



Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

One Bayard Drive
Saint John, NB E2L 3L5
Canada

Tel (506) 653-6800 • Fax (506) 653-6859

On the Motu Proprio *Traditionis Custodes*

On July 16, 2021, His Holiness Pope Francis issued the Motu Proprio *Traditionis Custodes* (*Guardians of the Tradition*), indicating his desire “to press on ever more in the constant search for ecclesial communion.” This was implemented following a detailed consultation of bishops in 2020, whose “results have been carefully considered in light of experience that has matured during these years.” As the Successor of Peter and the unique guarantor of the Church these new norms were issued out of true concern for unity in the Church.

As this new legislation directly affects the celebration of the Mass using the 1962 Roman Missal (also referred to as the Extraordinary Form or the Traditional Latin Mass), many have asked what this will mean for the Diocese of Saint John, which has a faithful Latin Mass community currently served in the Fredericton region. While this new Motu Proprio further regulates the use of the Missal of 1962, it acknowledges the exclusive competency of the diocesan Bishop to “authorize the use of the 1962 Roman Missal in his diocese according to the guidelines of the Apostolic See” (Art. 2). Out of pastoral concern and care for the faithful who benefit spiritually from participating in the Mass using the Missal of 1962, I take this opportunity to outline how its use will continue in the diocese.

Those faithful who find spiritual fruit in the Missal of 1962 will continue to be served in a central location of our diocese, namely the Fredericton region. Fr. Michael McGowan, who was appointed Spiritual Advisor for the Latin Mass Community and has faithfully served in this capacity since January 2021 is no longer able to continue in this role due to recent health issues. As such, I have asked Fr. Peter Melanson to assume the pastoral care of this community. As he has done in the past, Fr. Melanson will celebrate the Mass using the 1962 Missal on a monthly basis at a location, day and time to be confirmed and communicated by the end of the summer. I express my gratitude to both Fr. McGowan and Fr. Melanson for their dedicated leadership and pastoral care of this community.

To ensure proper application of *Traditionis Custodes* and to provide pastorally for those faithful who find spiritual fruit in the Missal of 1962, the following prescriptions are set out within the Motu Proprio:

- The priest delegated to celebrate the Mass is to ensure that the faithful who participate in liturgies using the Missal of 1962 recognize the “validity and the legitimacy of the liturgical reform, dictated by the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of the Supreme Pontiffs” (Art. 3 §1).
- The readings for all Masses celebrated within the Diocese of Saint John, including Masses offered according to the Missal of 1962, are to be proclaimed in the vernacular from the translations approved by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Proclamation of the readings in the vernacular allows the faithful to grasp more fully Sacred Scripture. (Art. 3 §3)

- To celebrate Holy Mass with the 1962 Missal can no longer be considered as a right, but a privilege or a concession contrary to the general norm. Therefore, to celebrate privately or publicly with the 1962 Missal requires the permission of the Ordinary.

In a letter which accompanied the Motu Proprio, Pope Francis asked bishops “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.” While specific instruction is given in the Motu Proprio for the celebration of the Mass using the Missal of 1962, I want parishes to ensure that Holy Mass using the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI, and revised with a new translation in 2011, is also celebrated with reverence, guarding against liturgical abuse. In this way, the Traditional Latin Mass can serve as a reference point to enhance the celebration of the Ordinary Form of Mass, and help to restore dignity, reverence, and a sense of the Sacred in all liturgical celebrations, regardless of the form or rite.

“Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church's mission, every work of pastoral planning, must draw the strength it needs from the Eucharistic mystery and in turn be directed to that mystery as its culmination” (Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*). With deep gratitude for the gift of Jesus truly present in the Eucharist, let us pray that all parishes will be places of encounter with the living God. Together with the Holy Father we pray for unity in the Church, entrusting our diocese to Jesus through Mary.

In his mercy,



✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

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