



We proclaim a crucified Christ

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28 August 2021

Feast of St Augustine of Hippo, Doctor of the Church

Pastoral Letter on the application of *Traditionis Custodes* in the Archdiocese of Melbourne

Dear clergy and lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Melbourne,

On the threshold of the third millennium, St Pope John Paul II wrote: “*I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the [2nd Vatican] Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the 20th century: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.*” (Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 57). Five decades on from Vatican II, both Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have confirmed these words as normative for the Church in our time.

One of the four central teaching documents of Vatican II was the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, called *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (This sacred Council), which initiated a liturgical renewal in the life of the Church. The way we worship matters – it gives expression to what we believe and how we are to live; it demands of us full and active participation in the life of God; it is the public expression of who we are in Christ. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* called for a restoration of the Liturgy of the Church, and the promotion of its worthy celebration. In so doing it set in motion the reform of the Church’s liturgical Rituals into the forms and expressions to which we are accustomed today.

The Church has always attended closely to the form and expression of our public worship, especially in the celebration of that greatest of Sacraments, the Holy Eucharist. To this end, various forms of the Mass have been promulgated through the centuries, drawing on ancient liturgical sources to give renewed expression for current times and people. These reforms are articulated in the approved text we use for Mass, called the *Roman Missal*. The *Roman Missal* sets out how the Mass is celebrated in the Latin Catholic Church (as distinct from the other Catholic Churches, such as the Maronite, Melkite, Syro-Malabar, Chaldean, and Ukrainian Churches). The *Roman Missal* we now use was promulgated in 1970. The manner in which the Mass is to be

celebrated is set out in the *Third Typical Edition of the Roman Missal* of 2000. The approved English translation is from 2011.

Last month, Pope Francis recalled this reality in an Apostolic Letter (Motu Proprio) called *Traditionis Custodes* (Guardians of Tradition). Following a world-wide consultation of the Bishops of the Church into the celebration of the Mass using the previously promulgated *Roman Missal* of 1962 (the one in use prior to the reforms called for at Vatican II), Pope Francis has considered it necessary to reiterate that “the liturgical books promulgated by Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II, in conformity with the decrees of Vatican Council II, are the unique expression of the *lex orandi* [the law of prayer] of the Roman Rite.” (TC, Art.1)

Traditionis Custodes sets out new arrangements for the celebration of Mass using the 1962 Missal, and directs “the diocesan bishop, as moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole liturgical life of the particular Church entrusted to him, to regulate . . . the use of the 1962 Roman Missal in his diocese.” (TC, Art.2) In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, it falls to me, as Archbishop, to apply these directives of Pope Francis for the celebration of the 1962 Mass within the territory of the local Church in Melbourne.

It might be helpful to first note the Holy Father’s use of the term, ‘1962 Roman Missal’. The celebration of the Mass referred to has been given many names: ‘Traditional Latin Mass’; ‘Mass in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite’; ‘Tridentine Mass’; etc. The Motu Proprio of the Holy Father has drawn us specifically to consider the liturgical form of the Roman Rite according to its previous (1962) and current (reformed) Rituals.

So, what has prompted Pope Francis to ask for this? He notes in a letter accompanying *Traditionis Custodes* that the earlier decisions made by his Predecessors, allowing for the use of the 1962 Missal, “intended to recover the unity of an ecclesial body with diverse liturgical sensibilities.” However, this accommodation has instead been used in some places “to widen the gaps, reinforce the divergences and encourage disagreements that injure the Church, block her path, and expose her to the peril of division.” Pope Francis’ intention is to preserve the unity of the Church, as manifested in her public liturgical expression. The Pope is concerned that the celebration of the Mass according to the 1962 Missal has drifted from an expression of liturgical diversity to one of division. While this has generally not been my experience in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, nonetheless we are called to heed this counsel, and be on guard to preserve the common public expression of our faith.

There is a distinction to be made between one’s personal prayer life and spirituality, and praying as a member of the assembled People of God. When I pray privately with the Lord, I pray in my own words, with a style that suits my preference and where the Lord meets me. When we pray publicly, we pray with the ritual and words the Church provides, as formative of us as a priestly people. In public worship there is a ‘letting go’ of personal preference, as dearly held as that might be. When we pray publicly, it is the Body of Christ who prays; and we participate – laity and clergy, in our respective roles – as members of that one Body. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

teaches: “The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.” (§1124)

In noting that the Church has always set forth the *form* of the Sacred Liturgy (the *lex orandi*), she has also spoken often of the *manner* in which it is to be celebrated. This is frequently referred to in a Latin phrase, *ars celebrandi*, or the ‘art of celebrating’ the Sacred Liturgy. In his letter accompanying *Traditionis Custodes*, Pope Francis speaks to this, and the need for all of us – but most especially all clergy (including me) – to examine our conscience, as it were, in the manner in which Mass is celebrated in our local Church. Specifically, he notes:

I am saddened by abuses in the celebration of the liturgy on all sides. In common with Benedict XVI, I deplore the fact that “in many places the prescriptions of the new Missal are not observed in celebration, but indeed come to be interpreted as an authorization for or even a requirement of creativity, which leads to almost unbearable distortions.”

Pope Francis speaks here of something that we should always be attentive to locally. Christ’s faithful deserve good quality liturgy that is sacred in character, faithful in execution, and dignified in disposition. To this end, I ask that every priest permitted to celebrate Mass in our Archdiocese re-read the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which is found in the front of the *Roman Missal*, and to examine the manner in which Mass and Liturgies in local settings are being celebrated. Only the words, gestures and postures set out in the *Roman Missal* are approved for use in the Archdiocese. It is easy for any of us to slip into unhelpful practices; now is a moment to re-adjust our *ars celebrandi* such that our actions and words conform to the approved texts, our liturgical style and deportment is dignified and worthy of the worship of God, and liturgical settings are gracious and uplifting. As Pope Francis goes on to say, “I ask you to be vigilant in ensuring that every liturgy be celebrated with decorum and fidelity to the liturgical books promulgated after Vatican Council II, without the eccentricities that can easily degenerate into abuses.”

Since the publication of *Traditionis Custodes* I have received a very large volume of correspondence from you, the clergy and the faithful of our local Church, including: from those who attend the 1962 Mass regularly and sometimes infrequently; those who attend both forms; and also, from those who do not attend it at all. It has been edifying for me to read the sense of Catholic faith that the bulk of these letters and emails have witnessed to in attending the 1962 Mass. Words such as reverence, silence, beauty, tradition, comfort and similar are frequently used. I have also had the opportunity to speak directly and at length with some of the clergy currently celebrating the 1962 Mass publicly, as well as a number of lay faithful who attend these Masses. Again, I have been struck by an evident faith and spiritual goodness. Finally, I have sought the views of the Council of Priests, and my Auxiliary Bishops and Regional Vicars. All of this has helped me to form my judgements on how *Traditionis Custodes* might be implemented in the Archdiocese.

In an Archdiocese of some one million Catholics and approximately 123,000 regular Mass attenders, you may wonder to what extent the 1962 Missal is in use in our local Church. Exact numbers are difficult to identify with certainty, but I am aware of eleven locations where it has been celebrated publicly; there may be others. Some of these are long-standing arrangements,

while others have only been established recently. Around 800-900 faithful are estimated to attend Masses in these locations. Unique to Melbourne, we also have a Personal Parish that celebrates the Liturgy exclusively according to the pre-Conciliar rituals.

As the Archbishop of Melbourne, it falls to me to now pastorally apply the Holy Father's measures at a local level, "...to provide for the good of those who are rooted in the previous form of celebration and need to return in due time to the Roman Rite promulgated by Saints Paul VI and John Paul II." With this in mind, my immediate intention is to bring a measure of regularisation, in community and location, to what has often occurred in a more unplanned fashion until now.

My own responsibilities are to:

- Ensure acceptance of the validity and the legitimacy of the liturgical reform of 1970
- Designate locations where the 1962 Mass is to be celebrated
- Approve a time schedule for the celebration of the 1962 Mass
- Appoint clergy for the public celebration of the 1962 Mass

I am to appoint a Delegate, who is to:

- Regulate the schedule and times for the celebration of the 1962 Mass
- Propose clergy to the Archbishop for the celebration of the 1962 Mass
- Ensure the competency of clergy to celebrate the 1962 Mass

(I have appointed Fr Brendan Hayes, Parish Priest of Armadale and Toorak, as my Delegate, and thank him for accepting this role.)

I am to designate those locations where the 1962 Mass may be publicly celebrated, which I advise as follows:

- Caulfield North (St Aloysius' Church)
- East Melbourne (St Patrick's Cathedral)
- Nth Geelong-Norlane (St John the Evangelist's Church)
- Kealba (St Paul's Church)
- North Melbourne (St Michael's Church)
- Blackburn North (St Philip's Church)

I am to designate a translation of Sacred Scripture to be used in all Liturgies:

- The Jerusalem Bible; the Grail Psalms (as per the currently-approved Lectionary)

Any priest who wishes to celebrate Mass using the 1962 Missal, for his own personal devotion, without members of a congregation present, may seek the requisite authorisation from me (through my Delegate) to continue to enjoy this faculty. Priests who wish to be considered for inclusion in a roster for the celebration of the 1962 Mass in public, may apply to the Delegate, who will make recommendations to me. My intention is to grant faculties for these requests, so long as the conditions stipulated for clergy in *Traditionis Custodes* can be fulfilled and the intentions of the Holy Father are accepted.

I designate the Provincial Seminary of Victoria, Corpus Christi College, as the approved location where Seminarians and the newly Ordained are to receive their formation “...in the faithful observance of the prescriptions of the Missal and liturgical books, in which is reflected the liturgical reform willed by Vatican Council II.”

The Personal Parish of St John Henry Newman, Caulfield, is to be retained, while ensuring that the effective spiritual growth of the faithful is fostered, that the reformed Liturgy is provided to the Faithful who ask for it, and that the Word of God is proclaimed in the vernacular (English) from the approved text at all Sacred Liturgies.

The faithful who wish to attend one of the scheduled celebrations of the 1962 Mass within the Archdiocese may do so at their own free will and in good faith, while accepting the validity of the liturgical reform, as articulated by the Second Vatican Council, “...in the unity of one, single Rite, in which is preserved the great richness of the Roman liturgical tradition.”

The arrangements listed above seek to bring a measure of regularisation and stability to the provision of the 1962 Mass in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, while not neglecting Pope Francis’ longer-term intention to re-establish unity of a ‘single and identical prayer’ throughout the Church of the Roman Rite. Therefore, these provisions will be reviewed after a period of time, according to the Holy Father’s directives, or those of his Successors in the See of Peter.

Friends in Christ, whenever we gather to celebrate the mystery of the Lord’s Death and Resurrection, we are drawn into communion with the Lord himself and with one another, as members of the one Body of Christ, in communion with the whole Church. As the local Church in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, may we strive to nurture that unity with open and generous hearts, as the Lord deeply longed for us, “May they all be one,... so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.” (Jn 17: 21, 23)

With every grace and blessing, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter A Comensoli', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne