

Summorum Pontificum: Is It An Expression Of Catholic Tradition?

By Fr. Kevin Vaillancourt

On September 14, 2007, the recent *motu proprio* of Benedict XVI will go into effect. *Summorum Pontificum* is the long-awaited declaration on what I have referred to as the “universal indult,” giving any priest in the world the permission to say the Latin Mass according to the 1962 Missal without special permission from the local bishop. Up until this July 7, 2007 document was promulgated, the requirements of *Quattuor Abhinc Annos* of 1984 and the *Ecclesia Dei* decree of 1988 (both by John Paul II), left the decision to allow the celebration of the Latin Mass (at the request of the people) up to the local bishop (if he chose to allow it). After July 7, things have changed. As Cardinal Barbarin, the Archbishop of Lyon, states: “The only new element in *Summorum Pontificum* is the decision to comply with the wishes of the faithful, depending henceforth on the *priests’* authority.” While this is not completely true, as we will see later, it is an expression of the common thought of all who are anxious for new rules for the Latin Mass. They see that *Summorum Pontificum* takes *Ecclesia Dei* to a new level: that is, that any priest can say the Latin Mass at any time without asking special permission, and that the faithful can attend these Masses without need of a petition. If only things were as simple as this, for there is much more to this decree than simply the granting of a universal permission to say the Latin Mass. What follows is an explanation of some of the major points in the *motu proprio* absent all the subjective euphoria, demonstrating that *Summorum Pontificum* is truly the smokescreen that I have warning people about for quite some time.

In the days and weeks following the *motu proprio*, people all over the world were anxious to weigh in on the effects of this document. Most hailed it as a “victory for the Latin Mass,” and even the “liberation of the Latin Mass” from the chains that oppressed its public celebration after the introduction of the *Novus Ordo Missae* of Paul VI. Cardinal Karl Lehman, president of the German episcopal conference, had this interesting comment: “I hope that people on all sides will be able to guide the ‘hot heads’ toward a more moderate position.” The “hot heads” are those who prefer the use of the Latin Mass *exclusively* even though, as the Cardinal also remarked, that “the number of Christians, of Catholics, who like the traditional form is not that high.” There were some who expressed words of caution regarding the *motu proprio*. Among them was Bishop Luca Brandolini, Bishop of Sora-Aquino-Pontecorvo: “This day is for me a day of grief. I have a lump in my throat and I do not manage to hold back my tears. But, I will obey . . . However, I cannot hide my sadness for the putting aside of one of the most important reforms of the Second Vatican Council . . . I am living the saddest day of my life as a priest, as a bishop and as a man.” Abe Foxman of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League expressed his “extreme disappointment and deep offense” at the news of the promulgation of the *motu proprio*, calling it a “theological setback in the religious life of Catholics and a body-blow to Catholic-Jewish relations.” “It appears,” wrote Foxman, “the Vatican has chosen to satisfy a right-wing faction in the Church that rejects change and reconciliation.” However, on the eve of the promulgation (July 6), the Vatican Press Office made it a point to correct this observation by noting that the *Oration* offensive to the Jews in the Good Friday liturgy (calling for prayer for the “perfidious Jews”) was eliminated by John XXIII in 1959, *a full three years before the 1962 Missal was put into effect*. The Press Office was quick to add this remark: “Also eliminated were similar formulas for those converting from idolatry, Islam or a heretical sect.”

Now that a period of time has passed to allow such rhetoric to calm down, the bishops’ conferences of various places throughout the world have issued documents explaining how *Summorum Pontificum* will be observed in their areas. You see, according to the Vatican II notion of *collegiality*, these bishops are co-rulers of the modern church, and so it will be up to them to make their own rules for their own areas, regardless of what the “universal indult” might seem to imply in the minds of some people. These documents give us great insight into the manner in which the *motu proprio* will be enforced, coming as they do from men who have read and studied the entire document: not just the “liberation” of the Latin Mass section, but *everything else* that applies to the use of the Latin Mass in the conciliar church according to this teaching, particularly in the accompanying letter of commentary that Benedict XVI issued along with the *motu proprio*. We would do well to soberly study both of these documents in their entirety. In so doing it will be obvious that the euphoria generated in some circles is not well deserved.

The Words Of The *Motu Proprio*

The exact text of the *motu proprio*, and the accompanying letter of explanation, are available for all to read. They have been published and re-published in many media forms that are quite easily found. Therefore, I do not deem it necessary to re-print them here. However, I will cite some key sections of these document to illustrate some very grave concerns Catholics should have regarding *Summorum Pontificum* and the accompanying letter. The warnings I have long given regarding the promulgation of the “universal indult,” and the compromises in worship and beliefs that necessarily follow it, have indeed been well founded.

Right from the start, Benedict XVI attempts to explain that the Sacred Liturgy has *evolved* in practice from the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great, through the promulgation of *Quo Primum Tempore* by Pope St. Pius V, leading up to the *entirely new rite* of Paul VI known as the *Novus Ordo Missae*. He would have us to believe that the great work of St. Gregory in establishing the liturgical norm of worship for the Latin Rite, and the subsequent canonization of this Mass by Pope St. Pius V centuries later, somehow shares some continuity with the

corrupted form of the modern “mass.” In fact, Benedict XVI states in his cover letter to the *motu proprio* that “There is no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal.” However, Paul VI’s creation shares more in common with the condemned Anglican worship service of Cranmer from centuries ago than it does with the traditions of St. Gregory and St. Pius V. Thus, the lie that a “continuity of worship” that exists between the Pius V Missal and the rite of Paul VI comes from a purposeful misstatement of history and liturgical observances, to the great deception of all. In true Modernist fashion, Benedict XVI would have us accept the Novus Ordo as part of the Sacred Tradition of Catholic worship *simply because he says it is so*, offering no form of proof to substantiate this claim. He would have us believe the modern liturgy, formed with the cooperation of six non-Catholic ministers, is merely another expression of the same liturgical form of worship used by Catholics for centuries. This is simply *not true*, yet most Catholics have come to believe it is so because the *Novus Ordo Missae* was forced on them after Vatican II, and they have done little to study the many errors it contains. Similar false assertions are to be found in other sections of these two documents.

Since Benedict XVI assured everyone after his election that he would never go backwards in the promotion of the decrees of Vatican II, we should not be surprised that in Article 1 of the Decree he designated the *Novus Ordo Missae* as the “*ordinary*” expression of the law of prayer for the Latin Rite,” while the Missal of John XXIII is the “*extraordinary*” expression of the law of prayer on account of its venerable and ancient use.” The Novus Ordo best expresses the new faith Catholics were forced to accept after Vatican II, this is why it is the “ordinary” form of worship in the modern church. However, both documents explain that we are to assume that there is no division in prayer between these rites *simply because Benedict has told us this is so*: “These two expressions of the law of prayer of the Church in no way lead to a division in the law of prayer of the Church, for they are two uses of the one Roman Rite.” Yet even a casual observer of the two rites knows that there are many differences between the two rites, such as:

- in the prayers of the Offertory (in the Latin Mass these prayers pertain to the *Sacrifice* to be accomplished, while in the modern ceremony much is made of the “gifts of man’s hands” being offered up),
- the corrupted formula for the Consecration of the wine (despite the recent command to change the English translation in the Novus Ordo from *for all* to *for many* sometime in the next two years or so),
- the ever-increasing amount of lay participation in the modern rite belies the very sacredness that must exist in the highest form of Catholic worship, something which *never existed in the traditional rite*,
- the excessive use of concelebrations in the modern rite, something that is nowhere found in the Latin Mass as part of daily use,
- and even the use of communicating under both species of bread and wine, so readily accepted in the modern rite, which is something that has been purposely *forbidden* in the Latin Rite for many centuries.

Just these few areas of comparison clearly demonstrate there is no possible “continuity” between the two rites no matter who tells us otherwise.

We must pause for awhile here to examine the use of the 1962 Missal for this indult. In the March, 2007, issue of *The Catholic Voice*, we explained how the insertion of St. Joseph’s name into the prayers of the Canon of the Mass opened the door for further change. This violation of traditional observance began with John XXIII’s “typical edition,” even though it was not continued when the *Novus Ordo Missae* was promulgated. Besides this, there are other novelties in the 1962 Missal that put it out of phase with the Roman Missals in existence before it, most of them involved in the eliminations of prayers and ceremonies that had been in practice among Catholics for well over a thousand years.

One striking novelty in the 1962 Missal occurs before the distribution of Holy Communion. Those who truly observe the rubrics for that Missal are surely aware of this text:

Whenever Holy Communion is distributed within the Mass, when the celebrant has consumed the Most Sacred Blood, the *Confiteor* and the absolution are omitted, but the celebrant says the *Ecce Agnus Dei* and says the *Domine, non sum dignes* three times.

This means all who observe the rubrics of the 1962 Missal *as they should be practiced* must *omit* the *Confiteor* before the distribution of Communion during Mass. *There are no options here*, although many “traditional” priests have taken it upon themselves to add the *Confiteor* (and the prayers that follow) simply because this is what is expected by all who attend a Latin Mass. Since the Indult is granted only for the use of the 1962 Missal, this means that any priest observing the Indult *must follow the 1962 Missal rubrics* or else he is disobedient. But, if he follows these rubrics, he can lay *no claim* to preserving the true Latin Mass. What a conundrum the Modernists have presented those Catholics whose only concern is for a Mass in Latin! By September 14, we will see what these “traditional” celebrants will do each time they use the 1962 Missal.

The “Updated” 1962 Missal

While I am on the subject of the 1962 rubrics, here is something interesting. Benedict XVI has indicated his desire to see changes made to the rubrics of the 1962 Missal. For instance, according to article 6 of the *motu proprio*, the Scripture readings may be “proclaimed” in the vernacular (how and by whom it is not indicated). This seems to imply that the vernacular may be used *ad libitum* during the Mass as a substitute for the Latin readings, *provided* the modern scriptural translations are used in these vernacular “proclamations.” Also (taken from the “cover letter”) “new Saints and new Prefaces can and should be inserted in the old Missal” as a demonstration of how “the two forms of the usage of the Roman Rite can be mutually enriching.” Thus, even the 1962 Missal will be changed over time by modern Rome to resemble *nothing* of what it looked like when it was first published and used in 1962. This says nothing of the “approved” Latin Mass institutes (particularly among the Fraternity of St. Peter) and the “adaptations” they have been making to the rubrics of the 1962 Missal long before *Summorum Pontificum*. For years we have heard how some “approved by Rome” practices for the Novus Ordo have been inculcated in those “Latin Mass chapels” such as “communion in the hand” and female altar servers. Some of the FSSP priests are bi-ritual, concelebrating at times using the Novus Ordo. I can hear it now: “Oh, but Father, the Latin will be restored, so it doesn’t matter what else is added or taken away. The Church can do these things, you know.” Ah, but what church is doing all these things? The modern church is developing its own Latin liturgy under the guise of the “1962 Missal”, but as long as there is Latin then somehow everything is OK. Poor Catholics who believe such things! As Rev. John Berg, the Superior General of the Fraternity of St. Peter remarked in an interview on July 5, 2007, the observance of *Summorum Pontificum* will lead modern Catholics to “embrace the bishop more, and become involved in the life of the church much more . . . supporting things like pro-life, catechisis, and other initiatives.” The indult documents of the last twenty years are proclaimed to serve one purpose: keep people loyal to the modern church, its modernist style of catechetical instruction, and the observances of such “initiatives” as socialist causes for “worker and family,” and similar movements.

The Novus Ordo Forced On Parishes & Priests

The use of the 1962 Missal is allowed any priest when he says Mass in *private*, according to this decree (article 2). This can take place on any day, except during the Sacred Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil), when (I assume) that the modern missal will be used exclusively, and even those who offer the Latin Mass will be expected to concelebrate with the local bishop on Holy Thursday following the *modern rite*. Should the priest wish to offer the Mass of the indult in *public*, he is regulated by Articles 3 - 7, giving him permission to offer the Latin Mass on weekdays, and only *once* on Sundays. Thus, even in those places where the Latin Mass has said exclusively for many years, changes need to be made. The Latin Mass community of St. Boniface in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania found this out. In a *Memorandum* published July 7, 2007, by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, their community was singled out specifically as having to conform to this new law as of September 14, 2007 — they can have only *one* Latin Mass on Sundays. Many other churches and chapels throughout the world, where the exclusive use of the Latin Mass under the Indult has been maintained, are being told to conform in the same manner. Thus, the *Novus Ordo Missae* must be recited in all of those churches on Sundays, even when it has never said there before! People of these Latin Mass communities can do nothing to stop this.

Something that is particularly disturbing is found, not in *Summorum Pontificum*, but in the letter to the bishops which accompanied this decree. In order to calm down the fears of the modern bishops who thought the more widespread use of the Latin Mass would bring the death-knell to the *Novus Ordo Missae*, Benedict XVI wrote this:

There is no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal. In the history of the liturgy there is growth and progress, but no rupture. What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful. It behooves all of us to preserve the riches which have developed in the Church’s faith and prayer, and to give them their proper place. Needless to say, *in order to experience full communion, also the priests of the communities adhering to the former usage cannot, as a matter of principle, exclude celebrating according to the new books. The total exclusion of the new rite would not, in fact, be consistent with the recognition of its value and holiness.*

Translation: For twenty-three years, it has been an important requirement for the permission granted by the 1984, 1988, and now 2007 versions of the Indult that all who make use of them must also recognize the *Novus Ordo Missae* as side-by-side valid with the traditional Latin Mass, in effect and value. The “cover letter” issued to explain the application of the *motu proprio* takes this a step further. It is no longer enough to pay mere lip service to the Novus Ordo and its “spiritual value”; now *all priests* — even those in communities where the Latin Mass is said *exclusively* — “cannot *as a matter of principle* exclude celebrating according to the new books.” Thus, *all priests* who will make use of the 2007 Indult *must* also celebrate the *Novus Ordo Missae*. *They must become bi-ritual* to prove by their actions that they accept all that Benedict XVI has taught regarding the “mutual continuity of the different forms of the same rite.” Do not be surprised when you see the various Modernist Bishops’ Conference of the world enforcing this requirement. Some “traditional theologians” think they can escape this clause because it came in the “letter” and not in the “official” *motu proprio*. This somehow means that what is in the “letter” is not “official” and the modern bishops cannot bind priests to it. Those who believe such things have a very misguided understanding of what is “official” and what is not, and the binding force of both of these documents, even under the command of obedience. Both are proclaimed *universally* in the modern church, and this is what makes them both binding — that is, if you want to say you are “obedient” to modern Rome. In this area you can be sure that these bishops will be careful to follow up on Benedict’s “mind” for the Latin Mass, and

some already have. For example, in the August 2, 2007, issue of the *Inland Register*, the newspaper for the modern diocese of Spokane, we find that the “letter” of Benedict XVI is quoted extensively on page 10, making it clear that in that diocese, “*as a matter of principle,*” no priest will be allowed to celebrate the Latin Mass exclusively if he wishes to follow the indult. When the day comes (and it is not far away) that more modern dioceses of the world enforce this same point, those who talk about the “liberation” of the Latin Mass will see at what price it came.

Nothing To Rejoice At

It should be clear that a sober examination of the *motu proprio* of Benedict XVI yields a more worrisome set of circumstances than most Latin Mass “hot heads” have been saying for the past two months. In typical Modernist fashion, what was given with one hand, has been removed quite forcefully with the other. The obvious point from all this is that Benedict XVI is no “conservative,” and that the traditional Faith of the Roman Catholic Church will not be returning via modern Rome any time soon. Those who tell us that the more frequent celebration of the Latin Mass according to the 1962 Missal (which rubrics?) will somehow “force” the Modernists to abandon their errors are engaged in wishful thinking. This is clear from the reactions to the *motu proprio* up to the time I wrote this article. Those who have spent so much time celebrating the promulgation of the *motu proprio* should apologize to all faithful Catholics for their lack of study in so important a matter. They have failed to fully explain what is found in both documents, and I pray it was not deliberate. Our fight for the restoration of the traditional Latin Mass in churches where the traditional Faith of the Roman Catholic Church is taught continues.