



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

January 9, 2022

To the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Honolulu regarding the celebration of the Latin Mass of the Missal of 1962

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace be with you!

You may have heard that on July 16, 2021, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter called *Traditiones Custodes* (Custodians of the Tradition), which changes the regulation of the Latin Mass that was in use before the Second Vatican Council. Pope John Paul II had allowed the celebration of this pre-Vatican II Mass under certain circumstances as a concession to those who felt attached to this older form of the liturgy, and he entrusted the local bishop to oversee the celebration of such Masses in his own diocese. Only priests authorized by the bishop were allowed to celebrate the Mass of the 1962 Missal. Pope Benedict XVI was also concerned for those who were attached to what is often called the “Tridentine Mass” because it was formulated at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) – though it was changed several times in the years following, so that the 1962 Missal of Pope St. John XXIII was the one in use at the time of Vatican II. Pope Benedict dubbed this Mass of the 1962 Missal “the extraordinary form” and gave a wider permission to any priest to celebrate the Mass of the 1962 Missal, and the priest did not need the permission of the bishop. Pope Francis, after consultation with the bishops of the world, decided to restore the situation to resemble what was in place under Pope John Paul II.

With the new norms issued by Pope Francis, it is the local bishop who must give permission for any priest or any community to celebrate the pre-conciliar Mass that Pope Benedict called the “Mass in the extraordinary form.” Pope Francis is concerned about the unity of the Latin Church and the importance of celebrating according to the form that grew out of the Second Vatican Council. While not completely suppressing the Mass of the Missal of 1962, he is clear that it is only celebrated today as a concession.

I know this decision has left many people confused, hurt and angry. As I take my responsibility in issuing an Instruction for the Diocese of Honolulu, which I promulgated on January 9, 2022, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, I wanted to offer some catechetical reflections.

It was recently explained to me by a prominent Church official that the “extraordinary form” (as dubbed by Pope Benedict XVI) of the Mass is to be considered extra-ordinary – that is, out of the ordinary, or not the ordinary -- form of the Mass. He explained that the Second Vatican Council was the first council to articulate the definition of the Church as the People of God – hierarchically structured, but including all the baptized faithful as essential members of the Body of Christ. Vatican II did not invent the concept of the People of God, which comes from the Old Testament, but it was the first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church to articulate the identity of the Church as the People of God. Therefore,

the liturgy that the Council called to be reformed necessarily had to reflect this ecclesiology (way of understanding the Church). The pre-conciliar Mass was very priest-centered, in which the priest did almost everything himself in the name of the people. The post-conciliar Mass, however, involves all of the people, each with his or her proper function, so that the way we pray (*lex orandi*) expresses what we believe (*lex credendi*.) If we believe that all the baptized are members of the Church, then the liturgy should involve them in “full, conscious, and active” participation.

If we compare the Mass of the 1962 Missal in Latin to the current form of the Mass, we readily see that the current form is not a new invention but an organic development of the Mass as it has been celebrated for centuries. The major differences are:

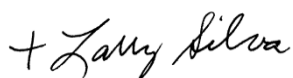
- The post-Vatican II form of the Mass is normally celebrated in the vernacular, or the language of the people, so that it is more readily understood and is more accessible to wider participation. While Latin is still treasured, the Mass is normally celebrated in whatever language the people speak. (This was originally why the Mass was in Latin, because that was the language that people spoke.)
- The current form involves a variety of ministries. The priest, of course is still essential, but he is not the only active participant in the Mass. There are lectors, cantors, psalmists, deacons, servers, and others who minister during the Mass in their own way. Extremely important is the liturgical assembly itself, which participates by actively listening, responding, singing and praying.
- The current form is normally celebrated with the priest facing the people. While it is true that the priest speaks in the name of the entire assembly, and that he is himself a sinful worshipper in need of repentance and of the graces that flow from the Mass, he also represents Christ the Bridegroom, who, in the Mass, interacts with and makes love with his Bride, the Church. It is this interaction between Christ the Head and the people who are the members of his Body that is signified by the interaction between priest and people.

It is to emphasize the true nature of the Church as the living Body of Christ, with every member an active part of it, that has motivated Pope Francis to issue these new directives. While they recognize the beauty of the ancient forms, they emphasize that the form of the Mass that developed organically from the Second Vatican Council is the “unique expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman Rite.”
(*Traditiones Custodes*, Article 1)

The Instruction I have issued for the Diocese of Honolulu recognizes the importance of the Mass of the 1962 Missal to many of our brothers and sisters. For the most part, they leave unchanged the practice in place before Pope Francis issued *Traditiones Custodes*. At the same time, they make clear that while the Mass of the Missal of 1962 is still a legitimate form of the Mass, it is the Mass that developed from the Second Vatican Council that is the “unique expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman Rite.”

I am grateful to the priests in the diocese who serve the communities where the Mass of the 1962 Missal is still celebrated, and I pray that all of us will grow in unity in the one Body of Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Silva".

Most Reverend Larry Silva
Bishop of Honolulu