

# THE NEW ORDER OF THE MASS: ANCIENT BUT EVER NEW

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Archbishop Piero Marini, DD is a “heavyweight” speaker for the three-day IEC Theological Symposium. First, he is the head of the Pontifical Commission for Eucharistic Congresses. Also, he gave his talk on the History of the “*Novus Ordo Missae*” (New Order of the Mass) with the learnings and, more importantly, the experiences of a Vatican insider who saw the transition of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. He went on to serve as papal liturgist and master of ceremonies of St John Paul II and Pope Benedict. As such he also had great experience in how the *Novus Ordo Missae* opened itself to elements of various cultures in the spirit of dialogue under the strong pastoral impetus of John Paul II.



Attendees were given headsets to hear the English translation and follow the talk of the Italian-speaking Archbishop Marini.

By tediously pointing out details of various schema used by scholars and study groups who went to work after the Second Vatican Council called for liturgical reforms, and by walking us through an overview of how Blessed Paul VI strongly intervened as “magister” of the Church in every step of the process from 1965 to 1969 when the New Order of the Roman Mass was finally published, Archbishop Marini made us appreciate the value of the New Order of the Mass. It was the product of reflective study on the Gospels, the early Christian Traditions, the historical developments that either clarified or diluted words and gestures of the Mass, and the fruit of constructive dialogue involving the expertise of theologians and the sensitive pastoral heart of Paul VI who was well prepared for the task of great liturgical discernments.

He had been Archbishop of Milan, where the Liturgy of Rome has been enriched with its co-existence with the venerable Ambrosian Mass. Among others, the New Order of the Mass has addressed (a) the fundamental importance of the presence and active participation of the assembly who used to simply “hear” and “watch” mumbled words and gestures limited to the priests, (b) the greater choice of Eucharistic Prayers, like that of the Oriental rites, as against rigid uniformity.

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Drawing from his experience of organizing papal celebrations under the Roman Rite for the Pastoral Visit of St John Paul II to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, Archbishop Marini observed that the New Order of the Roman Missal is so widely

used in the Church now, and it has concretely been used to incorporate elements of local cultures (music, dance, songs, language, local vestments and gestures) into the richness of the Eucharistic Celebration. Anything in people's way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error, the Church liturgy can regard with openness and sympathy. The Archbishop realistically cautions: inculturation is good, but whenever cultural elements are inserted in liturgical celebrations outside the milieu in which they arose, there is the danger of exploitation of the liturgy. In ending, the prophetic words of Paul VI were echoed by the Archbishop: "The Church is not old, she is ancient; time does not bow her down, and if she remains faithful to the inner and outer principles of her mysterious existence, it rejuvenates her. She does not fear the new; she loves by it." The New Order of the Roman Mass is an expression of this spirit in the Church!

- Fr. Domie Guzman, SSP