

# Tridentine Community News

July 22, 2007

## *The Motu Proprio "Summorum Pontificum": Contents and Implications*

Since the issuance of the Motu Proprio "*Summorum Pontificum*" on July 7, there has been an atmosphere of jubilation in the press and on-line world of fans of the Classical Roman Liturgy. But there has also been some misinformation spread, sometimes from dioceses and bishops themselves. It is therefore important to examine just what our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, said, rather than what someone's spin on them is.

Pope Benedict was clear in stating that *Summorum Pontificum* supersedes its predecessor documents, *Quattuor Abhinc Annos* and *Ecclesia Dei Adflicta*. The most important provision is the granting of the right to celebrate the Traditional Latin Mass directly to the priest. The bishop no longer has the right to prohibit this, except presumably in extraordinary circumstances. The *Ecclesia Dei* Commission, which formerly had only an advisory and ombudsman role, has now been granted the authority to rule on situations where a bishop may be trying to exercise powers that he no longer has over the celebration of the Old Mass.

Our Holy Father actually issued two documents, one being the legalistic Motu Proprio itself, the second being a Cover Letter to the world's bishops. The Cover Letter is written in an informal, conversational style. The Pope tells it like it is, addressing many of the expected objections and concerns in a frank manner. He acknowledges that while the SSPX situation was a motivating factor in issuing the Motu Proprio, so was the desire to provide for the liturgical preferences of those who have remained in communion with Rome. Pope Benedict also admits that widespread liturgical abuses have driven many to seek out the Traditional Mass for its stability and reverence. He even admits that it is the bishops' own lack of oversight of liturgical norms that has led to this situation, and mentions his first-hand experience in witnessing the hurt that such abuses can cause the faithful.

Near the end of the Cover Letter is a statement which clearly indicates that bishops must not be an impediment to the new permissions of the Motu Proprio: "Should some problem arise which the parish priest cannot resolve, the local ordinary will always be able to intervene, in full harmony, however, with all that has been laid down by the new norms of the Motu Proprio." In other words, obey the new law.

### *What Is Permitted*

Effective September 14, 2007, any pastor or rector may elect to use the Classic Form for any private Mass, any public weekday

Mass, and one public Sunday and feast day Mass. A "stable" group of petitioners must request the public Mass(es), but no number has been specified. The public may also attend a private Mass if the celebrant permits. The distinction is that a private Mass is not publicized on a schedule.

Confessions, weddings, funerals, baptisms, and the Sacrament of the Sick may all be celebrated in the Old Form at the pastor's discretion. Bishops may celebrate Confirmation with the old books.

Ordinaries may (continue to) establish "personal", or non-territorial, parishes that exclusively use the old books. This permits, for example, Fraternity of St. Peter and Institute of Christ the King apostolates to continue to grow in number.

It is not clear whether a local bishop may authorize a pastor to offer more than one Sunday Mass according to the Old Form in a parish which also celebrates the New Form; that question may have to be resolved by the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission.

### *What Is Not Permitted*

An assistant pastor may not celebrate a public Mass in the Old Form without his pastor's permission. He may, however, celebrate a private Mass on his own initiative.

No priest may celebrate private Masses in the Old Form during the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday). Nothing has been said about public Masses during the Triduum, despite allegations to the contrary by a number of dioceses.

Presumably the dominant group in a parish, whether New or Old Form, will have first preference for those celebrations. If time allows, the other Form may also be scheduled. In this region, we can assure you that a Good Friday Liturgy will continue to be held at Windsor's Assumption Church.

### *Changes in Terminology*

Admit it. You still call Macy's "Hudson's". It's OK. We understand. But all of us should get out of the habit of calling the Classic Form of the Mass "Tridentine". Our Holy Father wishes to refer to it as the Extraordinary Form or Usage of the Roman Rite. Now, that term does not exactly roll off the tongue. Perhaps another name will arise. But it is clear that the term "Tridentine", no matter how intuitive, is on its way out. And so is "Novus Ordo", now known the Ordinary Form of the Mass.

Pope Benedict also instructed us not to refer to either Form as a rite. Priests who celebrate both the Old and New Mass are not "bi-ritual." They are simply using two forms of the same Roman Rite.

Questions? Comments? Ideas for a future column? Please e-mail [info@windsorlatinmass.org](mailto:info@windsorlatinmass.org) with your thoughts.

