

Liturgy for the young



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I felt a frisson of hope when I read (The Church in the World, 14 May) that Pope Benedict said there was an “urgency of the reform” to favour the “adaptation of rites to the various cultures, especially in mission territory”. Surely the most important mission territory the European Church must address if it is to have any future is literally on its doorstep – the young of our countries.

If liturgy can be genuinely adapted to the youth culture of our times (while retaining its potency) then there really is hope! For 13 years I have played a small part in the weekend Brightlights Festival run by the young volunteers of SPEC, the Westminster Diocese’s youth retreat centre.

(In 2011 the festival runs over 1-4 July, in Aylesford, Kent.) To see several hundred young people literally jumping and singing for joy as the latest worship-songs praise God to the sky; while at other times the youngsters are wrapt in silent adoration of the exposed Eucharist; or pouring out wounded hearts to a dozen confessors who can offer 10, 15 or more minutes to each person, is truly inspirational.

The tragedy is that the “bridge” between this inculturated worship and the typical Sunday parish Mass, where many imagine that a “folk Mass” using 1970s choruses is supposed to attract their twenty-first-century children, is almost unassailable.

My prayer is that a Church currently obsessed with liturgical perfectionism about precisely translated words which will not draw a single extra adherent to it will inculturate sufficiently to truly convey spiritual meaning to the over-secularised people of today. Only then will there be a fervor that can reverse the decline in Mass attendance, vocations and even the collections.

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