

## **Novus Ordo Liturgy Contains Prayers for the Conversion of the Jews**

By Fr. Brian Harrison, O.S.

### CLERICAL "SECRET": NOVUS ORDO PRAYS REPEATEDLY FOR CONVERSION OF JEWS

As one of the signatories to the "International Declaration" coordinated by *The Remnant* in support of Pope Benedict XVI's Good Friday prayer, I certainly agree with this newspaper's general approach to this issue. Indeed, I congratulate Mr. Matt warmly for taking that initiative. However, I would like to correct his factually mistaken comment that the Holy Father's prayer represents "the first time in 40 years, in fact, that a Pope has stated that all nations, including the Jewish nation, are called to acknowledge Christ as savior of the world" (*Remnant*, February 29, p. 2).

To my mind, such statements could reinforce a certain tendency among traditionalists to exaggerate the defects of the *Novus Ordo* Church, sometimes to the extent of wanting to speak, see or hear almost nothing but bad news about it. But in fact it's not *that* bad! For instance, not only does one of the N.O. Good Friday intercessions pray for the conversion of all non-Christians; it teaches that they cannot even *enter* the path leading to salvation until they believe in Christ: "Let us pray also for those who do not believe in Christ, so that, illumined by the light of the Holy Spirit, they too may be able to enter the way of salvation." (*Oremus et pro iis qui in Christum non credunt, ut, luce Spiritus Sancti illustrati, viam salutis et ipsi valeant introire.*) There is no trace here of any exception being made for the Jews. Indeed, the ambiguous Good Friday intercession for that nation needs to be interpreted in the light of this unambiguous one that immediately precedes it.

Furthermore, the main purpose of such documents as Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1976) and John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* (1991) is to reaffirm the perennial teaching that all nations and peoples are called to acknowledge Christ as God and Savior. It is true that these affirmations do not *explicitly* include the Jews; But when, for instance, John Paul II asserts that "all are called" to accept the Good news of Christ (*RM*, 11), the word "all" is quite unambiguous, given that the context contains no hint of any suggestion that the Jews are an exception.

Perhaps even more importantly, I have news for nearly all lay Catholics, as well as for traditionalist clergy and religious (not to mention those liberal clergy

and religious who don't bother to pray their Divine Office). The best-kept "secret" in all this recent controversy is that Pope Benedict's new prayer is by no means the first liturgical prayer in 40 years to pray *explicitly* for the conversion of the Jews. On the contrary, the N.O. liturgy has been praying for this at least seven times a year for the last 37 years!

For instance, on the last day of every year (December 31 at "Lauds" or "Morning Prayer"), the Church prays: "O Christ, God and man, you fulfil the prophecies as David's Lord as well as his son: we beseech you that Israel may recognize you as Messiah (*te rogamus, ut Israel te Messiam agnoscat*)".

Second only to the Mass in importance for Catholic worship is Vespers ("Evening Prayer"), and throughout the whole 7-week Easter season the *Novus Ordo* has an evening prayer for the conversion of the Jews almost every week. Sometimes this is only implied, as for instance, at Vespers on the vigil of the final (7th) Sunday of the season, wherein the Church addresses the following prayer to Jesus: "May all the peoples praise you as King and God, and may Israel become your possession (*et Israel fiat possessio tua*)". (That is, may the sons and daughters of Israel come under Christ's dominion as members of his Church.) And for Vespers on Wednesday of the second and fourth weeks of Easter we find this prayer: "[O God], who chose your Son's first disciples from among the Jewish people, reveal to the children of Israel the reciprocal promise (*repromissio*) made to their fathers." (This is a reference to the promise announced to their fellow-Jews by Peter and the other apostles at Pentecost, that they would receive the Holy Spirit and salvation in return for believing in Christ and accepting baptism.)

Very explicit, on the other hand, is the Vespers prayer for Easter Sunday - the most important of all the annual Catholic feasts. It addresses Jesus in these words: "May Israel recognize in you the Christ she is hoping for (*Israel in te Christum spei suae agnoscat*), and may the whole earth be filled with the knowledge of your glory." This prayer is then repeated on the evenings of the third and fifth Sundays of the Easter season.

In short, the Holy Father's recently promulgated Good Friday prayer simply repeats the same perennial doctrine that the *Novus Ordo* liturgy has already been making explicit for nearly four decades. Now, since even most Catholics have no knowledge of these openly "conversionist" prayers in the new Divine Office, much less can we expect the Jews to know about them. So the big question is: Why haven't our "progressive" Church leaders such as Cardinals Kasper and

Keeler, Fr. Lawrence Frizzell, and other clergy who have solemnly promised to pray their (N.O.) Office every day, ever revealed this fact to their Jewish dialogue-partners? Could it be that they regard it as an embarrassment - even, perhaps, as a 'dirty little secret' that must be kept under wraps?

Fr. Brian Harrison, O.S.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.