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## *New York to Hear Mass in Latin, Language of Catholic Discontent*

By PETER STEINFELS

A centuries-old form of the Roman Catholic Latin Mass, which was supplanted after the Second Vatican Council a quarter-century ago, will be celebrated tonight in New York City, bringing to the fore many of the complex religious and political discontents fueling conservative Catholicism.

With John Cardinal O'Connor welcoming worshipers to St. Patrick's Cathedral, Alfons Cardinal Stickler, the retired head of the Vatican library and archives, will preside at a Solemn High Pontifical Mass using the Tridentine rite.

Named for the 16th-century Council of Trent, which inspired its uniform use throughout Western Catholicism, the Tridentine Mass is said in Latin by a priest facing an altar, with his back to the congregation.

It was the Mass familiar to Catholics before the Second Vatican Council initiated a revision of the liturgy in 1963. The revised liturgy, meant to encourage active participation by the whole congregation, is celebrated in local languages, with the priest facing the people across a free-standing altar.

But when the new Mass officially replaced the Tridentine rite in 1971, it set off a long-running battle between church officials and some Catholics, including members of the clergy, who were unhappy with a

host of changes in church practice.

With the authorization of Pope John Paul II in 1984, more than 100 of the 181 dioceses in the United States now permit a few parishes to provide a Tridentine Mass. But no diocese has spotlighted it as the New York Archdiocese will do this evening.

Not since the Tridentine Mass was supplanted a quarter century ago has it been "celebrated by a Cardinal of Curial rank in the cathedral of a premier archdiocese with the express consent of the local cardinal,"

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# New York Will Be Hearing Mass in Latin

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the Rev. John A. Perricone, who arranged the event, said on Wednesday, speaking of Cardinal Stickler's high position in the Vatican. Cardinal Stickler has been coming to New York for several years, at Father Perricone's invitation, to say Tridentine Masses at parish churches.

A year ago, Father Perricone, a 49-year-old priest who teaches philosophy at St. Francis College in Brooklyn and lives at St. Agnes parish in Manhattan, brought Cardinal Stickler and Cardinal O'Connor together and sought permission to have this evening's Mass held in the cathedral where it could receive greater attention. Cardinal Stickler and Cardinal O'Connor were made cardinals at the same ceremony in 1985.

A call to the office of Cardinal O'Connor on Wednesday asking for his comment was not returned.

Unlike many who may be drawn to this evening's liturgy either out of love of an ancient language or nostalgia for the familiar ritual of their younger days, advocates of the old rite like Father Perricone see it as a vaccine against the toxins of modern culture, a means of maintaining the purity of the church's beliefs and the fidelity of its believers.

"The Latin Tridentine Mass has become a conservative rallying cry," declared a news release of this evening's ceremony from Father Perricone. The old rite "allows me to depart from Mass at peace instead of enraged," said Roger A. McCaffrey, the publisher of *The Latin Mass*, a quarterly with 16,000 subscribers.

"I hear that all the time from people who are fed up with the garbage that goes on at the typical parish Mass these days," he added, such as "females in the sanctuary," the area near the altar, and "irreverence before the Blessed Sacrament."

Father Perricone likes to point to young people like Christopher Grizzetti who have fallen in love with the Latin liturgy.

Mr. Grizzetti, who works at an investment management firm in Manhattan, is 25. He left the church during his college years and discovered the old Latin rite shortly after returning two years ago.

"You are given the opportunity to be with Our Lord in the Eucharist in a quiet manner," he said. "There aren't distractions in being asked to participate constantly."

He contrasted it with parish liturgies that were "always trying to be innovative" and where "the music was overwhelming and distracting."

Tonight's Mass, with music by

Liszt, Bruckner, Gabrieli and Mozart, as well as chant, will display the Tridentine rite in an unusually splendid version. It will be almost as distant from the hurried Tridentine Masses that older Catholics experienced in their 1950's parishes as from the folk-rock Masses of their 1990's parishes.

Mr. McCaffrey estimates that 50,000 to 75,000 American Catholics attend Tridentine Masses every week, some celebrated by groups that defy the church authorities, the American counterparts to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his followers in Europe.

That is a tiny fraction of the more than 30 million Catholics at church in the United States on any given Sunday, and Msgr. Alan F. Detscher, executive director for the Committee on Liturgy of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, doubts the

## Catholics unhappy with the modern liturgy embrace an ancient rite.

appeal of the movement. Parishes that offer the old Latin rite initially attract a large group, Monsignor Detscher said, including the curious and the nostalgic, but the numbers generally decrease over time.

Studies done over the years show that satisfaction among Catholics with the post-Vatican Council liturgy is generally high, he said, yet "a lot still needs to be done to improve the quality of the present celebrations."

Enthusiasm for the Tridentine rite is by no means uniform among the various currents of conservative Catholicism, some of them focused on anti-abortion efforts, others on papal authority or on assuring the doctrinal orthodoxy of Catholic theology and education.

Many conservatives share the sense that there has been a grave falling off in things Catholic since the Second Vatican Council and accuse many bishops, priests and lay leaders of bending to contemporary attitudes. They feel that many parish liturgies are banal and play down the church's less palatable doctrines, including those about sexual sin, contraception, divorce and abortion.

Still, many conservatives do not

think that the old Latin rite is necessarily the remedy. Indeed, even among Catholics outspoken in their complaints about the current liturgy, there are quarreling factions.

Those known as traditionalists will settle for nothing less than a widespread availability of the Latin Tridentine rite as an option, although they disclaim any interest in having it replace the new Mass.

"The revised liturgy," Mr. McCaffrey said, "is going to stay with us. Most traditionalists realize that."

But David Lane, who heads the Latin Mass group at St. Ann's Armenian Catholic Church in Manhattan, said that for most traditionalists, "the ultimate goal is to restore this as the prevailing liturgy."

"Traditionalists pray for the abrogation of the new Mass," Mr. Lane said, which he called "destructive and deficient in its presentation of the doctrine." Alongside the traditionalists, and often arguing fiercely with them, is another group that believes that something between the revised liturgy and the old Latin rite could yet be devised — and would be truer to the original intentions of the Second Vatican Council.

Although proponents of the Tridentine Mass want to separate their religious cause from partisan politics, the movement remains deeply entwined with conservative political and social views.

Yesterday the group headed by Father Perricone presented a forum on "Catholics and the Secular State," at which a good portion of the audience clearly longed for the establishment of an explicitly Catholic state.

Despite its splendors, the Mass tonight will include the essential features that Father Perricone said make the Tridentine rite distinctive. There will be repeated penitential prayers and gestures like striking the breast that indicate the worshiper's sinfulness.

Silence will reign while the celebrant whispers inaudibly the Mass's central prayer. The solemn moment when, according to church teaching, the bread and wine are changed into Jesus' body and blood will be signaled only by bells and the elevation of the host. There will be repeated genuflections, and only priests' fingers will touch the consecrated bread distributed to kneeling communicants. All this, Father Perricone said, heightens "reverence for the Mass as sacrifice and for the Blessed Sacrament."

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