

Bill Donohue Reacts to the Controversy Surrounding the Latin Mass

Yesterday morning, Bill Donohue appeared on NBC's "Today" to discuss the pope's recent decree allowing wider celebration of the Latin Mass. Below is a transcript of the segment, with Donohue's comment in bold.

When Pope Benedict decided to revive the Latin Mass he set off a firestorm of controversy and may have reopened a rift between Catholics and members of the Jewish faith. NBC's Stephanie Gosk has more now.

STEPHANIE GOSK reporting:

Catholicism is a faith steeped in traditions, and now one of the oldest, the Latin Mass, is on the verge of a revival. Pope Benedict has opened the way for priests to give the 16th Century liturgy without seeking special permission, permission that has been required since the Second Vatican Council in 1970.

Father MICHAEL DUNNE (Holy Trinity Church, London): It speaks of our tradition, which, of course, is a key theological concept for we, as Catholics, that the voice of God speaks through tradition.

GOSK: Replacing the Latin Mass with a translated version three decades ago alienated an estimated one million Catholics. Pope Benedict says he hopes the reintroduction of the traditional liturgy will help heal that rift. But it also appears to be creating some new ones. Liberal Catholics are concerned.

Unidentified Man: They will think of it as a step back in time.

GOSK: The Jewish community worries what that will mean for their relationship to the Catholic Church.

Rabbi GARY GREENEBAUM (American Jewish Committee): For many, many hundreds of years, right in the liturgy of the Catholic Church, there were denigrating comments about, statements about Jews.

GOSK: In the Latin Mass given on Good Friday, Catholics pray for the conversion of the Jews and ask God to remove the veils from their hearts. But Pope Benedict has left rules in place to restrict the use of that Mass.

Mr. BILL DONOHUE (President, The Catholic League): This is an internal matter for the Catholic Church, all right? The Catholic Church doesn't tell Jews what to do. Jews shouldn't be telling Catholics what to do.

GOSK: Even with the changes, it is unlikely the old Mass will be widely embraced. Many young priests don't even speak Latin. But for those that do, and for their nostalgic faithful, the once dead language has new life. For TODAY, Stephanie Gosk, NBC News, London.