Eamon Duffy on Liturgical Reform and Pope Benedict

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Eamon Duffy is a great scholar of the History of Christianity, and he brings a historian?s care to his discussion of Pope Benedict XVI?s views on liturgical reform.

His exemplary essay was in last week?s Tablet ? I am just getting caught up on reading after being away last week ? and it is accessible online and it is a must-read.

Duffy illustrates one of the difficulties faced by Pope Benedict. He considered the post-conciliar reforms, especially the ban on the Tridentine Mass, a mistake in part, because they were ordered from above and the liturgy by its very nature must emerge organically from the life and prayer of the Church. As a peritus at the Council, Ratzinger was aware of, and vocal about, some of the problems with the old Mass, and he supported the need for reform, even though he came to entertain objections about how those reforms were carried out. The difficult is this: If your problem is that changes in the liturgy must develop organically, then even when you are Pope, you cannot simply make new and different commands effective.

Liturgy is so important. It is not just something we do. As Christians, it defines who we are. In this hustle-bustle world where we are constantly being invited to reduce ourselves to the status of homo economicus, Catholics must regain the sense of wonder, and the orientation towards Christ, that will come from seeing ourselves as homo liturgicus. Whatever you think of Benedict?s decisions or attitudes about the liturgy, he is absolutely right to put the liturgy at the center of Catholic concern.

Links:

[1] https://www.ncronline.org/forward/join?clickSource=end-article

[2] https://www.ncronline.org/node/160616