



LEO DARROCH, Executive President.

Statement.

Good Friday Prayer for the Conversion of the Jews.

The recent *Nota* from the Secretariat of State on the revision of the Good Friday prayer for the conversion of the Jews has received much comment in the media; much of it unfavourable, unfortunately, from some of those for whom the revision was intended to placate. The fact that there has been a great deal of misinformation and misunderstanding from certain quarters has not helped to promote a sensible appraisal of the revision. The Jewish Journal states, “*The change would affect the Missal of 1962 which the pope brought back into use.*” Other Jewish sources have made the same mistake and are blaming Pope Benedict XVI for re-introducing the traditional form of Mass. This is completely untrue and indicates, perhaps, an understandable lack of knowledge about the Catholic Church which, however basic, cannot be attributed to Catholics.

It cannot be emphasised strongly enough that Pope Benedict has not ‘re-introduced’ anything. The Missal approved in 1962 was never abolished and, thus, the prayer for the conversion of the Jews has always been available in its traditional form. In his explanatory letter to the bishops that accompanied his Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum* (7 July 2007) Pope Benedict declared “*I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this Missal (of 1962) was never juridically abrogated and, consequently, in principle, was always permitted.*”

A new Missal was promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970 (and included a revised version of the prayer) but in 1971, following receipt of a petition signed by a number of international figures, including the violinist Yehudi Menuhin, Pope Paul VI authorised the continuity of the older form in England and Wales. In 1984 Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter ‘*Quattuor abhinc annos*’, extended the permission to the rest of the Latin Church and stipulated that “*These celebrations must be according to the 1962 Missal and in Latin*”. Only four years later, because this document was found to be too restrictive, Pope John Paul II, in 1988, widened the authorisation even further through another Apostolic Letter ‘*Ecclesia dei adflicta*’. He declared “*Moreover, respect must everywhere be shown for the feelings of all those who are attached to the Latin liturgical tradition, by a wide and generous application of the directives already issued some time ago by the Apostolic See, for the use of the Roman Missal according to the typical edition of 1962.*”

It is a fact, therefore, that the prayer for the Jews has been recited in Catholic Churches around the world more or less without interruption since 1962. It is pertinent to ask why complaints were not ranged against Pope Paul VI in 1971, or Pope John Paul II in 1984 and 1988? Why has Pope Benedict been unjustly, and falsely, accused of re-introducing a prayer that was never abolished and was publicly sanctioned by two of his predecessors? It is this kind of ill-informed comment and partial approach that does nothing to help the cause of improving Judeo-Catholic relations that Pope Benedict’s accusers purport to pursue.

Pope Benedict XVI, like Pope John Paul II and Pope Paul VI before him, is the supreme authority in the Catholic Church on matters pertaining to the celebration of the Church’s liturgy, insofar as the deposit of the Catholic Faith is preserved and propagated. The revised version of the prayer for the Jews as published by the Secretariat of State on 4 February 2008 quite clearly maintains Catholic doctrine. Our Holy Father has considered this matter and given his decision. The International Federation Una Voce welcomes this decision in filial obedience and will accept the new form with immediate effect.

Leo Darroch – Executive President.

10 February 2008.