



IS THERE A PROBLEM?

It has become apparent to observant Catholics that the behavior and dress of the faithful during church services have steadily declined in the past few decades. It was to their dismay, to find out that many of their priests and bishops did not feel that this occurrence was anything to be alarmed about. In fact, they were even encouraging this casual and non-traditional behavior with statements such as: Christ is our brother, and you would not go around bowing and genuflecting to your brother. To this some would add that it is necessary to know Christ on a personal level, so one should act in church in the same manner one would act in the home of a friend.

Statements such as those are very hard to counter since they seem, at first glance, to be quite logical. And who is a layman to question the direction in which the clergy are leading the people of God. So, being obedient, faithful Catholics tried to close their eyes and cover their ears and prayed for the grace of tolerance and understanding. Many of these good people struggled to try to keep some type of reverence in church, but didn't know exactly how.

Since the Vatican II Council, it seemed, nothing one did could be considered reverent or irreverent. It seems it all depends on how one feels. If one feels that talking or clapping in church is reverent, then it is reverent. If one feels that they can laugh or dance reverently then it becomes reverent. Actions are no longer judged reverent or irreverent. It is the feeling or attitude that makes it one or the other. The faithful Catholic is truly in a state of confusion as to how one should conduct himself in Church.

BY THEIR FRUITS YOU SHALL KNOW THEM

Fr. James Buckley, in an article written for the Homiletic & Pastoral Review, related this incident:

"While saying the offertory prayers, I heard two women's voices from the ambulatory behind me. At first, I paid no attention. Then, with a sudden shock I became aware that they were addressing me. They called out persistently, 'How do we get into the rectory?'

Here I was, celebrating the holy mystery before which the angels gaze in awe; yet two Catholic ladies thought so little of it that they didn't hesitate to interrupt me for directions."

... "I had often wondered if there was a decline among Catholics regarding belief in the Real Presence. Loud talking in church, walking past the tabernacle without genuflecting and the almost total neglect of making a thanksgiving after Mass were, I thought, inauspicious signs of erosion. Then, in January 1992, the Gallup Survey of Catholics Regarding Communion was published and my suspicions were confirmed. **The survey revealed that only 30% of Catholics believe that when they receive Holy Communion they are really and truly receiving the body, blood, soul and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine.**"

If it is true that a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit, then the seeds of conduct sown after the Council must surely have not been in the Spirit of Vatican II as we were so cleverly led to believe. This survey not only tells us that only 30% of Catholics believe in the Eucharist in the same manner as the Church teaches, but more important, and even more tragic is the fact that 70% don't believe. **Just imagine 70% of our Catholics do not understand the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which means that they are there, but don't understand what is going on.** What a horror, what a sad situation, but one that might just be bad enough to jolt our lax and complacent shepherds into action.

CLAPPING IN CHURCH

One thing that Fr. Buckley did not mention, but should be addressed, is the ridiculous way so many are using the wonderful practice of clapping. Protestants, who do not claim to have our Lord truly present in their churches, seem to have more respect than do many of our Catholics who do. One Baptist who had converted to the Catholic Church said that she was shocked to see Catholics clapping in church. She said, "We don't do that in our church." It is very likely that if this lady would look around she would find some modern Baptist liberals who would see nothing wrong with clapping in church. But to be honest, it could be justified by the fact that their churches are, to large degree, places for Christian fellowship. Catholics however are supposed to believe that the church is the place where they receive the Lord Jesus, not in a symbolic manner, but in actuality. Catholics are supposed to believe that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the reenactment of Calvary, in an unbloody manner. As one holy priest said: "Can you imagine St. John and the Blessed Mother clapping at the foot of the cross?"

It is important to mention here that there is nothing doctrinally wrong with the act of clapping in church. It is possible to have a situation where it might be even appropriate. This situation however would be an extraordinary one. The problem comes in when we make the extraordinary ordinary.

THE DIRECTION WE SHOULD TAKE

Foresight is the ability to see ahead; to be able to anticipate the eventuality of what is now being introduced. We have some leaders in the church who either have lost their faith in the Real Presence or have no foresight. It is even possible that they have no understanding of human nature, even though they may be very good people. For example, you might know a man who is both religious and extremely dedicated to his family. He truly tries to do the right thing for the family, but ends up with his whole family falling apart. It is not that the father wanted to destroy his family, it is just that he did not know or had got information from someone else who did not know how to lead a family. They once called this knowledge good old common sense. Today common sense is not so common, in fact it is very uncommon. Education is in and common sense is out, so we end up with educated failures.

In making decisions as to the way people are to be encouraged to act and dress in church, it is incumbent on those in authority to know the nature of the human person. The teaching of many great saints, i.e. faith is built on nature, is something that they must keep in mind. When this knowledge of the human person is lacking or disregarded, many silly and confusing things are introduced. Things that can completely destroy the faith of the average Catholic.

When one contemplates on the Mass being the reenactment of Calvary, and the church being the house of God, it does not take a genius to conclude that it is not wise to introduce things that would take away from the dignity of the Mass and the church. In fact it is absolutely necessary for the shepherds to introduce practices that genuinely contribute to the reverence due these sacred things.

One father of nine children was deeply concerned with the nonsensical clapping in church. He was striving to teach his children reverence for the sacred, but was being seemingly prohibited by the clapping being done for the choir, or the local ladies group or maybe the basketball team who stopped in for Mass dressed in their uniforms (that is their shorts). One always dress for the most important occasion, and Mass is not the most important, so they come in their shorts and get some applause. **Things like this would have never happened when the vast majority believed in the Real Presence. But with 70% nonbelievers, you can bet things like this will continue, and the 70% will not see any problem with it.**

The father wrote his bishop and informed him of his concerns about the clapping in the house of God. The bishop's response was: "Believe me when I say that there is nothing wrong with that." Then he preceded to explain how clapping was perfectly appropriate in church. He also stated: "This has been done throughout Christendom down through the ages". But this concerned father knew that slander, adultery, rape, and many other things also have been done throughout Christendom down through the ages. The father wrote back to the bishop saying: "Bishop, I cannot debate what has been done throughout Christendom down through the ages, but I do know that in the forty-five years of my life it has not been done except in the last few years".

It is very discouraging for those who do believe that the church is truly the house of God to see how so many people are acting, especially if they know and understand the meaning of the saying: **"If you don't act the way you believe you will end up believing the way you act."** We are not trying here to insinuate that the bishop in this case questions the Real Presence, but we are saying that he does not understand the consequence of these actions.

LEARNING FROM THE SAINTS

St. Peter Julian Eymard, a saint noted for his love of the Eucharist, had this to say: "Watch a saint enter a church. He goes in without concerning himself with those who are already there. He concentrates on Our Lord and forgets everything else".

... "This respect is the solemn profession of our faith, and at the same time, a grace of piety and fervor; for **God punishes irreverences committed in his sanctuary with a weakening of faith and a withdrawal of graces of devotion.**"

It might be good for the reader to ponder the words of these two quotes from a saint who was a lover of the Eucharist. It might make some sense as to the drastic decline in the belief of the Real Presence in the Eucharist.

In conclusion, let us see what His Holiness Pope Pius X had to say concerning the clapping in church. He had just been elected Pope and was entering St. Peter's when all started to applaud. This was the Pope's response as he turned to Archbishop Merry del Val who was beside him: **"They should not do this to the servant in the house of the Master."**

Too bad St. Pius X did not have the bishop to inform him that, this has been done throughout Christendom down through the ages.

Now let us continue from the book on the life of St. Pius X: "Early on the morning set for the coronation the streets of Rome were crowded with people streaming to St. Peter's Basilica. Many who had come from a distance spent the night sleeping in the open in order to be early for the ceremonies. At six the doors were opened and thousands pressed in, more than half of whom had no cards but hoped to get in anyway. Here and there small slips of paper were being passed among the congregation which read: **'It is the deep wish of His Holiness that in the basilica there be no applause and that a reverent silence be observed.'**"

Wow! Now wouldn't you say that this Holy Pope really understands the Majesty of God, as well as the nature of man? Wouldn't you agree that if it was justifiable to clap for anyone certainly it would be for a Pope, and a saintly one at that? And wouldn't you say if a pope like Pius X, who is a canonized saint, discouraged clapping because he found it out of place in church, that you're in very good company if you feel the same? It might be good to ponder this question: How many of those who are promoting clapping in church, or see nothing wrong with it, will be canonized a saint?

If we want to change the horrible statistic that only 30% of Catholics believe the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will be necessary for those in authority to go back to the mentality of the Saints. They were truly aware of the reverence that is necessary for us humans to show when dealing with the things of God. We all need to rediscover the true meaning of reverence as it pertains to the worship of our God. Then and only then will we be able to instill in

others, as well as in ourselves, the belief that our Lord and Savior is truly present in the Eucharist.

A GOOD TREE BEARS GOOD FRUIT
70% DON'T BELIEVE.

IT'S TIME TO GET SERIOUS, TOO MANY LIVES
HAVE BEEN HARMED ALREADY.