

LITTERÆ APOSTOLICÆ  
MOTU PROPRIO DATÆ  
BENEDICTUS XVI

**SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM**

**De usu extraordinario  
antiquæ formæ Ritus Romani**

**SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM** cura ad hoc tempus usque semper fuit, ut Christi Ecclesia Divinæ Maiestati cultum dignum offerret, «ad laudem et gloriam nominis Sui» et «ad utilitatem totius Ecclesiæ Suæ sanctæ».

Ab immemorabili tempore sicut etiam in futurum, principium servandum est «iuxta quod unaquæque Ecclesia particularis concordare debet cum universali Ecclesia non solum quoad fidei doctrinam et signa sacramentalia, sed etiam quoad usus universaliter acceptos ab apostolica et continua traditione, qui servandi sunt non solum ut errores vitentur, verum etiam ad fidei integritatem tradendam, quia Ecclesiæ lex orandi eius legi credendi respondet»<sup>1</sup>.

Inter Pontifices qui talem debitam curam adhibuerunt, nomen excellit sancti Gregorii Magni, qui tam fidem catholicam quam thesauros cultus ac culturæ a Romanis in sæculis præcedentibus cumulatōs novis Europæ populis transmittendos curavit. Sacræ Liturgiæ tam Missæ Sacrificii quam Officii Divini formam, uti in Urbe celebrabatur, definiri conservarique iussit. Monachos quoque et moniales maxime fovit, qui sub Regula sancti Benedicti militantes, ubique simul cum Evangelii annuntiatione illam quoque saluberrimam Regulæ sententiam vita sua illustrarunt, «ut operi Dei nihil præponatur» (cap. 43). Tali modo sacra

APOSTOLIC LETTER  
**SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM**  
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF  
BENEDICT XVI  
GIVEN MOTU PROPRIO

**On the extraordinary use  
of the ancient form of the Roman Rite**

It has been the constant concern of the Supreme Pontiffs up to the present to ensure that the Church of Christ offers a worthy worship to the Divine Majesty, 'to the praise and glory of His name,' and 'to the benefit of all His Holy Church.'

Since time immemorial it has been necessary - as it is also for the future - to maintain the principle according to which 'each particular Church must concur with the universal Church, not only as regards the doctrine of the faith and the sacramental signs, but also as regards the usages universally accepted by uninterrupted apostolic tradition, which must be observed not only to avoid errors but also to transmit the integrity of the faith, because the Church's law of prayer corresponds to her law of faith.'<sup>1</sup>

Among the pontiffs who showed that requisite concern, particularly outstanding is the name of St. Gregory the Great, who made every effort to ensure that the new peoples of Europe received both the Catholic faith and the treasures of worship and culture that had been accumulated by the Romans in preceding centuries. He commanded that the form of the sacred liturgy as celebrated in Rome (concerning both the Sacrifice of Mass and the Divine Office) be conserved. He took great concern to ensure the dissemination of monks and nuns who, following the Rule of St. Benedict, together with the announcement of the Gospel illustrated with their lives the wise provision of their

<sup>1</sup> Institutio generalis Missalis Romani, Editio tertia, 2002, 397.

liturgia secundum morem Romanum non solum fidem et pietatem sed et culturam multarum gentium fecundavit. Constat utique liturgiam latinam variis suis formis Ecclesiae in omnibus aetatis christianae saeculis permultos Sanctos in vita spirituali stimulasse atque tot populos in religionis virtute roborasse ac eorundem pietatem fecundasse.

Ut autem Sacra Liturgia hoc munus efficacius expleret, plures alii Romani Pontifices decursu saeculorum peculiarem sollicitudinem impenderunt, inter quos eminent Sanctus Pius V, qui magno cum studio pastoralis, Concilio Tridentino exhortante, totum Ecclesiae cultum innovavit, librorum liturgicorum emendatorum et «ad normam Patrum instauratorum» editionem curavit eosque Ecclesiae Latinae usui dedit

Inter Ritus romani libros liturgicos patet eminere Missale Romanum, quod in romana urbe succrevit, atque succedentibus saeculis gradatim formas assumpsit, quae cum illa in generationibus recentioribus vigente magnam habent similitudinem.

«Quod idem omnino propositum tempore progrediente Pontifices Romani sunt persecuti, cum novas ad aetates accommodaverunt aut ritus librosque liturgicos determinaverunt, ac deinde cum ineunte hoc nostro saeculo ampliorem iam complexi sunt redintegrationem»<sup>2</sup>. Sic vero egerunt Decessores nostri Clemens VIII, Urbanus VIII, sanctus Pius X<sup>3</sup>, Benedictus XV, Pius XII et beatus Ioannes XXIII.

Rule that 'nothing should be placed before the work of God.' In this way the sacred liturgy, celebrated according to the Roman use, enriched not only the faith and piety but also the culture of many peoples. It is known, in fact, that the Latin liturgy of the Church in its various forms, in each century of the Christian era, has been a spur to the spiritual life of many saints, has reinforced many peoples in the virtue of religion and fecundated their piety.

Many other Roman pontiffs, in the course of the centuries, showed particular solicitude in ensuring that the sacred liturgy accomplished this task more effectively. Outstanding among them is Saint Pius V who, sustained by great pastoral zeal and following the exhortations of the Council of Trent, renewed the entire liturgy of the Church, oversaw the publication of liturgical books amended and 'renewed in accordance with the norms of the Fathers,' and provided them for the use of the Latin Church.

One of the liturgical books of the Roman rite is the Roman Missal, which developed in the city of Rome and, with the passing of the centuries, little by little took forms very similar to that it has had in recent times.

It was towards this same goal that succeeding Roman Pontiffs directed their energies during the subsequent centuries in order to ensure that the rites and liturgical books were brought up to date and, when necessary, clarified. From the beginning of this century they undertook a more general reform<sup>2</sup>. Thus acted also our predecessors Clement VIII, Urban VIII, Saint Pius X<sup>3</sup>, Benedict XV, Pius XII and Blessed John XXIII.

<sup>2</sup> Ioannes Paulus Pp. II, Litt. ap. Vicesimus quintus annus (4 Decembris 1988), 3 : AAS 81 (1989), 899.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Recentioribus autem temporibus, Concilium Vaticanum II desiderium expressit, ut debita observantia et reverentia erga cultum divinum denuo instauraretur ac necessitatibus nostræ ætatis aptaretur. Quo desiderio motus, Decessor noster Summus Pontifex Paulus VI libros liturgicos instauratos et partim innovatos anno 1970 Ecclesiæ latinæ approbavit ; qui ubique terrarum permultas in linguas vulgares conversi, ab Episcopis atque a sacerdotibus et fidelibus libenter recepti sunt. Ioannes Paulus II, tertiam editionem typicam Missalis Romani recognovit. Sic Romani Pontifices operati sunt ut «hoc quasi ædificium liturgicum [...] rursus, dignitate splendidum et concinnitate» appareret<sup>4</sup>.

Aliquibus autem in regionibus haud pauci fideles antecedentibus formis liturgicis, quæ eorum culturam et spiritum tam profunde imbuerant, tanto amore et affectu adhæserunt et adhærere pergunt, ut Summus Pontifex Ioannes Paulus II, horum fidelium pastoralis cura motus, anno 1984 speciali Indulto “Quattuor abhinc annos”, a Congregatione pro Cultu Divino exarato, facultatem concessit utendi Missali Romano a Ioanne XXIII anno 1962 edito; anno autem 1988 Ioannes Paulus II iterum, litteris Apostolicis “Ecclesia Dei” Motu proprio datis, Episcopos exhortatus est ut talem facultatem late et generose in favorem omnium fidelium id petentium adhiberent.

Instantibus precibus horum fidelium iam a Prædecessore Nostro Ioanne Paulo II diu perpensis, auditis etiam a Nobis Patribus Cardinalibus in Concistorio die XXIII mensis martii anni 2006 habito, omnibus mature perpensis, invocato Spiritu Sancto et Dei freti auxilio, præsentibus Litteris Apostolicis

In more recent times, Vatican Council II expressed a desire that the respectful reverence due to divine worship should be renewed and adapted to the needs of our time. Moved by this desire our predecessor, the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI, approved, in 1970, reformed and partly renewed liturgical books for the Latin Church. These, translated into the various languages of the world, were willingly accepted by bishops, priests and faithful. John Paul II amended the third typical edition of the Roman Missal. Thus Roman pontiffs have operated to ensure that 'this kind of liturgical edifice ... should again appear resplendent for its dignity and harmony'<sup>4</sup>.

But in some regions, no small numbers of faithful adhered and continue to adhere with great love and affection to the earlier liturgical forms. These had so deeply marked their culture and their spirit that in 1984 the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, moved by a concern for the pastoral care of these faithful, with the special indult “Quattuor abhinc annos” issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship, granted permission to use the Roman Missal published by Blessed John XXIII in the year 1962. Later, in the year 1988, John Paul II with the Apostolic Letter given Motu Proprio “Ecclesia Dei”, exhorted bishops to make generous use of this power in favor of all the faithful who so desired.

Our predecessor John Paul II having already considered the insistent petitions of these faithful, having listened to the views of the Cardinal Fathers of the Consistory of 22 March 2006, having reflected deeply upon all aspects of the question, invoked the Holy Spirit and trusting in the help of God, with this

<sup>4</sup> Pius Pp. X, Litt. Ap. Motu proprio datæ Abhinc duos annos (23 Octobris 1913) : AAS 5 (1913), 449-450 ; cfr Ioannes Paulus II, Litt. ap. Vicesimus quintus annus (4 Decembris 1988), 3 : AAS 81 (1989), 899.

DECERNIMUS quæ sequuntur:

**Art. 1.**

Missale Romanum a Paulo VI promulgatum ordinaria expressio “Legis orandi” Ecclesiæ catholicæ ritus latini est. Missale autem Romanum a S. Pio V promulgatum et a B. Ioanne XXIII denuo editum habeatur uti extraordinaria expressio eiusdem “Legis orandi” Ecclesiæ et ob venerabilem et antiquum eius usum debito gaudeat honore. Hæ duæ expressiones “legis orandi” Ecclesiæ, minime vero inducent in divisionem “legis credendi” Ecclesiæ; sunt enim duo usus unici ritus romani.

Proinde Missæ Sacrificium, iuxta editionem typicam Missalis Romani a B. Ioanne XXIII anno 1962 promulgatam et numquam abrogatam, uti formam extraordinariam Liturgiæ Ecclesiæ, celebrare licet. Condiciones vero a documentis antecedentibus “Quattuor abhinc annos” et “Ecclesia Dei” pro usu huius Missalis statutæ, substituuntur ut sequitur:

**Art. 2.**

In Missis sine populo celebratis, quilibet sacerdos catholicus ritus latini, sive sæcularis sive religiosus, uti potest aut Missali Romano a beato Papa Ioanne XXIII anno 1962 edito, aut Missali Romano a Summo Pontifice Paulo VI anno 1970 promulgato, et quidem qualibet die, excepto Triduo Sacro. Ad talem celebrationem secundum unum alterumve Missale, sacerdos nulla eget licentia, nec Sedis Apostolicæ nec Ordinarii sui.

**Art. 3.**

Si communitates Institutorum vitæ

Apostolic Letter We DECREE the following:

**Art. 1**

The Roman Missal promulgated by Paul VI is the ordinary expression of the *Lex orandi* [Law of prayer] of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. Nonetheless, the Roman Missal promulgated by St. Pius V and reissued by Bl. John XXIII is to be considered as an extraordinary expression of that same *Lex orandi*, and must be given due honour for its venerable and ancient usage. These two expressions of the Church’s *Lex orandi* will in no any way lead to a division in the Church’s *Lex credendi* [Law of belief]. They are, in fact two uses of the one Roman rite.

It is, therefore, permissible to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass following the typical edition of the Roman Missal promulgated by Bl. John XXIII in 1962 and never abrogated, as an extraordinary form of the Liturgy of the Church. The conditions for the use of this Missal as laid down by earlier documents “Quattuor abhinc annos” and “Ecclesia Dei”, are substituted as follows:

**Art. 2**

In Masses celebrated without the people, each Catholic priest of the Latin rite, whether secular or regular, may use the Roman Missal published by Bl. Pope John XXIII in 1962, or the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970, and may do so on any day with the exception of the Easter Triduum. For such celebrations, with either one Missal or the other, the priest has no need for permission from the Apostolic See or from his Ordinary.

**Art. 3**

Communities of Institutes of consecrated

consecratæ atque Societatum vitæ apostolicæ iuris sive pontificii sive diocesani quæ in celebratione conventuali seu “communitatis” in oratoriis propriis celebrationem sanctæ Missæ iuxta editionem Missalis Romani anno 1962 promulgatam habere cupiunt, id eis licet. Si singula communitas aut totum Institutum vel Societas tales celebrationes sæpe vel habitualiter vel permanentemente perficere vult, res a Superioribus maioribus ad normam iuris et secundum leges et statuta particularia decernatur.

#### Art. 4.

Ad celebrationes sanctæ Missæ de quibus supra in art. 2 admitti possunt, servatis de iure servandis, etiam christifideles qui sua sponte id petunt.

#### Art. 5

§ 1. In parœciis, ubi cœtus fidelium traditioni liturgicæ antecedenti adhærentium stabiliter existit, parochus eorum petitiones ad celebrandam sanctam Missam iuxta ritum Missalis Romani anno 1962 editi, libenter suscipiat. Ipse videat ut harmonice concordetur bonum horum fidelium cum ordinaria parœciæ pastorali cura, sub Episcopi regimine ad normam canonis 392, discordiam vitando et totius Ecclesiæ unitatem fovendo.

§ 2. Celebratio secundum Missale B. Ioannis XXIII locum habere potest diebus ferialibus; dominicis autem et festis una etiam celebratio huiusmodi fieri potest.

§ 3. Fidelibus seu sacerdotibus id petentibus, parochus celebrationes, hac in forma extraordinaria, permittat etiam in adiunctis peculiaribus, uti sunt matrimonia, exsequiæ aut celebrationes occasionales, verbi gratia peregrinationes.

life and of Societies of apostolic life, of either pontifical or diocesan right, wishing to celebrate Mass in accordance with the edition of the Roman Missal promulgated in 1962, for conventual or “community” celebration in their oratories, may do so. If an individual community or an entire Institute or Society wishes to undertake such celebrations often, habitually or permanently, the decision must be taken by the Superiors Major, in accordance with the law and following their own specific decrees and statutes.

#### Art. 4

Celebrations of Mass as mentioned above in art. 2 may – observing all the norms of law – also be attended by faithful who, of their own free will, ask to be admitted.

#### Art. 5

§ 1 In parishes, where there is a group of faithful who stably adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition, the pastor should willingly accept their requests to celebrate the Mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962, and ensure that the welfare of these faithful harmonises with the ordinary pastoral care of the parish, under the guidance of the bishop in accordance with canon 392, avoiding discord and favouring the unity of the whole Church.

§ 2 Celebration according to the Missal of Bl. John XXIII may take place on working days; while on Sundays and feast days one such celebration may also be held.

§ 3 For faithful and priests who request it, the pastor should also allow celebrations in this extraordinary form for special circumstances such as marriages, funerals or occasional celebrations, e.g. pilgrimages.

§ 4. Sacerdotes Missali B. Ioannis XXIII utentes, idonei esse debent ac iure non impediti.

§ 5. In ecclesiis, quæ non sunt nec parœciales nec conventuales, Rectoris ecclesiæ est concedere licentiam de qua supra.

**Art. 6.**

In Missis iuxta Missale B. Ioannis XXIII celebratis cum populo, Lectiones proclamari possunt etiam lingua vernacula, utendo editionibus ab Apostolica Sede recognitis.

**Art. 7.**

Ubi aliquis cœtus fidelium laicorum, de quo in art. 5 § 1 petita a parochi non obtinuerit, de re certiore faciat Episcopum diœcesanum. Episcopus enixe rogatur ut eorum optatum exaudiat. Si ille ad huiusmodi celebrationem providere non vult res ad Pontificiam Commissionem “Ecclesia Dei” referatur.

**Art. 8.**

Episcopus, qui vult providere huiusmodi petitionibus christifidelium laicorum, sed ob varias causas impeditur, rem Pontificiæ Commissioni “Ecclesia Dei” committere potest, quæ ei consilium et auxilium dabit.

**Art. 9.**

§ 1. Parochus item, omnibus bene perpensis, licentiam concedere potest utendi rituali antiquiore in administrandis sacramentis Baptismatis, Matrimonii, Pœnitentiæ et Unctionis Infirmorum, bono animarum id suadente.

§ 4 Priests who use the Missal of Bl. John XXIII must be idoneous and not juridically impeded.

§ 5 In churches that are not parish or conventual churches, it is the duty of the Rector of the church to grant the above permission.

**Art. 6**

In Masses celebrated in the presence of the people in accordance with the Missal of Bl. John XXIII, the readings may be given in the vernacular, using editions recognised by the Apostolic See.

**Art. 7**

If a group of lay faithful, as mentioned in art. 5 § 1, has not obtained satisfaction to their requests from the pastor, they should inform the diocesan bishop. The bishop is strongly requested to satisfy their wishes. If he does not want to arrange for such celebration to take place, the matter should be referred to the Pontifical Commission “Ecclesia Dei”.

**Art. 8**

A bishop who, desirous of satisfying such requests, but who for various reasons is unable to do so, may refer the problem to the Commission “Ecclesia Dei” to obtain counsel and assistance.

**Art. 9**

§ 1 The pastor, having attentively examined all aspects, may also grant permission to use the earlier ritual for the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Penance, and the Anointing of the Sick, if the good of souls would seem to require it.

§ 2. Ordinariis autem facultas conceditur celebrandi Confirmationis sacramentum utendo Pontificali Romano antiquo, bono animarum id suadente.

§ 3. Fas est clericis in sacris constitutis uti etiam Breviario Romano a B. Ioanne XXIII anno 1962 promulgato.

**Art 10.**

Fas est Ordinario loci, si opportunum iudicaverit, parœciam personalem ad normam canonis 518 pro celebrationibus iuxta formam antiquiorem ritus romani erigere aut rectorem vel cappellanum nominare, servatis de iure servandis.

**Art. 11.**

Pontificia Commissio “Ecclesia Dei” a Ioanne Paulo II anno 1988 erecta<sup>5</sup>, munus suum adimplere pergit. Quæ Commissio formam, officia et normas agendi habeat, quæ Romanus Pontifex ipsi attribuerit.

**Art. 12.**

Eadem Commissio, ultra facultates quibus iam gaudet, auctoritatem Sanctæ Sedis exercebit, vigilando de observantia et applicatione harum dispositionum.

Quæcumque vero a Nobis hisce Litteris Apostolicis Motu proprio datis decreta sunt, ea omnia firma ac rata esse et a die decima quarta Septembris huius anni, in festo Exaltationis Sanctæ Crucis, servari iubemus, contrariis quibuslibet rebus non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ, apud Sanctum Petrum, die septima mensis Iulii, anno Domini MMVII, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

§ 2 Ordinaries are given the right to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation using the earlier Roman Pontifical, if the good of souls would seem to require it.

§ 3 Clerics ordained “in sacris constitutis” may use the Roman Breviary promulgated by Bl. John XXIII in 1962.

**Art. 10**

The ordinary of a particular place, if he feels it appropriate, may erect a personal parish in accordance with can. 518 for celebrations following the ancient form of the Roman rite, or appoint a chaplain, while observing all the norms of law.

**Art. 11**

The Pontifical Commission “Ecclesia Dei”, erected by John Paul II in 1988<sup>5</sup>, continues to exercise its function. Said Commission will have the form, duties and norms that the Roman Pontiff wishes to assign it.

**Art. 12**

This Commission, apart from the powers it enjoys, will exercise the authority of the Holy See, supervising the observance and application of these dispositions.

We order that everything We have determined with this Apostolic Letter given Motu Proprio be considered as having full and lasting force, and be observed from September 14 of this year, Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, notwithstanding any provisions to the contrary.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s, on July 7, in the year of Our Lord 2007, the third of Our Pontificate.

**BENEDICTUS PP. XVI**

<sup>5</sup> Cfr Ioannes Paulus Pp. II, Litt. ap. Motu proprio datæ Ecclesia Dei (2 iulii 1988), 6 : AAS 80 (1988), 1498.