

Tridentine Community News

September 7, 2008

Governance of Tridentine Congregations

Currently, Tridentine Mass Communities are almost all under the jurisdiction of the local diocesan bishop. More so prior to the *Motu Proprio, Summórum Pontíficum*, than now, this had the effect of blocking the establishment of, or restricting, Tridentine Mass Communities when a local bishop was unsympathetic to the cause. Therefore, since the original 1984 Tridentine Mass Indult, *Quattuor Abhinc Annos*, ideas have been floating as to how to implement more supportive governance.

Apostolic Administration

An Apostolic Administration refers to the notion of having a bishop specifically for Tridentine Mass communities, crossing diocesan boundaries. As with the Archdiocese for the Military Services in the U.S., a bishop of such an arrangement might be stationed anywhere in the world, yet theoretically have worldwide, or at least regional, jurisdiction.

The argument in favor of such an arrangement is that the bishop would have the interest of Extraordinary Form Catholics as his mission. The success of the (regional and so far only) Apostolic Administration of St. John Marie Vianney in Campos, Brazil is often cited as a model for future arrangements. In that case, the original diocese refused to adopt the post-Vatican II liturgical changes. A parallel diocese was then established by the Vatican. The original group eventually reconciled with Rome. Current administrator Bishop Fernando Rifan (photo adjacent) has become a sought-after and eloquent speaker on the Extraordinary Form around the world.



The principal argument against such an arrangement is that real estate and budgetary matters become significant: Tridentine Communities might have to build, or maintain beyond their abilities, churches for their congregations. At this point in history, most Tridentine Mass groups are best off sharing a church with an Ordinary Form community. This is certainly the case here in Detroit and Windsor, where we are blessed with historic, but expensive-to-maintain, churches. Being under a diocesan bishop at least gives the possibility that a Tridentine community will be able to use such beautiful, appropriately-outfitted churches for the Classic Form of Holy Mass.

Personal Prelature

Similar in many ways to an Apostolic Administration is a Personal Prelature, a structure that also permits both religious and lay members. Unlike an Apostolic Administration, which operates

independently of the local diocese, priests and lay members of a Personal Prelature are subject to their local diocesan bishop and therefore may use the churches and facilities of the local diocese. Clerical members are distinguished from members of an Order (e.g. Franciscans) in that they do not take vows. They thus resemble more a Clerical Society (e.g.: Fraternity of St. Peter).

The only Personal Prelature so far established is that of Opus Dei, headed by Bishop Javier Echevarría. Opus Dei, for instance, administers St. Mary of the Angels Church in Chicago.

A Personal Prelature for the Tridentine Mass does not necessarily solve the real estate challenges of an Apostolic Administration, as the local diocesan bishop would still have to give permission for such a group to operate within his diocese. Also, Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos has mentioned that our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, wants the Tridentine Mass to become a more normal part of parish life. Having a Personal Prelature or Apostolic Administration may make for a more sympathetic environment, but it may also relegate Tridentine Masses outside of the majority of parishes. For the good of the Church, the Tridentine Mass should not be an unusual experience for Catholics. Diocesan bishops simply must heed our Holy Father's direction on this front, even if it is not their personal preference.

Personal Parishes or Oratories

Summórum Pontíficum makes mention of the possibility of Personal Parishes for the Extraordinary Form in a diocese. A diocese has two types of parishes: A Territorial Parish is one which serves a certain geographic region. A Personal Parish does not have territorial boundaries, but rather serves parishioners of a certain ethnicity or liturgical preference, who may reside anywhere. Note that membership in a Territorial Parish is no longer restricted to those who live in the neighborhood; the title is only one of nomenclature. A local example of a non-ethnic Personal Parish is Christ the King in Ann Arbor, a Personal Parish for the Charismatic Community. Personal Parishes that exclusively serve Extraordinary Form communities have been established in North America by the Fraternity of St. Peter, the Institute of Christ the King, and even by diocesan priests.

Note that variations on the above are possible: Vancouver's Extraordinary Form Community, Divine Mercy "Quasi Parish", until recently celebrated its Masses at four different locations over the course of a week. Thus, two parishes can occupy the same building. Recently, the Vancouver community was given Holy Family Church, a formerly German ethnic church, and has taken the name "Holy Family Parish" as its new, formal name. German Novus Ordo Masses will continue as a guest operation in the new Tridentine parish.

In some cases, especially in churches administered by the Institute of Christ the King, such Personal Parishes are referred to as [Public] Oratories. While fancier-sounding, the term can apply to a non-territorial parish (as it does in this instance); a church which is not a parish; or a parish run by the Oratorian Fathers, such as those in England and Toronto.