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Feast of St. John the Evangelist 2021

Dear Fathers,

On July 16 of this year, Pope Francis issued his *Motu Proprio, Traditionis custodes (TC)*, on the use of the liturgical books prior to the reform of the Second Vatican Council. On the following December 4, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDWDS), responded to requests for clarification for the correct application of the *Motu Proprio* in a document titled *Responsa ad dubia*.

Immediately after *TC* was issued, I began a series of consultations with liturgists as well as those priests and leaders of religious communities who have experience providing pastoral service to the faithful who regularly attend Masses celebrated in the earlier form. Having carefully studied the Roman documents and considered what I learned in my consultation I now have promulgated the policy of the Archdiocese of Chicago for implementing the *Motu Proprio*. A copy of the policy is attached here.

Most priests and people in the Archdiocese of Chicago always celebrate the Mass according to the *Roman Missal* promulgated by Pope Saint Paul VI and Pope Saint John Paul II. As such, the Roman documents and this policy may seem to be of little relevance to your ministry. But, let me argue that they are worthy of your attention for two reasons.

First, some of your parishioners may be aware of the developments surrounding *TC*, and you should be able to answer their questions. Secondly, and more important, as I will indicate below, my hope is that the issuance of this policy in response to the Holy Father's decision will be an occasion to renew your understanding of the foundations of liturgical renewal and to share that with your communities.

As Archbishop Arthur Roche, Prefect of the CDWDS, notes in his letter to the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences, introducing the *Responsa ad dubia*, the Holy Father's aim in issuing the *Motu Proprio* is "to continue 'in the constant search for ecclesial communion', which is expressed by recognizing in the liturgical books promulgated by the Popes Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II, in conformity with the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, the unique expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman Rite. This is the direction in which we wish to move, and this is the meaning of the responses."



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The search for ecclesial communion belongs to all of us. Again, as the Prefect observes, “as pastors we must not lend ourselves to sterile polemics, capable only of creating division, in which the ritual itself is often exploited by ideological viewpoints. Rather, we are all called to rediscover the value of the liturgical reform by preserving the truth and beauty of the rite that it has given us. For this to happen, we are aware that a renewed and continuous liturgical formation is necessary both for priests and for the lay faithful.”

At the plenary assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the American hierarchy launched a Eucharistic revival. Its aim is to bring healing, conversion, formation, and unity among our people through an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, so that they can be sent out in mission for the life of the world. At the heart of this revival is a fresh appreciation of what Pope Saint John Paul II reminded us in *Dies Domini*, that Sunday, the day of Resurrection is “a celebration of the living presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his own people.”

My intention in sharing this policy is to encourage you to reflect on the duty we each must assist our people in this moment of Eucharistic revival by rediscovering the value of the liturgical reform in the rites given to us by the Second Vatican Council. I have asked our Office for Divine Worship to develop materials and opportunities to assist you in the liturgical catechesis and formation of our parishioners, so all can come to a better understanding and deeper acceptance of the restored and renewed liturgy that is part of the precious heritage of the Second Vatican Council.

As we take up this task with pastoral sensitivity, let us recognize that devotion to the liturgy as it was before the reform is understandable for those whose life of faith was nurtured by years of celebrating it. The challenge before us as pastors, then, is to assist these brothers and sisters in coming to an appreciation that the reformed liturgy continues to embody the spiritual depth of the earlier liturgy and that it has been enhanced by the restoration of elements in the tradition which had become underemphasized. In fact, Pope Francis has taken this action to assure that all Catholics experience this renewed richness.

Thus, I invite you to join me in seizing this moment as a fresh opportunity for us as pastors to promote unity within the life of the Church. Let us take our inspiration from the words of Saint John, whose Feast we celebrate today: “If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.”



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This "love for one another" also compels us to faithfully adhere to the liturgical norms, so that as the Body of Christ our worship of God may always enrich and never diminish the faith of our people. For this reason, I ask you to carefully study the policy, the *Motu Proprio*, and the *Responsa ad dubia* (see links below), and prayerfully reflect on your own responsibility in this regard.

With all of this in mind, I close by recalling the insightful observation of Pope Benedict XVI when he issued *Summorum Pontificum*: "The surest guarantee that the Missal of Paul VI can unite parish communities and be loved by them consists in its being celebrated with great reverence in harmony with the liturgical directives. This will bring out the spiritual richness and the theological depth of this Missal."

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Archbishop of Chicago

Enclosure



LINKS

- ***Traditionis custodes***

English:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20210716-motu-proprio-traditionis-custodes.html

Spanish:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/motu_proprio/documents/20210716-motu-proprio-traditionis-custodes.html

Latin:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/la/motu_proprio/documents/20210716-motu-proprio-traditionis-custodes.html

- **Letter from Pope Francis to the Bishops which accompanied TC**

English

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2021/documents/20210716-lettera-vescovi-liturgia.html>

Spanish

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/letters/2021/documents/20210716-lettera-vescovi-liturgia.html>

- ***Responsa ad dubia***

English:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20211204_responsa-ad-dubia-traditionis-custodes_en.html

Spanish:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20211204_responsa-ad-dubia-traditionis-custodes_sp.html

- **The Pope's address to the Participants in the 68th National Liturgical Week in Italy:**

English

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/august/documents/papa-francesco_20170824_settimana-liturgica-nazionale.html

Spanish

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2017/august/documents/papa-francesco_20170824_settimana-liturgica-nazionale.html