a picnic. The candle-lighting was simply a task that needed to be done and was accomplished with the utilitarian utensil that a Bic-lighter is intended to be. What had just occurred was an anti-liturgical action that signaled to the person performing it and to anyone watching it that the Mass, about to take place, was in no way special or different from any other meal.

Attention to detail demonstrates that the Mass is a sacred act of worship. Attention to detail may include the following:

- 1.) Attentive altar servers (rather than looking bored or distracted). The comportment of the altar servers should be reverent, i.e. hands folded in prayer, attentive to liturgical duties and action, etc.
- 2.) Casual dress avoided by anyone who has a formal role to play in the Liturgy, such cantors, lectors and extra-ordinary ministers.
- 3.) Liturgical vestments made with quality materials and craftsmanship. They should look clean, elegant and fit properly. To this end, the commonly worn altar-server garment that looks made from a bed-sheet with a hood should not be worn. This “more-modern” vestment is reminiscent of a bathrobe, looks sloppy—and often, depending upon the wearer—can even appear frumpy. In terms of beauty and style it is an inferior garment when compared to the traditional “cathedral style” altar-server vestment.

### **The Eleventh Way: Let's Dress Better**

For whatever reason Catholics, generally speaking, no longer dress well for Mass. If the Mass is a sacred liturgy—the worship of the One, True, All-holy-Triune God—the clothes worn to Mass should reflect what we believe. However, if one were to judge solely on the basis of the attire worn to Mass, one could easily conclude that participation in the Liturgy is no big deal. Sloppy or casual clothing certainly does not signal that we are about to partake of the heavenly banquet of the Lamb. Perhaps the informal, sloppy, casual way the Novus Ordo is so frequently celebrated in parishes all over the country has given way to the informal attire of Mass-goers. Whatever the cause, certainly one way to perfect Sunday worship is to simply dress better. Similar to the way the reverent “dressing” of the liturgical space can help one spiritually prepare for Mass, putting on garments specially set aside for Mass is another way in which we can place ourselves into the proper spiritual frame-of-mind to take part in sacred worship—a frame-of-mind cultivated *before* that worship has actually begun.

The time just prior to and just after Mass is not neutral time. These are times of spiritual adjustment—time in which we get ready for worship and time in which we take that worship back into our day, back into the communities where we live. By dressing better we signal to ourselves and others that we are engaged in a special activity that should, again, lift us out of our ordinary day-to-day business.

Dress better for Mass and leave the tattered blue jeans, T-shirts, shorts, tennis shoes and sandals at home.

### **The Twelfth Way: Latin in the Liturgy**

Most Catholics are unaware that Vatican II never mandated that Latin be completely expunged from the Novus Ordo. Indeed, the Council taught exactly the opposite. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, article 36, teaches: “The use of the Latin language, with due respect for particular law, is to be preserved in the Latin rites. But since the use of the vernacular, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments or in other parts of the liturgy, may frequently be of great advantage to the people, a wider use may be made of it, especially in the readings, directives and in some prayers and chants.” The article goes on to say that it is “for the competent ecclesial authority [meaning the bishop]...to decide whether and to what extent, the vernacular language is to be used.”

The *Constitution* teaches that Latin will be used in the Liturgy—perhaps even assumes that it will continue to be the primary liturgical language. It is the vernacular that is in need of special provision. In other words, Vatican II started out with Latin as the dominant liturgical language—with only a wider use of the vernacular introduced into a liturgy celebrated in the ancient language of the Church. That Latin is to be retained in the liturgical rites is a point *Sacrosantum Concilium* repeated several times.

Whatever the teaching of Vatican II and whatever post-conciliar decisions and directives have been made, the question before us is this: How does the use of Latin perfect the Liturgy? First, the Latin language when used in worship connects Catholics to their history and sacred Tradition. The manner in which Vatican II reforms have been implemented has cut the faithful off from their spiritual, liturgical heritage. For many Catholics the Church and her worship may as well have been invented last week. Most Catholics have little or no memory of the vast and glorious liturgical treasures of the Church, her art, music or architecture. The use of Latin re-connects the faithful to their 2000-year history. The language spiritually, mentally, even psychologically connects the worshipper to the apostolic faith. To be thus connected gives the Catholic a sense of identity, uniqueness, and permanence in a world dominated by all that is fleeting and temporary. The language connects us to all those who worshipped before us and is a gift of continuity that we pass on to the next generation of believers.

Second, as a formal liturgical language, Latin takes the faithful out of the ordinary-everyday world and places them in another world with a special focus and meaning—namely a time and place that is given over to God. The use of Latin signals this shift and even facilitates it. Ironically, in some ways, this shift happens specifically because we are praying in a so-called “dead language”—a language that has almost no other purpose in modern culture than to be put to the worship of God. The Latin tongue infuses worship with a mystical sense that the common, familiar, even sometimes pedestrian-sounding vernacular is unable to do. I am not advocating, nor would I necessarily wish to advocate, that the vernacular be done away with. I am arguing, however, that at least certain parts of the Mass be said in Latin such as the Gloria, the Pater Noster, the Sanctus, the Agnus Dei or the Greek Kyrie and so on. In addition, the ancient liturgical language could be facilitated by the use of Latin hymns.

## Conclusion

There are many who believe that the Novus Ordo itself is intrinsically flawed, and while they may acknowledge that it is a valid Eucharist, will nonetheless argue that perfecting the Novus Ordo is like trying to prop up a house whose foundation was poorly executed to begin with. Even worse, they may argue that these Twelve Ways are akin to rearranging deck chairs on a sinking Titanic. They advocate, scrap the whole thing and return to the Old Latin Rite. Even if this was a valid perspective—it is very unlikely that the Church, anytime soon, will revoke the liturgical changes of Vatican II. It is likely that the Novus Ordo will be the central rite of the Roman Rite for decades, if not for centuries to come. What we need is not a change of ritual per se, but a change of attitude about ritual itself. These Twelve Ways can facilitate this much needed change.

As Catholics we need to rediscover the Mass as sacred ceremony and respect it as such. Perhaps we need some of that holy fear in the presence of the sacred. We need to realize that the central action of the Church, namely her worship, is not something we alter, re-design—even corrupt according to our whims. We need to approach the Mass as if it were indeed formal, ritual prayer.

We need to get out of the way—both priest and people—and allow sacred worship to cover us, envelope us, carry us upon its holy wings, and be absorbed into its seamless beauty. It must always be kept in mind, that simply saying the right words, simply doing the proper gestures doesn't not make worship all that it should be—that even the most externally reverent Liturgy is never enough. Authentic worship of God also requires a heart full of charity. Then we truly will have offered a more pleasing worship to the Trinity, in union with his angels and his saints.