

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ

His Excellency Archbishop Arthur Roche,
Prefect,
Congregation for Divine Worship
and the Discipline of the Sacraments,
00120
Città del Vaticano

28 July 2021

Your Excellency,

Following the publication of the Motu Proprio *Traditionis Custodes* of our Holy Father Pope Francis, I write to you following some conversations among a number of our bishops, to seek from the Congregation some indications concerning our application of the Motu Proprio within England and Wales.

These are some particular points on which we would welcome some clarification.

- a. Will your Congregation, and/or the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts be issuing any further guidance on the interpretation or the application of the Motu Proprio?
- b. We note that the current Motu Proprio abrogates all of the "previous norms, instructions, permissions and customs that do not conform to the provisions of the present Motu Proprio" (Art 8). We ask, then, whether the application of *Traditionis Custodes*, whilst not mentioning them specifically, also abrogates the use of the Extraordinary Form for the other sacraments other than the celebration of Holy Mass (1962) and the use of the Roman Breviary (1962) as these were specifically mentioned in *Summorum Pontificum* article 9?
- c. How do we apply the use of the National Calendar for England and Wales (which is based on the Universal calendar) with the use of the "Tridentine" Calendar with regard to feasts such as Corpus Christi etc which fall on different days?
- d. There is not a clear correlation between the "novus ordo" lectionary, approved for use in England and Wales, and that of the 1962 Rite. Is it permissible to go directly to the source publications of the Bible (which in England and Wales would be the original Jerusalem Bible and the RSV) from which the permitted lectionary texts are currently drawn, to find the relevant texts?
- e. What is the understanding of "groups" which the Holy Father mentions in the Motu Proprio? Is this to be interpreted as formally constituted groups of the faithful only or does the Motu Proprio apply to those who, by their own free will, gather for the celebrations of the Extraordinary Form Mass? This would be an important pastoral consideration in England and Wales.

- f. Finally, you will know that since the time of the indult granted to Cardinal Heenan in November 1971, there have always been a number of the faithful who request that their Requiem Rites be celebrated according to the liturgical texts prior to 1970. Does the current Motu Proprio allow for this to continue? In what way should this be so? For example, would the Requiem need to be celebrated in a designated place by a priest who is permitted to do so under the new faculty?

These are questions which have been raised, and we would appreciate any guidance from the Congregation regarding them.

Although the Motu Proprio has come into immediate effect, we are aware that its correct and lasting application will take time. From the combination of the Motu Proprio text and its accompanying letter, it is clear that the Holy Father wishes a unity of liturgical prayer, expressed through 'the unique expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman Rite'. In pastoral attentiveness, we will have to accompany people who are firmly attached to the Missal of 1962 towards the Missal of Popes Saints Paul VI and John Paul II.

A difficulty we foresee in England and Wales is how to respond to the Latin Mass Society. Attached is a recent letter I have received from its Chairman, Dr Joseph Shaw, together with a canonical interpretation of the Motu Proprio. The LMS website and letterhead also prominently state that its *raison d'être* "is [as] an association of Catholic faithful dedicated to the promotion of the traditional Roman liturgy of the Catholic Church, the teachings and practices integral to it, the musical tradition which serves it, and the Latin language in which it is celebrated." Obviously this is not in accord with the mind of the Holy Father. We would welcome any advice from the Congregation on how best to deal with this situation. I am sure that there are other similar groups across the Church which use exclusively the 1962 Rites, such as the FSSP and the Institute of Christ the King (ICKSP) who have churches in this county. Guidance with regard to them, too, would be most helpful.

May I thank you in anticipation of your help in these matters and assure you of our continued support and prayers in your work and that of your Congregation

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vincent Nichols". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster



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,


✠ Arthur Roche
Prefect


✠ Vittorio Francesco Viola, OFM
Secretary

His Eminence Vincent Cardinal NICHOLS
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GRAN BRETAGNA