



**Foederatio Internationalis *Una Voce***

***Positio N. 26***

THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM AND MEN

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### From the General Introduction

These papers, commissioned by the International Federation *Una Voce*, are offered to stimulate and inform debate about the 1962 Missal among Catholics 'attached to the ancient Latin liturgical tradition', and others interested in the liturgical renewal of the Church. They are not to be taken to imply personal or moral criticism of those today or in the past who have adopted practices or advocated reforms which are subjected to criticism. In composing these papers we adopt the working assumption that our fellow Catholics act in good will, but that nevertheless a vigorous and well-informed debate is absolutely necessary if those who act in good will are to do so in light of a proper understanding of the issues.

The authors of the papers are not named, as the papers are not the product of any one person, and also because we prefer them to be judged on the basis of their content, not their authorship.

The International Federation *Una Voce* humbly submits the opinions contained in these papers to the judgment of the Church.

### The Extraordinary Form and Men: Abstract

Sociologists of religion have observed that Catholic congregations are lacking in men; a 2005 survey found 37% of congregations to be male. The Extraordinary Form is more successful in attracting and retaining men, typical congregations comprising about 55% males. The importance of fathers in Catholic families underscores the importance of the effect, and the contribution to the evangelisation of men which can be made by this Form of the Mass. This phenomenon fits into a wider pattern of the more demanding religious groups, making use of formal liturgies which emphasise the transcendent, having more success attracting men than liturgically informal, community-oriented groups. The Extraordinary Form is also connected with a set of traditional devotions, notably the walking pilgrimage, particularly attractive to men and to the young.

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## FIUV POSITION PAPER 26: THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM AND THE EVANGELISATION OF MEN

1. Since the 1970s, in the developed world, the ratio between Catholic men and women attending Mass, and committed in other ways to the Church, has changed noticeably. The size and resources of the Church in the United States enable us to consult carefully researched statistics for this phenomenon, which can be seen throughout the West. For example, in 1974, 46% of men and 45% of women surveyed regarded themselves as ‘strong Catholics’; in 2012, 24% of men and 30% of women did so.<sup>1</sup> In 2005 a survey reported that only 37% of regular worshippers at Masses in the United States were men.<sup>2</sup> A study published in 1985 showed that 70-90% of parish activities (catechesis, service, bible studies groups) were led by women.<sup>3</sup>
2. The phenomenon has particular dangers for the Church. Not only does the Church need men to replenish the ranks of the clergy, but in general fathers appear to be markedly more influential than mothers in passing on the Faith to their children.<sup>4</sup> The simplest explanation for this may be the father’s greater association with the adult world, which children seek to join as they grow up.
3. The role of fathers in the formation of their children was underlined by Pope Benedict XVI, in addressing African fathers:

In manifesting and in living on earth God’s own fatherhood (cf. *Eph* 3:15), you are called to guarantee the personal development of all members of the family, which is the cradle and most effective means for humanizing society, and the place of encounter for different generations.<sup>5</sup>
4. It is therefore very significant that the ratio of men and women attending the Extraordinary Form tends to be more favourable to men, a fact which has not yet caught the attention of professional researchers, but can easily be verified by casual observation. Appealing for observations from around the world, the FIUV has found nothing to contradict the accuracy and world-wide applicability (in the Latin Rite) of the figure noted above, of about 37% of Ordinary Form congregations being male. At the Extraordinary Form, a figure of about 55% appears to be typical, in a range from 50% to 75%.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics reported in the National Catholic Reporter: ‘Losing their religion’ by Cathy Lynn Grossman, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015; research was published by the Centre of Research in the Apostolate (CARA), based in Georgetown in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> Gallup Poll of Catholics (2005), Question 75.

<sup>3</sup> David C. Leege and Thomas A. Tozzolo “Participation in Catholic Parish Life: Religious Rites and Parish Activities in the 1980s” *Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life*, 3 (1985) p14.

<sup>4</sup> A major study in Switzerland in 1994 showed that in a family with a non-practising mother and a practising father, about two thirds of the children will, on average, go on to practise their religion. In a family with a practising mother and a non-practising father, only one third of the children will practise the faith; the sex of the children themselves makes little difference. See Werner Haug and Phillipe Warner of the Federal Statistical Office, Neuchâtel: “The demographic characteristics of the linguistic and religious groups in Switzerland.” *Population Studies No. 31: The Demographic Characteristics of National Minorities in Certain European States* ed. Werner Haug et al. (The Council of Europe Directorate General III, Social Cohesion, Strasbourg 2000)

<sup>5</sup> Pope Benedict XVI Post-Synodal Exhortation *Africae munus* (2011) 53

## Men and Religion

5. Women outnumber men in most Protestant congregations throughout the West, and there is evidence of this being a long-term characteristic of many Protestant denominations.<sup>6</sup> In other religions, however, this is not so. The balance in the Catholic Church in the United States as recently as 1974 has already been noted. Orthodox Judaism and Islam appear to attract more men than women, even in the West; Eastern Orthodoxy seems to attract a balanced group of Western converts.<sup>7</sup> The imbalance in the Catholic Church in the West of today demands special explanation.
6. One important issue seems to be the role of the emotions: it is widely observed that men are less comfortable with the expression of emotion than women.<sup>8</sup> The emotionalism of many Protestant denominations could explain a long-term problem in attracting men. As the English apologist Mgr Hugh Benson observed at the eve of the First World War:

[A]mongst Catholics emotionalism and even strong sentiment is considerably discouraged, and ... the heart of religion is thought rather to reside in the adherence and obedience of the will. The result is, of course, that persons of a comparatively undeveloped nature will, as Catholics, continue to practice their religion, and sometimes, in ungenerous characters, only the barest minimum of their obligations; whereas as Anglicans they would give it up altogether.<sup>9</sup>

Benson related this to the balance between the sexes, and testified that, if anything, more men than women were to be seen at Catholic services in his own experience.<sup>10</sup>
7. In addition to a discomfort with emotionalism, a preference for a wider range of forms of communication, as opposed to verbal communication alone, has been associated with men, and an interest in the 'vertical' as opposed to the 'horizontal' dimension of worship: the connection with God, as opposed to the community. All these are at work in a preference for a more formalised and sacral form of worship, as noted by the Jesuit sociologist Patrick Arnold:

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<sup>6</sup> The results of the 1936 United States Census give us the following statistics, quoted by Leon Podles *The Church Impotent: the feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 1999) p11: 'in Eastern Orthodoxy the ratio of women to men is .75-.99 to one; Roman Catholics, 1.09 to one; Lutherans, 1.04-1.23 to one; Mennonites, 1.14-1.16 to one; Friends [Quakers], 1.25 to one; Presbyterians, 1.34 to one; Episcopalians, 1.37 to one; Unitarians, 1.40 to one; Methodists, 1.33-1.47 to one; Baptists, 1.35 to one; Assembly of God, 1.71 to one; Pentecostals, 1.71-2.09 to one; Christian Scientists, 3.19 to one.'

<sup>7</sup> See note 12 *infra*, and Podles *op. cit.* p.ix

<sup>8</sup> A parallel and easily observed issue is the relative unwillingness of men to submit their medical problems to doctors. 'The crude consultation rate [of General Practice doctors in the UK] was 32% lower in men than women. ... The greatest gender gap in primary care consultations was seen among those aged between 16 and 60 years. Gender differences in consulting were higher in people from more deprived areas than among those from more affluent areas. Accounting for reproductive-related consultations diminished but did not eradicate the gender gap.' British Medical Journal Open 2013 Health services research: "Do men consult less than women? An analysis of routinely collected UK general practice data" by Yingying Wang, Kate Hunt, Irwin Nazareth, Nick Freemantle, Irene Petersen: Abstract.

<sup>9</sup> Mgr Hugh Benson *Confessions of a Convert* (London: Longmans, 1913) pp111

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.* p.110: 'There is no "alienation of the men" [in the Catholic Church]; on the contrary, in this country, as also in Italy and France, I am continually astonished by the extraordinary predominance of the male sex over the female in attendance at Mass and in the practice of private prayers in our churches. At a recent casual occasion, upon my remarking to the parish-priest of a suburban church of this phenomenon, he told me that on the previous evening he had happened to count the congregation from the west gallery and that the proportion of men to women had been about as two to one. This, of course, was something of an exceptional illustration of my point.'

Even more central to masculine worship is the notion of the Transcendent. In deemphasizing in recent generations a concern with absolutes and ultimates, heaven and hell, and eternity and infinity, modern Christianity has taken a decisive turn towards feminine religion, which is typically interested in the immanent and the incarnational, in finding God in the small things, the everyday, and the mundane. . . . As liberal religion stresses increasingly the immanent and “horizontal” dimension of faith to the exclusion of the transcendent and “vertical” reality, it inadvertently ignores the voracious appetite of men for the Great, the Wholly Other, and the Eternal.<sup>11</sup>

Again:

A liturgy that appeals to men possesses a quality the Hebrews called *kabod* (‘glory’) and the Romans *gravitas* (‘gravity’); both words at root means ‘weightiness’ and connote a sense of dignified importance and seriousness.

8. While there may be other factors, approaching the question in this way appears to explain the variable success of different religions in attracting and retaining men. Orthodox Judaism, Islam, and Eastern Orthodoxy have, either in theology or liturgy, or in some combination of both, an emphasis on the transcendent and the mysterious, and on formal ritual.<sup>12</sup> Protestant denominations with a more liberal theology and informal liturgy tend to have proportionately greater problems retaining men,<sup>13</sup> and liberal Judaism is less successful than Orthodox Judaism. The success of the Extraordinary Form in attracting and retaining men fits into this wider pattern.

#### The Extraordinary Form and Men

9. The sacral formality and lack of spontaneity of the Extraordinary Form, its orientation to the transcendent, and its expression of profound truths without demanding an openly expressed verbal or emotional response from the congregation, are features which do not make demands upon men with which they are uncomfortable. At the same time, they provide something particularly attractive to men: the expression of ideas through action, the drama of the ceremonies. The content of the ritual, and of many of the liturgical texts, further stresses the transcendent, the sacrificial nature of the Mass, and the necessity of reverence before Christ made present upon the Altar. Finally, it provides men with the kind of challenge with which they are comfortable, indeed can find attractive: the call to a conversion of life, in the context of a clear expression of the reality of sin and the need for grace.

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<sup>11</sup> Patrick Arnold: *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings: Masculine spirituality and the Bible* (New York NY: Crossroad, 1992), p77-78

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Frederica Matthewes-Green *Facing East: A Pilgrim’s Journey into the Mysteries of Orthodoxy* (New York NY: Harper Collins, 1997) p.xii: ‘Something about Orthodoxy has immense appeal to men, and it’s something that their wives—especially those used to worshipping in the softer evangelical style—are generally slower to get. The appeal of joining this vast, ancient, rock-solid communion must be something like the appeal of joining the marines. It’s going to demand a hell of a lot out of you, and it’s not going to cater to your individual whims, but when it’s through with you you’re going to be more than you ever knew you could be. It’s going to demand, not death on the battlefield, but death to self in a million painful ways, and God is going to be sovereign. It’s a guy thing. You wouldn’t understand.’

<sup>13</sup> See the statistics quoted in note 6 *supra*.

10. It is useful to note a related remark by John, Cardinal Heenan about an early version of the reformed Mass demonstrated in 1967.

At home, it is not only women and children but also fathers of families and young men who come regularly to Mass. If we were to offer them the kind of ceremony we saw yesterday in the Sistine Chapel [a demonstration of the Normative Mass] we would soon be left with a congregation mostly of women and children.<sup>14</sup>

11. The Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite is, moreover, commonly associated with an interest in and practice of many traditional devotions, to a greater extent than in the rest of the Latin Church, devotions which can also be attractive to men. The most striking example of these is the walking pilgrimage, which has been taken up by Catholics attached to the Extraordinary Form in many countries,<sup>15</sup> inspired by the success of the annual pilgrimage from Paris to Chartres organised by Notre Dame de Chretienité, in which 8,000-10,000 people regularly take part. The physical challenge of a long walking pilgrimage—the pilgrims of the Chartres Pilgrimage cover 100km in three days—is a particular draw to men, and also to the young. In this respect Catholics attached to the Extraordinary Form are again responding to a wider phenomenon, which has seen the number of people tackling the even longer road to Santiago de Compostella—many with little or no religious faith—increase enormously in recent decades.<sup>16</sup> The spiritual need of these ‘pilgrims’, taking the term in a wide sense, is addressed by the physicality of many traditional devotions.

### Conclusion

12. The features of the Extraordinary Form attractive to men are not, necessarily, unattractive to women. While it seems natural to describe certain liturgical tendencies, such as emotionalism, creativity, spontaneity, and an emphasis on the community, as ‘feminine’, it does not follow necessarily that women want to see these features incorporated into their worship. What does seem to be the case, however, is that as a religion moves in the direction of the ‘feminine’, understood in this way, this causes particular problems for the retention of men.

13. Men have a role in the economy of salvation, just as women do, and the question of the evangelisation of men should not be ignored. To quote Pope Benedict XVI’s address to African men again:

I encourage Catholic men, within their families, to make a real contribution to the human and Christian upbringing of their children, and to the welcoming and protection of life from the moment of conception. I invite them to adopt a Christian style of life, rooted and grounded in love (cf. *Eph* 3:17). With Saint Paul, I exhort them once more: “Love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her ... husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Michael Davies *Pope Paul’s New Mass* (Kansas City MI: the Angelus Press, 1980) p111

<sup>15</sup> Notably the Christus Rex Pilgrimage in Australia, the Walsingham Pilgrimage in England, and the Auriesville Pilgrimage in the United States.

<sup>16</sup> The number of pilgrims completing the Camino is recorded and the statistics are available from the mid-1980s. In 1985 there were only 690; this increased to 4,910 in 1990, 55,004 in 2000, 179,919 in 2011 (the year after a holy year, when numbers are enormously increased), and 237,886 in 2014.

no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church” (*Eph 5:25, 28*).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Africae munus* 52