

Postmodern Worship

Throughout history, the Catholic Church has adapted to different times. Not only does the Church change in time, but it also changes in different places. However, its truths and teachings have held firm for over two-thousand years. The meaning and reverence of Church, should not be changed. The differences between what is trendy, the modern Mass and a more traditional Mass are great. No one knows what the future will hold, but it is important to beware of traps that have been laid out for us in the future.

What is the purpose of Mass? This question is important to answer before it is possible to discuss modernization of the Church. The overall purpose of Mass is to honor and glorify God, to share in the celebration of the Eucharist, learning and listening to scripture, and to have fellowship with one another. Each of these part is important, and any one cannot be thrown out. Fellowship, for instance, is not the whole point of Church, but if it is discouraged, the church doesn't have a community and loses much strength. If fellowship is overemphasized, church becomes a social gathering. We should honor and glorify God and his works. The end result is to become closer to God. The Church is God's house, in it, along with anywhere else, we should respect and honor him. The recent world-views in the world are Modernism and Postmodernist. Modernism is the idea that man shall prevail, and that '*his progress is inevitable*', and '*man is basically good*'. It was the popular mindset from the late 1800's to the mid 1900's. Recently, in protest of modernism, the movement of postmodernism counteracts these world-views,

1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau – *The Social Contract*

and teaches individuality, 'tolerance' of groups, and dehumanization of life.

Postmodernism is the questioning of all modern ideas and the defiance of reason and truth. All these principles add up toward the culture of today.

Some traditional church is often brought down because they are not cutting edge and are only for old people. However, many things are timeless and do not need to be changed. Take, for instance, classical music. It is timeless, powerful, and beautiful. While a building is not necessary for a church, it provides those worshiping to stand in reverence and peace. A building is not an entity, but is a house. Would you want your house to be a dingy and small house? No, you probably would like a beautiful and glorious house. Shouldn't we here on earth, give God a glorious and beautiful house? Although it is important, it is not crucial to Church. As it is written in 1 Timothy 3:15, "...how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth."² However, what is constantly brought down and ignored by those who are under the guise that all things that are not new are not worth consideration. Traditional Church is marked by powerful, yet beautiful music and singing to adorn the Mass. Being in Sunday's best is encouraged because it shows that effort and consideration and respect that is due in church. It also encourages peace and quiet to counter the constant bombardment of information, sounds, and pressure that are ever-present in culture.

Vatican II made many changes to the Mass. One of the major changes was the change from saying the Mass only in Latin to the common language of the worshipers.

2 Source : http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=61&chapter=3&verse=15&version=31&context=verse

Also, some more changes were that women needed to wear head-coverings, the priest, when he said Mass, was facing away from you, communion was given very formally, and those receiving communion should abstain from eating for twelve hours. These were changed to less-strict rules, such as not eating one hour before Mass, and the priest faced the congregation, and the Mass could be said in any language, such as English and Spanish. Most conservative parishes still keep elements of the traditional mass, but the actual truths of the mass have not been changed.

Modern Mass and Church, like most things, can be taken to the extreme, or it can be applied in moderation. Most all modern worship has less formalities, and makes it more comfortable for people in the parish to participate in the Mass. Some more liberal parishes try to make people feel good and emotional. They flow with the tide of culture, and not that of worship. The music, for instance, is sometimes energetic, with tambourines. While energetic music isn't bad in itself, when it is played during prayer, it detracts from it and it becomes the focus, not prayer or worship, which is the real focus of Church. Teenagers typically enjoy this, and it is a great thing to do after Mass, such as in youth group, so they may help each-other to glorify God. The same thing applies for Bible studies and other groups. Mass should involve the whole community, not just a group based off of judgments, class, interests and likes, like postmodernism advocates. Instead, the church welcomes all people who wish to worship God, regardless of race, interests, judgments, and likes. Modern churches also teach faith built through emotion alone. This rarely lasts and is meaningful to the person, in fact, it typically topples down after the emotion wears away. Basing the Mass on emotion is moving it away from God,

because it emphasizes culture and trendiness, but not God, it is a trap to not be caught up into.

In the future, the question whether the church should change to become more popular, following the influence of the culture, or if it should keep still to a more traditional worship. The successfulness of Vatican II has been questioned, and typically the congregation of more traditional churches are more in line with the teachings of the Church. It is crucial that the Church doesn't give into the tide of culture, but counters it, and provides a shelter from it so we may find refuge in this life through God. The Church should not judge anyone and welcome all people alike, such as in the story of the lost son in Luke³. This should not be blocked by his establishments on earth. It should be encouraged by the Church. The actual purpose of church should not be distorted by the changing times.

You can't change the truths but you can change the trappings. Traditional Churches are often criticized by not being in with the times. The idea that church needs to be constantly innovated is not a new idea. In churches that have given into this, they often have lost many core principles and values in faith, which disables their ability to worship Christ well. We must be aware of Satan's temptings to the church, and should stop his efforts in its roots. Arbitrary things about church, such as rules, and styles, can come and go, however, the meaning of worship must not change, it should be centered on the congregation. The congregation should be centered on God, which is the true purpose and meaning of Church. Looking ahead, these challenges will only continue to increase, so

³ Luke 15:11-31

must our resistance against the corruption of the Christian faith. The trappings may be changed, but not to the point where they undermine the truths.

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