

Is it just me, or . . .

CAMERAS AT MASS:

A New Plague

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For some reason, no traditional Catholic periodical familiar to me has discussed one especially regrettable phenomenon which is increasingly prevalent at certain (not all) diocesan Tridentine Masses within Australia: which, in addition, could well be afflicting diocesan Tridentine Masses in the U.S.A. and elsewhere. I refer to the seemingly incessant taking of photographs during Mass.

The reason always -- and, no doubt, accurately -- given by photographers themselves for their behavior is the insatiable appetite for liturgical photos which numerous Catholic bloggers and online discussion groups now have. This, incidentally, is one more reason for the

faithful to avoid most blogs that call themselves Catholic. (Having already said my much-deplored say in two separate *Remnant* articles on that particular topic during 2006, I shall not fan that controversy's flames now. Except to suggest this: in today's blogosphere, every single infallible doctrine of the Church may be, and usually is, held up to ridicule; but if you reveal even the smallest inclination to doubt The Immaculate Conception of the Blogging Species *Per Se*, then boy, 'hell hath no fury' like the resultant protests.)

Whatever excuse might be given for this photography, the result is invariably objectionable. Somehow, every church photographer appears to have been equipped at birth with the lumbering gait of half-a-dozen brontosauri, even when he is not personally obese or weighed down with his photographic apparatus. For the rest of us, concentration upon the liturgy becomes almost impossible when he is about. Not only is there the specific distraction of his noisy processions, which seem incompatible with the act of genuflection, but there is his peripatetic mania for taking photos at all possible and



most impossible parts of the ceremony. He thinks nothing of breezing into the pew reserved for those waiting to make their confessions, or of interrupting the organist and singers in mid-performance to take 'special' shots from the choir-loft. *Stomp stomp stomp, whirr whirr whirr, click click click, thump thump thump.* Doubtless his next trick will be to express his creativity with flash-bulbs: *flash flash flash.* Let it be stressed: this is not a wedding, this is a standard Mass.

There is no use appealing, over the photographer's head, to the priest. After all, the priest, far from merely tolerating the photographer's presence, generally

regards it (and the resultant cyberspatial publicity) as fortunate.

Undeniably I was an incompetent enough catechumen, but I do distinctly remember being told before being baptized as a Catholic that 'Our Lord, at the Last Supper, instituted the first Mass.' Not, be it noted, 'Our Lord, at the Last Supper, instituted the first photo-op.' As long as this particular pest is regarded as a vital part of the (ahem) New Evangelization, I can only recommend that parishioners who get no joy from the clergy, when expressing concern about the subject, consider attending some other Mass where paparazzi are actively forbidden. ■

~~The One Thing
Necessary~~