

Reprint from the Bulletin of December 30, 2012

“We go to the Lord, who comes to us.”

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. *Spirit of the Liturgy*

Our Christmas Masses this year were celebrated *Ad Orientem*. That means both the priest and the congregation were facing the same direction during the Eucharistic Prayer.

Celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated this way for virtually 1950 years. Following Vatican II, the practice of facing the people for the whole Mass became almost a universal custom.

However, this was not intended by the Council Father's in the reform of the Sacred Liturgy. The Roman Missal promulgated by Pope

Paul VI and the current Missal give the priest directives in the rubrics (instructions) when to face the people.

It is intended for the priest and people to face one another for the Liturgy of the Word and to face the same direction during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It only makes sense for priest and people to face one another for the readings and homily. However, it makes just as much sense for the priest and people to face the Lord during the Eucharistic Prayer. One analogy I have found helpful is the bus. The Liturgy

of the Word is when the bus driver and riders look at and discuss the directions, where they are going. Finally, they all get on the bus for the Liturgy of the Eucharist as they go to the Lord and face Him.

Pope Benedict explains it aptly by saying: Together “we go to the Lord, who comes to us.” The focus is not on the priest or people, but on Christ. The Holy Father also wrote: “The turning of the priest toward the people has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle. In its outward form, it no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above, but is locked into itself.”

Mass in this manner reminds us of our true focus and shows our continuity with sacred tradition.

God bless,
Fr. Finelli

