



CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO
ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Praefectus

Vatican City, 4 August 2021

Prot. N. 378/21

Your Eminence,

Thank you for your letter of 28 July 2021 and for referring your queries regarding *Traditionis custodes* to the Congregation. The Congregation itself is attentively studying the implications of the Motu Proprio at present and has not, as yet, issued any guidelines. However, in order to be of assistance to Your Eminence I am happy to make an initial response and share with you our present understanding regarding the matters you raise. This response, therefore, is of a personal nature.

It is clear that the principal commentary on the new law governing the granting of the use of antecedents liturgical texts, by way of exceptional concession, and not by way of promotion, is the accompanying letter from Pope Francis to the Bishops. It is also evident that these exceptional concessions should only be granted to those who accept the validity and legitimacy of the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of the Supreme Pontiffs. All that is in the new law is oriented to the return and stabilisation of the liturgy as decreed by the Second Vatican Council.

In regard to your specific points:

- a. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was previously the sole dicastery of the Holy See with competence in these matters. This remit has now been transferred in its entirety to the Congregations of Divine Worship & Discipline of the Sacraments and that for the Institutes of Consecrated Life & Societies of Apostolic Life. They alone now exercise competence within their given fields.
- b. It is clear to the Congregation that the new law abrogates what was previously given by way of exceptional and limited concession. Pastoral prudence, however, may determine for a very limited time only, and with a view to increased ecclesial communion, a full implementation of the Motu Proprio, but which would require careful monitoring and clear guidance towards that end. *Traditionis custodes* speaks only of the use of the *Missale Romanum* of 1962 and Eucharistic celebrations. There

has been considerable misinterpretation of previous provisions with growing practices, developments and promotion, which in no small part has encouraged a growth that was not foreseen or sanctioned by previous Pontiffs. A former underplaying of the Second Vatican Council's role of the Local Ordinary as moderator, promotor and guardian of the liturgy has proved to be unhelpful in this matter for which reason the Holy Father now stresses the importance of the Bishop's role in fully applying the new law.

- c. The *Calendarium* of the *Missale Romanum* of 1962, is at variance with that of the *Calendarium Romanum Generale* of the *Missale Romanum* of 1970, decreed by the Council and which governs the unique expression of the Roman Rite. However, the laws regarding obligatory feasts in the Code of Canon Law of 1983 postdates both of these Calendars. The Episcopal Conference, therefore, would need to consider these matters very carefully before approaching this Congregation for an adjustment in line with canons 1246-1248. Such a deliberation and decision by an Episcopal Conference would also need to consider how this would also to apply to other liturgical usages within the same ecclesiastical territory.
- d. The Scriptural texts to be used for the readings in the 1962 Missal should be the same version of Scripture approved for use by the Episcopal Conference for its *Ordo Lectionum Missae*. This would most certainly also apply to other liturgical usages within the same ecclesiastical territory.
- e. The term "groups" applies to the personal parishes that were previously erected for the concessionary use of the antecedent liturgy, and to those gatherings of people who have been regularly meeting for the celebration of the Eucharist using the *Missale Romanum* of 1962. At the same time, the *Motu Proprio* asks Bishops not to establish new groups.
- f. With regard to the indult given to Cardinal Heenan in November 1971, of which you write, we have searched our archives and found nothing that corresponds to this. There is, however, correspondence from the Cardinal and Bishop Wheeler regarding the reformed funeral rites which is dated October 1971, but there is no evidence of an indult or of any correspondence in this regard in that file. If Your Eminence has seen this indult I would be grateful if you would share it and all relevant correspondence with this Congregation. In any case, note needs to be taken of *Traditionis custodes* no.8, which abrogates all previous norms, instructions, permissions, and customs that do not conform to the present law. A previous indult would certainly fall under this proscription.

Clearly, this is a moment which demands of pastors a delicacy of care and direction towards those who are most affected by the laws now in force. The use of antecedent liturgical texts has been regulated and not suppressed. The reasons for this are clearly outlined in the Pope's letter. The misinterpretation and promotion of the use of these texts, after only limited concessions by previous Pontiffs, has been used to encourage a liturgy at variance with Conciliar reform (and which, in fact, was abrogated by Pope Saint Paul VI), and an ecclesiology that is not part of the Church's Magisterium.

The copy correspondence from The Latin Mass Society, which you enclosed with your letter, is a good example of this loose interpretation and the promotion of these liturgies under the guise of permissible legislation. It needs to be made very clear to them that the Bishops alone, in communion with the Pope, are the moderators of the liturgy and that the LMSs own understanding of *Traditionis custodes* as proposed by them has no standing whatsoever and should not be published as an authoritative commentary.

I hope that these comments are of some help to you at this time as you reflect upon your responses. Meanwhile, please be assured of our willingness to be of assistance and support.

Yours fraternally in the Lord,


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