

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

Doubtless you've read about the old days when our country was dotted with one-room schoolhouses. Well, good bishop, I am a one-man school staff: principal, teacher, tutor, and sometime janitor. My two classrooms—one doubles as a break-room and study hall—I rent from a local Presbyterian church. My students, home-educated teenagers, sit weekly at my seminars in Latin, history, and literature and then depart for home, where, depending on the requirements of the seminar, they complete four to six hours of study. Having previously taught in college, prison, public schools, a private school operated by renegade nuns, and another for middle-school girls founded by a minister who enjoyed dressing like a nun, let me assure you that, comparatively speaking, teaching home-schooled teens the intricacies of Vergil or the primitive beauty of *Beowulf* is pure bliss. My students misbehave, when they do misbehave, in the innocuous manner of their grandparents when young: chewing gum in class, sending a note to a friend, skipping their homework.

But *lingua Latina*, not my students, has hold of my thoughts today.

Last year, in the spirit of the Solemnity of Pentecost, various parishioners commemorated the day when all in the crowd could understand the preaching of the Apostles by offering up, during the Prayers of the Faithful, petitions in 12 languages ranging from Tagalog to Russian, from Vietnamese to Polish.

Sed nihil Latine.

In July 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued a *motu proprio* (*Summorum Pontificum*) encouraging the use of the Latin Mass based on the 1962 Roman Missal. You yourself then announced that the Extraordinary Mass, as it is sometimes called, would be offered throughout our diocese, and this promise has become a reality—everywhere but here. With other vicariates now offering the Old Mass, then, I am

writing to ask why we in the Asheville Vicariate have no such option. Having mentioned this deficiency to several priests without receiving an adequate reply—one retorted that no one wanted such a Mass, while another replied that no priests were qualified to offer one—I decided to write with some questions.

Has no one in the Asheville Vicariate requested the Latin Mass? If not, please consider this a request. If priestly preparation is the problem, why not return Latin to the curricula at our seminaries? After all, this ancient tongue remains the official language of the Church. Our seminarians needn't become fluent in Latin, but they could surely be taught enough to offer a Latin Mass.

Why do so many priests and lay leaders fear the Old Mass? Mention the Latin Mass to certain clerics, and they grimace as if you'd greeted them with a *Seig Heil* and the click of jackboots. What offends them? Are they frightened that the Old Mass may hold more appeal than the *Novus Ordo*, that some parishioners might prefer prayer and reflection to the glad-handing push-and-shove that passes for Mass in some parishes today?

Over the past five years, several priests and religious have made derogatory comments about the Old Mass. During his homily one priest, old enough to know better, said, "In those days the priest turned his back on the people and faced the wall." (No, in those days the priest, along with the congregation, faced Christ in the Eu-

Sacred Language



charist.) A nun in civvies remarked to me, "No one back then could understand what was being said." (Could they not read? Each page of Latin was mirrored by its English translation on the opposite page.) A bishop told a group of petitioners, "No one wants the Old Mass anymore." (Allow the Mass, and you'll see the truth.)

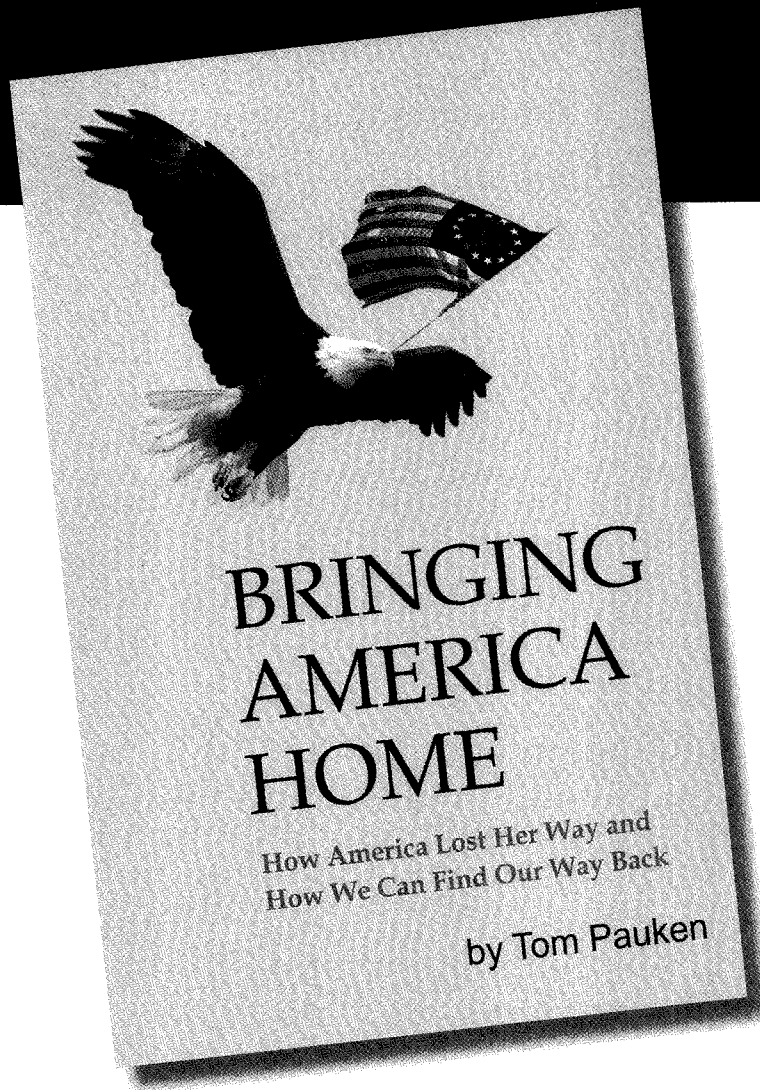
A Latin Mass offers several benefits. Language differences today have splintered many parishes; Latin offers a chance for unity, allowing Spanish and English speakers to share a Mass with a common language. A Latin Mass might also attract more people to the Church. The use of a sacred language—Hebrew for the Orthodox Jew, Arabic for the Muslim, and, once upon a time, Latin for the Roman Catholic—appeals to a certain aesthetic in some people. Yes, yes, I know, we should be able to find God anywhere, but for many that search is better conducted in a shadowy, hushed church perfumed by candles and incense than in some bare concrete-block room smelling of Lysol and social indignation.

Finally, the Latin Mass connects us to the past, sweeps us momentarily from the mess we moderns have made of the world. The quietude of the Old Mass, the solemnity of its prayers, the opportunity for private prayer, kneeling to receive the Eucharist: These appeal to millions of Catholics around the world.

Pax tecum, bone episcopo, et gratias tibi ago!

Joe Ecclesia

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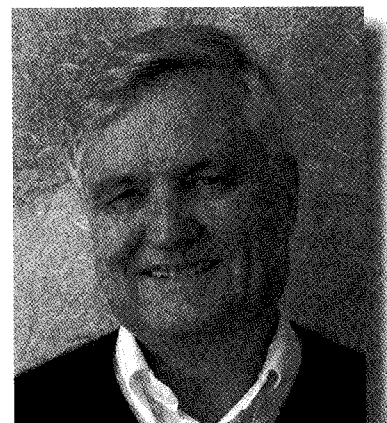
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Tom Pauken, a U.S. military intelligence officer in Vietnam, served on President Ronald Reagan's White House staff. As director of the Action agency, he founded the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program and implemented Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No to Drugs" campaign.

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George Wallace and the Tea Party

by Tom Piatak

MANY OF THOSE seeking to understand the Tea Party movement have tried to find historical parallels, and one that has been suggested is the George Wallace movement. Both movements have comprised voters feeling that the America they grew up in is being taken from them, and their strength in the electorate is roughly comparable. George Wallace drew 13 percent of the popular vote in 1968, after polling as high as 20 percent, and the comprehensive poll of the Tea Party movement published by the *New York Times* on April 14 found that 18 percent of voters consider themselves members of the Tea Party.

But there are significant differences as well. Wallace's greatest support came from lower-middle- and working-class whites, and Wallace famously sought to defend "this man in the textile mill, this man in the steel mill, this barber, this beautician, the policeman on the beat" against "pointy-headed intellectuals," "bearded bureaucrats," "anarchists," and "lawbreakers." Thanks to decades of free trade, America now has far fewer workers in textile and steel mills (though the intellectuals and bureaucrats seem to be doing just fine), and the demographic profile of the Tea Party reflects this. Indeed, as the *New York Times* headline trumpeted, "Poll Finds Tea Party Backers Wealthier and Better Educated," with 70 percent of Tea Party supporters having at least some college education, as opposed to 53 percent of the general public, and 14 percent of Tea Party supporters having a postgraduate degree, as opposed to 10 percent of the general public. Fifty-six percent of Tea Party supporters reported a family income above \$50,000 per year, as opposed to 44 percent of all Americans, and 20 percent of Tea Party supporters reported a family income over \$100,000 per

year, as opposed to 14 percent of the general public. Since 32 percent of Tea Party members are retired, versus 18 percent of all Americans, these income figures likely understate the degree to which the Tea Party, when compared with Americans as a whole, is better off.

In addition, the Tea Party seems somewhat indifferent to the social and cultural issues that have been an important component of American conservatism since the 1960's, even though Tea Party members are generally more conservative on those issues than is the general public. When asked to name the most important problem facing the country, 69 percent of Tea Party members point to the economy or the size of government, with only 1 percent naming such perennial concerns of the American right as immigration and abortion, and 45 percent state that reducing the size of the federal government should be the main goal of the Tea Party movement. As grave as our economic problems are, these answers suggest that the Tea Party movement is less radical than its supporters and detractors claim and than the Wallace movement was. Voicing support for libertarian economics and concern over the size of government are, after all, permissible avenues of dissent for American conservatives and increasingly the only forms of dissent permitted them. As Sam Francis argued in these pages in an essay on the legacy of Russell Kirk (*Principalities & Powers*, September 2004):

Kirk's classical conservatism was a welcome relief from the tedious and barren libertarianism that strutted about during and after the New Deal and has since managed to thrive as the domi-

nant ideology in the contemporary conservative mind. . . . Recognizing only one problem ("the state") and only one solution ("individual liberty"), libertarianism offers nothing to those concerned with the impending destruction of their civilization by forces that are largely irrelevant to its twin obsessions.

To their credit, many in the Tea Party do seem to be concerned about the impending destruction of our civilization, but they have yet to grasp the nature of the forces bringing about that destruction and what must be done to avert it.

The Wallace movement, despite its failure to attain power, reconfigured American politics by breaking apart the New Deal coalition. It appears likely that the Tea Party movement will bring about nothing more consequential than a second Contract With America. Far from representing an incipient Third Force in American politics, the Tea Party so far represents the militant arm of the GOP, with Tea Party members less likely than the general public to say America needs a third party. Newt Gingrich is the current political figure most admired by the greatest number of Tea Party members, and 57 percent even have a favorable view of George W. Bush. Two thirds of Tea Party members have always or usually voted Republican, 54 percent have a favorable view of the Republican Party, and an overwhelming 92 percent have a negative view of the Democratic Party. The thoroughgoing leftism of Barack Obama has certainly succeeded in reviving the GOP, but the opposition to Obama has not yet coalesced into the type of force capable of transforming American politics, much less of reviving the American nation whose continuing decline the Tea Party rightly laments.

Contributing editor Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.