

## Michael Wurtz CSC, Age 32, on Liturgical Reform

[Editor's note: there's a lot of buzz around what young people think of liturgical reform, and not a little bit of generalizing. I thought it would be interesting to ask half a dozen or so young people what they think. Not meant as a set-up: the only directions from me were, what do YOU think? We start with Fr. Michael Wurtz of the Holy Cross Fathers, who is here in Milwaukee at NAAL. He received his MA in Liturgical Studies from Saint John's in 2007.]

To presume that one can know another's liturgical viewpoint based solely on their age or in part by under which faculty they studied or even by their socio-economic background is flawed thinking. The "five agendas" outlined by M. Mannion and recently addressed by J. Baldwin are adopted by people of great variety. Such seems obvious. And yet, often in liturgical discussions/debates (in person or online) such flawed assumptions are operative. I suppose generalizations, while in essence inaccurate, are a way for us to think through complicated issues with the hope that we can come to some clarity.

As a doctoral student of liturgical studies in my early 30s I find discussions with those of all the varying "agendas" of liturgical reform exciting and stimulating. Though, admittedly, I do not feel at home in any one camp. I suppose no one really does!

I relate most readily with scholars such as D. Crouan (though I do not mean to speak for him here) and others who scan the state of liturgical life today and see an emptiness of beauty and depth. The implementation of the liturgical reforms stemming from the Second Vatican Council are, in my estimation, flawed, though the council itself need be respected and defended. And the flaw rests in the bravado and free license taken with the actual conciliar and post-conciliar texts. Examples of the results which linger today would be the puzzling disdain directed toward chant, the Latin language, Classical architecture, etc as well as an equal disdain directed toward emphasis on homiletics, a strong connection between liturgy and issues of social justice, and the legitimate emergence of lay ministries.

In principle the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite stands on its own, but I often wonder if *Summorum Pontificum* would have come into existence had the Missal of Paul VI been celebrated in a more worthy manner in the decades following the council.

Misguided assumptions of liturgical viewpoints seem to be the result of not holding together implicit tensions. We are a Church that rejoices in the fecundity of married couples and the celibacy of priests and vowed religious. We delight in the dramatic richness of gothic cathedrals and in the simple beauty of Cistercian chapels. We keep united the Last Supper meal of Holy Thursday and the sacrificial death of Christ on Good Friday. We commit monies to precious metals as well as to the parish soup kitchen.

Such paradoxes (if that is the right word) are intellectually difficult to hold together. And so, perhaps the various agendas or camps of liturgical reform represent particular sides, but sadly not the whole. In any event, it is safe to say that liturgical views transcend age, generation, gender, etc.. Presuming liturgical viewpoints of others based on these mere criteria is not advised.