Editor's Note: Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò has issued his most rousing call to date for the complete restoration of the Traditional Roman Rite. He shares his personal experience of the liturgical revolution. He relays the long-forgotten memories of his youth in which he was nurtured by the Old Rite. Yet, at the beginning of his priesthood the revolutionaries substituted what he calls a "counterfeit ritual". He relays that the need to go into hiding — due to threats to his life following his whistle-blowing Testimony concerning former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick — led him to discover the Old Mass. He recounts the great transformation this discovery worked in his priestly soul.

The former Apostolic Nuncio to the United States recognizes that the "dull Roman liturgist, the Prelate with his tailored clerical suit and his pectoral cross in his pocket, the consultor of the Roman Congregation with the latest copy of *Concilium* or *Civiltà Cattolica* in plain sight" do not see the Old Mass for what it is: the "chaste transport of the beloved towards his beloved … the joy of getting lost in her eyes." But he speaks to other clerics who "with a minimum of interior life approaches the ancient Mass, regardless of whether he has ever known it before or is discovering it for the first time," and recognizes that such priests are "deeply moved by the composed majesty of the rite," which Pope Francis is attempting to eradicate. To these clerics of good will, he addresses the following beautiful explanation of the intrinsic power of the ancient Roman Rite:

> What I would like to make my brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood understand is that that Mass is intrinsically divine, because one perceives the sacred in a visceral way: one is literally taken up into heaven, into the presence of the Most Holy Trinity and the celestial Court, far from the clamor of the world. It is a love song, in which the repetition of the signs, the reverences, and the sacred words is not in any way useless, just as a mother never tires of kissing her son, or a bride never tires of saying, "I love you" to her husband. Everything is forgotten there, because all that is said and sung in it is eternal, all the gestures that are performed there are perennial, outside of history, yet immersed in a *continuum* that unites the Cenacle, Calvary, and the altar on which the Mass is celebrated.

In contrast, he describes the rituals created under Paul VI:

> If I look at the table *versus populum*, I see there the Lutheran altar or the Protestant table; if I read the words of the Institution of the Last Supper in the form of narration, I hear the modifications of Cranmer's *Common Book of Prayer*,

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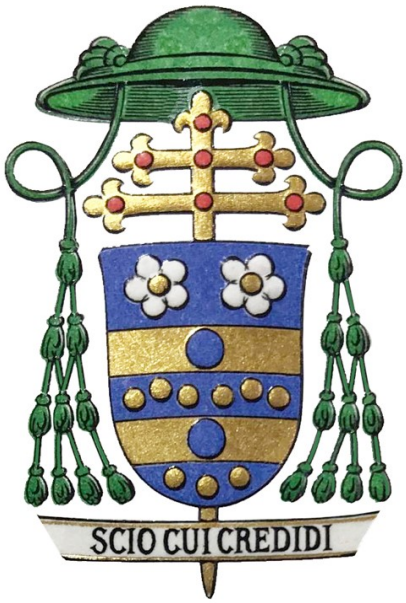
> and the service of Calvin; if I glance through the reformed calendar, I find that the same saints who cancelled the heretics of the Pseudo-reform have been removed. And the same is true for the songs, which would horrify an English or German Catholic: hearing the hymns of those who martyred our priests and trampled the Blessed Sacrament in contempt for "papist superstition" sung under the vaults of a church ought to make us understand the abyss that exists between the Catholic Mass and its conciliar counterfeit.

He then issues a challenge to his fellow bishops and priests: "I would like my confreres to dare to do the unthinkable." He dares them to enter into the ancient Rite, not for mere aesthetic or legalistic reasons (it not having been abrogated), but "rather with the reverential fear with which Moses approached the burning bush: knowing that each one of us, upon coming down from the altar after the Last Gospel, is in some way interiorly transfigured because there he has encountered the Holy of Holies." He acknowledges the great suffering and persecution of good priests that already exists and intimates that he understands a fear of more persecution may keep them from the true Mass. He reminds them, however, that the "Holy Tridentine Mass is the sole anchor of salvation of the Catholic Priesthood." He asks such good priests who fear reprisals from superiors: "Do you want to please God or the one who keeps you away from Him?" He exhorts them to "discover what it means to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice not as pathetic 'presiders of the assembly,' but rather as 'ministers of Christ and dispensers of the Mysteries of God' (1 Cor 4:1)."

He concludes by encouraging bishops and priests to "[p]ick up the Missal, ask for help from a priest friend, and ascend the Mountain of the Transfiguration." He assures them that once they ascend the Holy Mountain they will never want to go back.

Thank you, Archbishop Viganò, for once again being a true shepherd, this time to fellow bishops and priests. Thank you for leading them back "*ad altare Dei.*" — Brian M. McCall, Editor-in-Chief

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DILECTA MEA

You who permit yourselves to prohibit the Holy Apostolic Mass, have you ever celebrated it? You who from the height of your liturgical *cathedrae* are piqued about the "old Mass," have you ever meditated on its prayers, its rites, and its ancient and sacred gestures? I have asked myself this many times in the past few years: because I myself, even though I knew this Mass since I was very young; even though I had learned to serve it and respond to the celebrant when I was so little that I was still wearing boys' knickers, I had almost forgotten it and lost it. *Introibo ad altare Dei*. Kneeling in winter on the ice-cold steps of the altar, before going to school. Sweating on hot summer days under my altar boy's vestments. I had forgotten that Mass, even though it was the Mass of my ordination as a priest on 24 March 1968: an era in which one could already perceive the signs of the revolution that shortly thereafter would deprive the Church of her most precious treasure, imposing a counterfeit ritual in its place.

Well, that Mass that the conciliar reform cancelled and prohibited in my first years of Priesthood remained as a distant memory, like the smile of a distant loved one, the gaze of a missing relative, the sound of a Sunday with its bells, its friendly voices. But it was something that had to do with nostalgia, youth, the enthusiasm of an era in which ecclesiastical commitments were still to come, in which everyone wanted to believe that the world could recover from the aftermath of the Second World War and the threat of

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Communism with a renewed spiritual momentum. We wanted to think that economic well-being could somehow be accompanied by a moral and religious rebirth of our nation [Italy]. Despite the revolution of 1968, the occupations, terrorism, the Red Brigades, and the crisis of the Middle East. Thus, amidst the thousand ecclesiastical and diplomatic commitments, the memory of something had crystallized in my memory that in fact remained unresolved, which had been "momentarily" set aside for decades. Something that patiently waited, with the indulgence that only God uses toward us.

My decision to denounce the scandals of American Prelates and the Roman Curia was the occasion that led me back to consider, under another light, not only my role as Archbishop and as Apostolic Nuncio, but also the soul of that Priesthood which service first in the Vatican and lastly in the United States had in some way left incomplete: more for *my* being a priest than for the Ministry. And what up until then I had not yet understood became clear to me due to an apparently unexpected circumstance, when my personal safety seemed to be in danger and I found myself, against my will, having to live almost in hiding, far from the palaces of the Curia. It was then that that blessed segregation, which today I consider as a sort of monastic choice, led me to rediscover the Holy Tridentine Mass. I recall very well the day when, instead of the chasuble, I put on the traditional vestments with the Ambrosian *cappino* and the maniple. I recall the fear that I felt in pronouncing, after almost fifty years, those prayers of the Missal that re-emerged from my mouth as if I had just recited them shortly before. *Confitemini Domino, quoniam bonus*, in the place of the Psalm *Judica me, Deus* of the Roman Rite. *Munda cor meum ac labia mea.* These words were no longer the words of the altar boy or the young seminarian, but the words of the celebrant, of I who once again, I would dare say *for the first time*, celebrated before the Most Holy Trinity. Because while it is true that the Priest is a person who lives essentially for others — for God and for his neighbor — it is equally true that if he does not have the awareness of his own identity and has not cultivated his own holiness, his apostolate is sterile like the clanging cymbal.

I know well that these reflections can leave those who have never had the grace of celebrating the Mass of all time unmoved, or even arouse condescension. But the same thing happens, I imagine, for those who have never fallen in love and who do not understand the enthusiasm and the chaste transport of the beloved towards his beloved, or for those who do not know the joy of getting lost in her eyes. The dull Roman liturgist, the Prelate with his tailored clerical suit and his pectoral cross in his pocket, the consultor of the Roman Congregation with the latest copy of *Concilium* or *Civiltà Cattolica* in plain sight, looks at the Mass of Saint Pius V with the eyes of an entomologist (the science that studies insects), scrutinizing that pericope just as a naturalist observes the veins of a leaf or the wings of a butterfly. Indeed, I sometimes wonder if they don't do it with the asepticity of the

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pathologist who cuts open a living body with a scalpel. But if a priest with a minimum of interior life approaches the ancient Mass, regardless of whether he has ever known it before or is discovering it for the first time, he is deeply moved by the composed majesty of the rite, as if he has stepped out of time and entered the eternity of God.

What I would like to make my brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood understand is that that Mass is intrinsically divine, because one perceives the sacred in a visceral way: one is literally taken up into heaven, into the presence of the Most Holy Trinity and the celestial Court, far from the clamor of the world. It is a love song, in which the repetition of the signs, the reverences, and the sacred words is not in any way useless, just as a mother never tires of kissing her son, or a bride never tires of saying, "I love you" to her husband. Everything is forgotten there, because all that is said and sung in it is eternal, all the gestures that are performed there are perennial, outside of history, yet immersed in a *continuum* that unites the Cenacle, Calvary, and the altar on which the Mass is celebrated. The celebrant does not address the assembly, with the concern of being understandable or being nice or appearing to be up-to-date; rather, he addresses God: and before God there is only the sense of infinite gratitude for the privilege of being able to carry with him the prayers of the Christian people, the joys and sorrows of so many souls, the sins and shortcomings of those who implore forgiveness and mercy, gratitude for graces received, and suffrages for our dear departed. One is alone, and at the same time one feels intimately united with an endless host of souls that crosses time and space.

When I celebrate the apostolic Mass, I think of how on that same altar, consecrated by the relics of the Martyrs, so many Saints and thousands of priests, using the same words that I say, repeating the very same gestures, making the same bows and the same genuflections, wearing the same vestments. But above all, receiving Holy Communion with the same Body and Blood of Our Lord, to whom we have all been assimilated in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. When I celebrate the Mass of all time, I realize in the most sublime and complete way the true significance of what doctrine teaches us. Acting *in persona Christi* is not a mechanical repetition of a formula, but the awareness that my mouth utters the same words that the Savior pronounced over the bread and wine in the Cenacle; that as I elevate the Host and Chalice to the Father, I repeat the immolation that Christ made of Himself on the Cross; that in receiving Holy Communion I consume the sacrificial Victim and feed on God Himself, and I am not participating in a party. And the entire Church is with me: the Church Triumphant that deigns to unite itself to my imploring prayer, the Church Suffering that awaits it in order to shorten souls' stay in Purgatory, and the Church Militant that strengthens herself in the daily spiritual battle. But if, as we profess with faith, our mouth is really Christ's mouth, if our words in the Consecration are really those of Christ, if the hands with which we touch the Sacred Host and the Chalice are Christ's hands, what

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respect ought we to have for our body, keeping it pure and uncontaminated? What better incentive is there to remain in the Grace of God? *Mundamini, qui fertis vasa Domini*. And with the words of the Missal: *Aufer a nobis, quæsumus, Domine, iniquitates nostras: ut ad sancta sanctorum puris mereamur mentibus introire*.

The theologian will tell me that this is common doctrine, and that the Mass is exactly that, regardless of the rite; I do not deny it, rationally. But while the celebration of the Tridentine Mass is a constant reminder of an uninterrupted continuity of the work of the Redemption studded with Saints and Blesseds, the same thing does not happen, it seems to me, with the reformed rite. If I look at the table *versus populum*, I see there the Lutheran altar or the Protestant table; if I read the words of the Institution of the Last Supper in the form of narration, I hear the modifications of Cranmer's *Common Book of Prayer*, and the service of Calvin; if I glance through the reformed calendar, I find that the same saints who cancelled the heretics of the Pseudo-reform have been removed. And the same is true for the songs, which would horrify an English or German Catholic: hearing the hymns of those who martyred our priests and trampled the Blessed Sacrament in contempt for "papist superstition" sung under the vaults of a church ought to make us understand the abyss that exists between the Catholic Mass and its conciliar counterfeit. To say nothing of the language: the first ones to abolish Latin were the heretics, in the name of giving the people a greater comprehension of the rites; a people whom they deceived, contesting revealed Truth and propagating error. Everything is profane in the *Novus Ordo*. Everything is momentary, everything accidental, everything contingent, variable, and changeable. There is nothing of the eternal, because eternity is immutable, just as the Faith is immutable. Just as God is immutable.

There is another aspect of the traditional Holy Mass that I would like to emphasize, and that unites us to the Saints and Martyrs of the past. Since the times of the catacombs up until the most recent persecutions, wherever a priest celebrates the Holy Sacrifice, even in an attic or a cellar, in the woods or in a barn, or even in a van, he is mystically in communion with that host of heroic witnesses of the Faith, and the gaze of the Most Holy Trinity rests on that improvised altar; before it all the angelic hosts genuflect adoringly; all of the souls in Purgatory gaze toward it. In this too, especially in this, each of us understands how the Tradition creates an indissoluble link between the centuries, not only in the jealous custody of that treasure, but also in facing the trials that it entails, even unto death. In the presence of this thought, the arrogance of the present tyrant, with his insane decrees, ought to strengthen us in fidelity to Christ and make us feel that we are an integral part of the Church of all times, because we cannot win the palm of victory if we are not ready to fight the *bonum certamen*.

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I would like my confreres to dare to do the unthinkable: I would like them to approach the Holy Tridentine Mass not so as to be pleased with the lace of an alb or with the embroidery of a chasuble, or because of a mere rational conviction about its canonical legitimacy or about the fact that it has never been abolished; but rather with the reverential fear with which Moses approached the burning bush: knowing that each one of us, upon coming down from the altar after the Last Gospel, is in some way interiorly transfigured because there he has encountered the Holy of Holies. It is only there, on that mystical Sinai, that we can understand the very essence of our Priesthood, which is the giving of oneself to God, above all; an oblation of all of himself together with Christ the Victim, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls; a spiritual sacrifice which draws strength and vigor from the Mass; self-renunciation in order to make way for the High Priest; a sign of true humility, in the annihilation of one's own will and abandonment to the will of the Father, following the Lord's example; a gesture of authentic "communion" with the Saints, in the sharing of the same profession of faith and the same rite. And I would like not only those who have celebrated the *Novus Ordo* for decades to have this "experience," but above all the young priests and those who carry out their ministry in the front line: the Mass of Saint Pius V is for indomitable spirits, for generous and heroic souls, for hearts burning with Charity for God and one's neighbor.

I know well that the life of the priests today is made up of a thousand trials, of stress, of the feeling of being alone in fighting against the world, in the disinterest and ostracism of Superiors, of a slow wear and tear that distracts from recollection, from the interior life, and from spiritual growth. And I know very well that this feeling of being under siege, of finding oneself as a sailor who is alone and has to pilot a ship through a storm, is not the prerogative of traditionalists or progressives, but is the common destiny of all those who have offered their lives to the Lord and to the Church, each with their own miseries, with economic problems, misunderstandings with the Bishop, criticisms from their confreres, as well as the requests of the faithful. And also those hours of solitude, in which the presence of God and the companionship of the Virgin Mary seem to vanish, just as in the dark night of Saint John of the Cross. *Quare me repulisti? Et quare tristis incedo, dum affligit me inimicus?* When the demon winds insidiously between the internet and the television, *quærens quem devoret*, taking advantage of our weariness by betrayal. In those cases, which we all face just as Our Lord did in Gethsemane, it is our Priesthood that Satan wants to strike, presenting himself persuasively like Salomé before Herod, asking us for the gift of the Baptist's head. *Ab homine iniquo, et doloso erue me*. In the trial, we are all the same: because the victory that the Enemy wants to win is not only over the poor souls of the Baptized, but over Christ the Priest, whose Anointing we carry.

For this reason, today more than ever, the Holy Tridentine Mass is the sole anchor of

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salvation of the Catholic Priesthood, because in it the priest is reborn, each day, in that privileged time of intimate union with the Blessed Trinity, and from it he draws indispensable graces so as not to fall into sin, to progress along the way of holiness, and to rediscover the healthy balance with which to face his Ministry. Anyone who believes that all this can be liquidated as a mere ceremonial or aesthetic question has not understood anything about his own priestly Vocation. Because the Holy Mass "of all time" — and it truly is this, just as it has always been opposed by the Adversary — is not an obliging lover who offers herself to anyone, but rather a jealous and chaste Bride, as jealous as the Lord is.

Do you want to please God or the one who keeps you away from Him? The question, at its root, is always this: the choice between the gentle yoke of Christ and the Adversary's chains of slavery. The response will appear clear and limpid to you in the moment in which you too, marveling at this immense treasure that has been kept hidden from you, discover what it means to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice not as pathetic "presiders of the assembly," but rather as "ministers of Christ and dispensers of the Mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:1).

Pick up the Missal, ask for help from a priest friend, and ascend the Mountain of the Transfiguration: *Emitte lucem tuam et veritatem tuam: ipsa me deduxerunt, et adduxerunt in montem sanctum tuum, et in tabernacula tua.* Like Peter, James, and John, you will exclaim: *Domine, bonum est nos hic esse* — "Lord, it is good that we are here" (Mt 17:4). Or, with the words of the Psalmist that the celebrant repeats at the Offertory: *Domine, dilexi decorem domus tuæ, et locum habitationis gloriæ tuæ*.

Once you have discovered it, no one will be able to take away from you that through which the Lord no longer calls you *servants*, but *friends* (Jn 15:15). No one will ever be able to convince you to renounce it, forcing you to be content with its adulteration that was brought to birth by rebellious minds. *Eratis enim aliquando tenebræ: nunc enim lux in Domino. Ut filii lucis ambulate.* "For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light" (Eph 5:8). *Propter quod dicit: Surge qui dormis, et exsurge a mortuis, et illuminabit te Christus.* "Wherefore he says: Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten you" (Eph 5:14).

+ Carlo Maria Viganò, *Archbishop*

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Sanctissimi Nominis JESU

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