

**PONTIFICAL COMMISSION *ECCLESIA DEI***  
**INSTRUCTION**  
**ON THE APPLICATION OF THE APOSTOLIC LETTER**  
***SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM***  
**OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI**  
**GIVEN *MOTU PROPRIO***

**I. Introduction**

1. The Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum* of the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XVI given *Motu Proprio* on 7 July 2007, which came into effect on 14 September 2007, has made the richness of the Roman Liturgy more accessible to the Universal Church.

The richness of the Roman Liturgy is a gift for the Universal Church.

It is definitely not as many have claimed

2. With this *Motu Proprio*, the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI promulgated a universal law for the Church, intended to establish new regulations for the use of the Roman Liturgy in effect in 1962.

The *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* is not optional it promulgates a universal law

for the One Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church

No diocese is exempt no Bishop is exempt

3. The Holy Father, having recalled the concern of the Sovereign Pontiffs in caring for the Sacred Liturgy and in their recognition of liturgical books, reaffirms the traditional principle, recognised from time immemorial and necessary to be maintained into the future, that “*each particular Church must be in accord with the universal Church not only regarding the doctrine of the faith and sacramental signs, but also as to the usages universally handed down by apostolic and unbroken tradition. These are to be maintained not only so that errors may be avoided, but also so that the faith may be passed on in its integrity, since the Church's rule of prayer (lex orandi) corresponds to her rule of belief (lex credendi).*”<sup>[1]</sup>

The Holy Father then issues a call to obedience and reminds the Bishops:

*“each particular Church must be in accord with the universal Church not only regarding the doctrine of the faith and sacramental signs, but also as to the usages universally handed down by apostolic and unbroken tradition.*

*These are to be maintained not only so that errors may be avoided, but also so that the faith may be passed on in its integrity”*

4. The Holy Father recalls also those Roman Pontiffs who, in a particular way, were notable in this task, specifically Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Pius V. The Holy Father stresses moreover that, among the sacred liturgical books, the *Missale Romanum* has enjoyed a particular prominence in history, and was kept up to date throughout the centuries until the time of [Blessed Pope John XXIII](#). Subsequently in 1970, following the liturgical reform after the [Second Vatican Council](#), Pope Paul VI approved for the Church of the Latin rite a new Missal, which was then translated into various languages. In the year 2000, Pope John Paul II promulgated the third edition of this Missal.

5. Many of the faithful, formed in the spirit of the liturgical forms prior to the [Second Vatican Council](#), expressed a lively desire to maintain the ancient tradition. For this reason, [Pope John Paul II](#) with a special Indult *Quattuor abhinc annos* issued in 1984 by the Congregation for Divine Worship, granted the faculty under certain conditions to restore the use of the Missal promulgated by [Blessed Pope John XXIII](#). Subsequently, Pope John Paul II, with the Motu Proprio *Ecclesia Dei* of 1988, exhorted the Bishops to be generous in granting such a faculty for all the faithful who requested it. Pope Benedict continues this policy with the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* regarding certain essential criteria for the *Usus Antiquior* of the Roman Rite, which are recalled here.

6. The Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI and the last edition prepared under [Pope John XXIII](#), are two forms of the Roman Liturgy, defined respectively as *ordinaria* and *extraordinaria*: they are two usages of the one Roman Rite, one alongside the other. Both are the expression of the same *lex orandi* of the Church. On account of its venerable and ancient use, the *forma extraordinaria* is to be maintained with appropriate honor.

7. The Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* was accompanied by a letter from the Holy Father to Bishops, with the same date as the Motu Proprio (7 July 2007). This letter gave further explanations regarding the appropriateness and the need for the Motu Proprio; it was a matter of overcoming a lacuna by providing new norms for the use of the Roman Liturgy of 1962. Such norms were needed particularly on account of the fact that, when the new Missal had been introduced under Pope Paul VI, it had not seemed necessary to issue guidelines regulating the use of the 1962 Liturgy. By reason of the increase in the number of those asking to be able to use the *forma extraordinaria*, it has become necessary to provide certain norms in this area.

Among the statements of the Holy Father was the following: “*There is no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal. In the history of the Liturgy growth and progress are found, but not a rupture. What was sacred for prior generations, remains sacred and great for us as well, and cannot be suddenly prohibited altogether or even judged harmful.*”[\[2\]](#)

It is important to note:

- The Usus Antiquior was never abrogated;
- The two forms of the Mass are two usages of the one Roman Rite;
- The Usus Antiquior is to be maintained with appropriate honour;
- Both forms of the Mass now stand on the same legal footing.

8. The Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* constitutes an important expression of the Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff and of his *munus* of regulating and ordering the Church's Sacred Liturgy.<sup>[3]</sup> The Motu Proprio manifests his solicitude as Vicar of Christ and Supreme Pastor of the Universal Church,<sup>[4]</sup> and has the aim of:

a. offering to all the faithful the Roman Liturgy in the *Usus Antiquior*, considered as a precious treasure to be preserved;

b. effectively guaranteeing and ensuring the use of the *forma extraordinaria* for all who ask for it, given that the use of the 1962 Roman Liturgy is a faculty generously granted for the good of the faithful and therefore is to be interpreted in a sense favourable to the faithful who are its principal addressees;

c. promoting reconciliation at the heart of the Church.

Read and re-read #8 especially:

- “guaranteeing and ensuring the use of the *forma extraordinaria* for all who ask for it ..... faculty generously granted for the good of the faithful and therefore is to be interpreted in a sense favourable to the faithful who are its principal addressees

## II. The Responsibilities of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*

9. The Sovereign Pontiff has conferred upon the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* ordinary vicarious power for the matters within its competence, in a particular way for monitoring the observance and application of the provisions of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* (cf. art. 12).

10. § 1. The Pontifical Commission exercises this power, beyond the faculties previously granted by [Pope John Paul II](#) and confirmed by [Pope Benedict XVI](#) (cf. Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, artt. 11-12), also by means of the power to decide upon recourses legitimately sent to it, as hierarchical Superior, against any possible singular administrative provision of an Ordinary which appears to be contrary to the Motu Proprio.

**Art. 10, § 1 of the Instruction — encapsulating, practically speaking, the most important section of the Instruction** — treats of this new “*power to decide upon recourses legitimately sent to it, as hierarchical Superior, against any possible singular administrative provision of an Ordinary which appears to be contrary to the Motu Proprio.*” For all practical purposes, the Pope may be said to have created a new tribunal within the Catholic Church — without technically doing so — inasmuch as he has **empowered the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* to exercise an administrative tribunal’s role and decide administrative canonical lawsuits filed before it.** No one has really written of this novelty latent within the Instruction *Universae Ecclesiae*. This development is a true milestone for Catholics aiming to celebrate or assist in the “Old Rite” who for far too long have had to endure grave hardship in the plight to have their rights respected.

11. After having received the approval from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* will have the task of looking after future editions of liturgical texts pertaining to the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite.

### III. Specific Norms

12. Following upon the inquiry made among the Bishops of the world, and with the desire to guarantee the proper interpretation and the correct application of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, this Pontifical Commission, by virtue of the authority granted to it and the faculties which it enjoys, issues this Instruction according to can. 34 of the *Code of Canon Law*.

#### The Competence of Diocesan Bishops

13. Diocesan Bishops, according to Canon Law, are to monitor liturgical matters in order to guarantee the common good and to ensure that everything is proceeding in peace and serenity in their Dioceses<sup>[5]</sup>, always in agreement with the *mens* of the Holy Father clearly expressed by the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*.<sup>[6]</sup> In cases of controversy or well-founded doubt about the celebration in the *forma extraordinaria*, the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* will adjudicate.

... bishops are to do everything “always in agreement with the *mens* of the Holy Father clearly expressed by the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*.” par. 13. Moreover, **local ordinaries cannot issue administrative provisions which contradict the Motu Proprio.** par. 10. § 2.

14. It is the task of the Diocesan Bishop to undertake all necessary measures to ensure respect for the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite, according to the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*.

#### The *coetus fidelium* (cf. Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, art. 5 § 1)

15. A *coetus fidelium* (“group of the faithful”) can be said to be *stabilliter existens* (“existing in a stable manner”), according to the sense of art. 5 § 1 of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, when it is constituted by some people of an individual parish who, even after the publication of the Motu Proprio, come together by reason of their veneration for the Liturgy in the *Usus Antiquior*, and who ask that it might be celebrated in the parish church or in an oratory or chapel; such a *coetus* (“group”) can also be composed of persons coming from different parishes or dioceses, who gather together in a specific parish church or in an oratory or chapel for this purpose.

An important clarification since a number of Bishops maintained that the group requesting the Mass had to predate the Motu Proprio.

Now the ‘*coetus fidelium*’ not only **need not predate the Motu Proprio but they can be from different parishes and even different dioceses. No minimum number is specified.**

16. In the case of a priest who presents himself occasionally in a parish church or an oratory with some faithful, and wishes to celebrate in the *forma extraordinaria*, as foreseen by articles 2 and 4 of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, the pastor or rector of the church, or the priest responsible, is to permit such a celebration, while respecting the schedule of liturgical celebrations in that same church.

17. § 1. In deciding individual cases, the pastor or the rector, or the priest responsible for a church, is to be guided by his own prudence, motivated by pastoral zeal and a spirit of generous welcome.

§ 2. In cases of groups which are quite small, they may approach the Ordinary of the place to identify a church in which these faithful may be able to come together for such celebrations, in order to ensure easier participation and a more worthy celebration of the Holy Mass.

18. Even in sanctuaries and places of pilgrimage the possibility to celebrate in the *forma extraordinaria* is to be offered to groups of pilgrims who request it (cf. Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, art. 5 § 3), if there is a qualified priest.

19. The faithful who ask for the celebration of the *forma extraordinaria* must not in any way support or belong to groups which show themselves to be against the validity or legitimacy of the Holy Mass or the Sacraments celebrated in the *forma ordinaria* or against the Roman Pontiff as Supreme Pastor of the Universal Church.

**Sacerdos idoneus (“Qualified Priest”) (cf. Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, art 5 § 4)**

20. With respect to the question of the necessary requirements for a priest to be held *idoneus* (“qualified”) to celebrate in the *forma extraordinaria*, the following is hereby stated:

a. Every Catholic priest who is not impeded by Canon Law<sup>[7]</sup> is to be considered *idoneus* (“qualified”) for the celebration of the Holy Mass in the *forma extraordinaria*.

b. Regarding the use of the Latin language, a basic knowledge is necessary, allowing the priest to pronounce the words correctly and understand their meaning.

The priest is considered *idoneus* or “qualified” when he can pronounce the Latin and understand what it means.

What level of understanding isn’t specified.

He must know how to say the Mass, but he is assumed to be qualified if he “presents himself spontaneously to celebrate ... and [has] celebrated it previously”.

In other words, if he has been to a workshop or has learned to say it on his own and has actually done it, he is *idoneus*.

Also, priests in charge of churches must allow priests to say the old Mass within the bounds of the schedule.

No more threats to have Priests take exams before they can say the Mass

21. Ordinaries are asked to offer their clergy the possibility of acquiring adequate preparation for celebrations in the *forma extraordinaria*. This applies also to Seminaries, where future priests should be given proper formation, including study of Latin<sup>[8]</sup> and, where pastoral needs suggest it, the opportunity to learn the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite.

21 – Ordinarii **enixe** rogantur ut **clericis instituendis** occasionem praebeant accommodatam artem celebrandi in forma extraordinaria acquirendi, quod potissimum pro Seminariis valet, in quibus providebitur ut sacrorum alumni convenienter instituantur, Latinum discendo sermonem et, adiunctis id postulantibus, ipsam Ritus Romani formam extraordinariam.

#### **LITERAL TRANSLATION:**

21 – Ordinaries are strenuously (*enixe*) asked that they offer to clerics (*clericis*) to be trained up (*instituendis*) opportunity for acquiring adequate *ars celebrandi*... art of celebrating... in the Extraordinary Form, which point is has force above all (*potissimum*) for Seminaries, in which provision will be made that the students of holy things are to be suitably (*convenienter*) trained, by learning the Latin language, and, as additional circumstances demand it (*adiunctis id postulantibus*), the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite itself.

**N.B. The released English translation is a poor one. It waters down the official Latin text which is the only one which counts. The released translation ignores the Latin adverb *enixe*. Also, the gerund form *clericis instituendis* suggest that this is something which must be done. They are to be trained up. (FR.Z)**

22. In Dioceses without qualified priests, Diocesan Bishops can request assistance from priests of the Institutes erected by the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, either to the celebrate the *forma extraordinaria* or to teach others how to celebrate it.

23. The faculty to celebrate *sine populo* (or with the participation of only one minister) in the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite is given by the Motu Proprio to all priests, whether secular or religious (cf. Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, art. 2). For such celebrations therefore, priests, by provision of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, do not require any special permission from their Ordinaries or superiors.

#### **Liturgical and Ecclesiastical Discipline**

24. The liturgical books of the *forma extraordinaria* are to be used as they are. All those who wish to celebrate according to the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite must know the pertinent rubrics and are obliged to follow them correctly.

25. New saints and certain of the new prefaces can and ought to be inserted into the 1962 Missal<sup>[9]</sup>, according to provisions which will be indicated subsequently.

26. As foreseen by article 6 of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, the readings of the Holy Mass of the Missal of 1962 can be proclaimed either solely in the Latin language, or in Latin followed by the vernacular or, in Low Masses, solely in the vernacular.

27. With regard to the disciplinary norms connected to celebration, the ecclesiastical discipline contained in the Code of Canon Law of 1983 applies.

28. Furthermore, by virtue of its character of special law, within its own area, the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* derogates from those provisions of law, connected with the sacred Rites, promulgated from 1962 onwards and incompatible with the rubrics of the liturgical books in effect in 1962.

**This is also a bombshell:**

*‘Summorum Pontificum derogates from those provisions of law, connected with the sacred Rites, promulgated from 1962 onwards and incompatible with the rubrics of the liturgical books in effect in 1962’*

**Logically this puts to rest once and for all questions concerning:**

- **Extraordinary ministers;**
- **Communion in the hand;**
- **Communion standing when health is not the issue;**
- **Female altar servers**

**The case of female altar servers is especially interesting as it is covered in the ‘De Defectibus in Celebratione Missarum Occurrentibus’** (on defects that may occur in the celebration of Mass).

In the front of the 1962 Missale Romanum (Altar Missal) there is a section called De defectibus, “Concerning defects”. This section talks about problems or, to put it another way, liturgical abuses, which could make Mass illicit or invalid.

In Section X — De defectibus in Ministerio ipso occurrentibus ... Concerning defects occurring in the Ministry itself. Here we find this:

Possunt etiam defectus occurrere in ministerio ipso, si aliquid ex requisitis ad illud desit: ... si non adsit Clericus, vel alius deserviens in Missa, vel adsit qui deservire non debet, **ut mulier;**

...

Defects can also occur in the ministry itself, if any of the requisites for it be lacking: that, ... if a Cleric [Clericus] be not present, or an other [alius] serving at Mass, or there be present one who ought not to serve, **as a woman [mulier]**”;

Nothing ambiguous about this, but let’s review:

§ UE 28 says Summorum Pontificum “derogates from those provisions of law, connected with the sacred Rites, promulgated from 1962 onwards and incompatible with the rubrics of the liturgical books in effect in 1962.

§ In the 1962 Missale Romanum itself we find that females are not to serve.

§ Service by females was permitted by law after 1962, after 1983, as a matter of fact (cf. CIC 1983 can. 230 §2).

§ There is a conflict between the 1962 MR and the CIC 1983 can. 230 §2.

§ UE 28 makes it clear that, according to Summorum Pontificum, there are to be no female servers in the Extraordinary Form.

## **Confirmation and Holy Orders**

29. Permission to use the older formula for the rite of Confirmation was confirmed by the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* (cf. art. 9 § 2). Therefore, in the *forma extraordinaria*, it is not necessary to use the newer formula of Pope Paul VI as found in the *Ordo Confirmationis*.

30. As regards tonsure, minor orders and the subdiaconate, the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* does not introduce any change in the discipline of the *Code of Canon Law* of 1983; consequently, in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life which are under the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, one who has made solemn profession or who has been definitively incorporated into a clerical institute of apostolic life, becomes incardinated as a cleric in the institute or society upon ordination to the diaconate, in accordance with canon 266 § 2 of the *Code of Canon Law*.

31. Only in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life which are under the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, and in those which use the liturgical books of the *forma extraordinaria*, is the use of the *Pontificale Romanum* of 1962 for the conferral of minor and major orders permitted.

## **Breviarium Romanum**

32. Art. 9 § 3 of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* gives clerics the faculty to use the *Breviarium Romanum* in effect in 1962, which is to be prayed entirely and in the Latin language.

## **The Sacred Triduum**

33. If there is a qualified priest, a *coetus fidelium* (“group of faithful”), which follows the older liturgical tradition, can also celebrate the Sacred *Triduum* in the *forma extraordinaria*. When there is no church or oratory designated exclusively for such celebrations, the parish priest or Ordinary, in agreement with the qualified priest, should find some arrangement favourable to the good of souls, not excluding the possibility of a repetition of the celebration of the Sacred Triduum in the same church.

## **The Rites of Religious Orders**

34. The use of the liturgical books proper to the Religious Orders which were in effect in 1962 is permitted.

## **Pontificale Romanum and the Rituale Romanum**

35. The use of the *Pontificale Romanum*, the *Rituale Romanum*, as well as the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* in effect in 1962, is permitted, in keeping with n. 28 of this Instruction, and always respecting n. 31 of the same Instruction.

*The Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, in an audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal President of the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei on 8 April 2011, approved this present Instruction and ordered its publication.*

Given at Rome, at the Offices of the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei, 30 April, 2011, on the memorial of Pope Saint Pius V.

**William Cardinal LEVADA**  
*President*

**Mons. Guido Pozzo**  
*Secretary*

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[1] BENEDICTUS XVI, *Litterae Apostolicae Summorum Pontificum motu proprio datae*, I, AAS 99 (2007) 777; cf. *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, tertia editio 2002, n. 397.

[2] BENEDICTUS XVI, *Epistola ad Episcopos ad producendas Litteras Apostolicas motu proprio datas, de Usu Liturgiae Romanae Instaurationi anni 1970 praecedentis*, AAS 99 (2007) 798.

[3] Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 838 §1 and §2.

[4] Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 331.

[5] Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canons 223 § 2 or 838 §1 and §4.

[6] BENEDICTUS XVI, *Epistola ad Episcopos ad producendas Litteras Apostolicas motu proprio datas, de Usu Liturgiae Romanae Instaurationi anni 1970 praecedentis*, AAS 99 (2007) 799.

[7] Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 900 § 2.

[8] Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 249; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 36; Declaration *Optatum totius*, 13.

[9] BENEDICTUS XVI, *Epistola ad Episcopos ad producendas Litteras Apostolicas motu proprio datas, de Usu Liturgiae Romanae Instaurationi anni 1970 praecedentis*, AAS 99 (2007) 797.