

The Words of Consecration

by Sebastian R. Fama

Radical traditionalists consider the Mass of Pope Paul VI to be invalid. They specifically object to the words used in the consecration of the wine. In the Tridentine Mass (pre-Vatican II) the wording is as follows: For this is the chalice of my blood of the New and Eternal Covenant: the mystery of faith: which shall be shed for you and **for many** unto the forgiveness of sins." In Pope Paul's liturgy it is worded this way: "This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and **for all** so that sins may be forgiven."

Both versions are based on Jesus' words at the Last Supper as recorded in Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24. The verse from Matthew reads: "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Traditionalists claim that Jesus used the word many because He was referring only to those who would accept His offer of salvation. They argue that changing the word to all would include the damned thus giving Jesus' statement a meaning He did not intend. But is that really the case?

Substituting the word all for many actually clarifies the meaning of the passage. The Last Supper was to be the fulfillment of all that Jesus taught His apostles concerning the New Covenant. A year earlier He had told them that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood or they would have no life in them (John 6:53). They did not understand but continued to follow Him. Later, He told them that He was to suffer and die (Mark 9:30-32). Once again, they did not understand but they continued to follow. Now, at the Last Supper, He would put it all together for them. He was to die for the sins of the world and they would be able to partake of His sacrifice by eating His body and blood in the Eucharist.

Other passages of Scripture attest to the fact that Christ died for all. For example: In John 3:16-17 we read: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, **but that the world might be saved through Him.**" Second Corinthians 5:15 tells us that Christ died for all. Finally, 1 John 2:2 tells us virtually the same thing: "And He is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also **for the sins of the whole world.**"

Radical traditionalists do believe that Christ died for all men. However, as we noted earlier, they believe that the words of consecration refer only to the elect (those who will be saved). Thus, they reason that if Jesus used the word many, He could not have meant all. But this is a false assumption. In the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus uses the word many when referring to all of mankind. He said: "For **many are called**, but **few are chosen**" (Matthew 22:14).

Elsewhere in Scripture the words all and many are used interchangeably. In Mark 10:45 we find: "For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give **His life as a ransom for many.**" In 1 Timothy 2:5-6 we find: "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself **as a ransom for all.**"

The Catholic Church has always taught that the sacrifice of the Mass is not a new sacrifice. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same. If they are the same sacrifice, they must have the same purpose. If on the cross "Christ died for all" then in the Mass Christ's blood is offered for all.

There is another point that needs to be made here. Let us go back to Matthew 22:14 for a moment. Did you notice that the word Jesus used for everyone was "many" and the word He used for the elect was "few"? That is because a majority of mankind will choose hell over heaven. The word many can be used to refer to all or a majority but never to a few. And those who will be saved, relatively speaking, will be few and not "many." Jesus made this point earlier in Matthew 7:13-14 where He says:

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are **many**. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are **few**." This refutes the argument that the word many, in the words of consecration, refers only to the elect. These two passages in Matthew show us that **Jesus refers to the elect as "the few" not "the many."**

Radical traditionalists will often quote "*Quo Primum*" to give their claims an air of authority. "*Quo Primum*" was a bull issued by Pope St. Pius V in 1570. Among other things it said that the Tridentine Liturgy was to be said in

perpetuity. Since Pope Paul VI authorized a new Liturgy in 1969, Traditionalists reason that he erred against the faith.

To properly understand "*Quo Primum*" we need to understand the type of document it was and the circumstances under which it was written. "*Quo Primum*" was a continuation of the work of the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent was convened for two reasons: First to address the errors of Protestantism and second to reform the interior life of the Church. Just prior to the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent, problems had developed within the clergy. There was a good deal of corruption and liturgical abuse. The canons and decrees of the council make this very clear. In session 22 chapter 9 we find the following:

And because that many errors are at this time disseminated and many things are taught and maintained by divers persons, in opposition to this ancient faith, which is based on the sacred Gospel, the traditions of the Apostles, and the doctrine of the holy Fathers; the sacred and holy Synod, after many and grave deliberations maturely had touching these matters, has resolved, with the unanimous consent of all the Fathers, to condemn, and to eliminate from holy Church, by means of the canons subjoined, whatsoever is opposed to this most pure faith and sacred doctrine.

The Fathers then go on to present nine canons condemning errors regarding the Mass. "*Quo Primum*" took this a step further. It is important to note that "*Quo Primum*" was a disciplinary decree and not a doctrinal one. In fact, in its fourth paragraph "*Quo Primum*" allows for other forms of the liturgy. If "*Quo Primum*" were establishing doctrine this would not have been possible as doctrines are not subject to change. On the other hand, disciplinary decrees are subject to change. Pius V's intent was to stop priests from using illicit or unauthorized forms of the Mass. He was not restricting future popes as he had no authority to do so. He used the words "in perpetuity" for emphasis. All of this is further confirmed by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical "*Mediator Dei*" (*On the Sacred Liturgy*). While he was not commenting directly on "*Quo Primum*," His statements covered the same subject. In paragraph 58 he writes:

It follows from this that the Sovereign Pontiff alone enjoys the right to recognize and establish any practice touching the worship of God, to introduce and approve new rites, as also to modify those he judges to require modification. ... Private individuals, therefore, even though they be clerics, may not be left to decide for themselves in these holy and venerable matters, For the same reason no private person has any authority to regulate external practices of this kind, which are intimately bound up with Church discipline and with the order, unity and concord of the Mystical Body and frequently even with the integrity of Catholic faith itself.

Note that the "Sovereign Pontiff alone enjoys the right to recognize and establish **any practice touching the worship of God, to introduce and approve new rites, as also to modify those he judges to require modification.**" And that is exactly what we see several popes doing after "*Quo Primum*" was written. Father Joseph A. Jungman relates how Pope Clement VIII made changes to the liturgy in 1604, Pope Urban VIII made changes in 1634, and in 1920 Pope Benedict XV allowed changes based on the reform of Pope Pius X. Minor changes were made by Pope Clement XIII as well as Pope Leo XIII (*The Mass*, page 106). It should also be noted that Pope Pius XII made some changes to the liturgy.

I think it is clear that no one prior to Vatican II interpreted "*Quo Primum*" in the way that our Traditionalist friends do. I think we can confidently say that Pope Paul VI acted well within his authority when he promulgated the new liturgy. Note also that "*Mediator Dei*" only placed restrictions on clerics and lay people. The Traditionalists and their leaders certainly fall into this category.

Radical traditionalists claim to accept all that the Church taught prior to Vatican II. Certainly, there is no question that "*Mediator Dei*" was written prior to the council. So even when judged by their own standards, the Traditionalist argument fails.

Note: In December of 2011 the words "for all" were changed back to "for many." While the word "many" is literally closer to the original text, its meaning remains the same. Christ died for all. So says Scripture, and so says the Church established by Jesus Christ.