

## Excerpts from Interview of Cardinal Medina on March 9, 2001

The full interview can be accessed from our web site.

This interview, given in French to Andre Figueras, was published on 9 March 2001 in the daily Present under the title of "Cardinal Medina considers that the Holy Father always is disposed to grant 'huge things' just as he first consented in 1988".

**Q.** Eminence, you are to the Vatican the prefect in charge of the liturgy. Does the Tridentine rite have a special importance?

**A.** It was ordained before the Council of Vatican II. I celebrated in the Latin rite for 15 years. It is therefore not for me an unknown thing. It is the mass of my youth.

**Q.** After the promulgation of the new missal by Paul VI, the missal of holy pope Pius V of 1962 fell in disuse. Very quickly, the priests learned to celebrate with the renewed rite. That does not mean to say that we despised the constitution of important groups of traditionalists, to which His Holiness has conceded widely the possibility of using the old rite. In these circumstances, there was grouped together religious families in the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission. This included whole parishes, where bishops accepted the priests of the FSSP. I think that, little by little there is an opening for these traditionalists that, at first, seemed less evident.

**A.** In the United States, there exist special parishes that are devoted to the Latin rite. The realities are different from country to country.

**Q.** Why does the Pope not celebrate according to the traditional rite?

**A.** A good question. The pope celebrates only according to the Roman rite, with vigor. I believe that the Holy Father was ordained in the Latin rite, and that consequently, he knows it well. Maybe, certain opposition would then render accusations that the Pope is against the new rite, opposition that does not want it to show that the Pope is orthodox in belief.

**Q.** There are sometimes incidents that suggest scandal. For example a bishop who refused a funeral mass with the missal of 1962 for a dying priest.

**A.** Bishops should allow the funeral mass without hesitation. The desire of the dying must be respected. It specially is justified in the case of this priest. It is a question of sensitivity.

**Q.** But would you not compose any directives in this direction?

**A.** The principle is that a bishop is the head of his diocese. The responsibilities in this matter belong therefore to the diocesans. The Pope cannot be called to intervene except for major reasons. There are many different ways to approach the problem.

**Q.** According to the Magisterium, what is the canon-

The Holy Father conceded the use of this rite to some institutions. But the priests belonging to these traditional communities, who are brought in to act as a replacement in a diocesan parish, must celebrate there according to the new rite so as not to create confusion.

**A.** In different cases, the solution can be different. It is not necessary to erect a dogma for things that are not. There is the principle of holy Augustine: In all things, charity.

**A.** In any case, we are always very sensitive to the needs of the dying. If one expresses a request for a funeral mass according to Latin rite, in charity that request should be granted. And it is unfortunate that this does not always happen.

**Q.** From the new Mass, one unfortunate result was a grave diversion of the liturgy, and was it not inevitable that there would be a reaction against such tendencies?

**A.** Such abuses of the liturgy are not allowed. The Vatican II Council said specifically: A person, even a priest, cannot change the liturgical texts, except where it is specified that there is freedom to do so. For example, on Paschal eve, one can do nine readings, or four. There are even more in certain solemn masses. But beyond the stated limits one does not go.

**Q.** And what should the bishops do to correct abuses?

**A.** First it is necessary for them to know about such abuses. When I was a young priest, an old bishop said to me: the bishop is the last one to know what happens in his diocese. I believe that since that time, however, there has been some improvement in liturgical discipline.

**Q.** Another subject of discussion, is to say the mass "facing the people"?

**A.** Cardinal Ratzinger has just published a book concerning this. He mentions in particular this problem of the mass facing the people, and on the position of the cross. In the Roman basilicas, the pope faces the people.

**Q.** But how about in others?

**A.** In modern cities, it is often difficult to build churches versus orientis.

**A.** For my part, in all cases, I do not ever look at the persons at mass, I am attentive of the celebration. For me, the mass, in one direction or the other, is always versus Deum.

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**Q.** Your conclusion then, Eminence?

**A.** I know certain American bishops that are very welcoming of the Traditionalists.

**A.** I believe we must always be optimistic. The most difficult problems to resolve are those of sensitivity. Each tends to see behind the others only a heterodox intention.