



Bulletin from the Diocese of Santa Rosa



August 2007

On the Latin Rite

My Dear People,

On July 7, 2007, Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, issued an Apostolic Letter entitled: “*Summorum Pontificum*” on the use of the Roman liturgy prior to the reform of 1970. He accompanied this Apostolic Letter with another personal letter to the Bishops of the Latin Rite.

In his letter to the Bishops, the Holy Father clearly states that the 1970 Missal of Pope Paul VI which was republished in two subsequent editions by Pope John Paul II, “obviously is and continues to be the normal Form –the *Forma ordinaria* – of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The last version of the *Missale Romanum* prior to the Council, which was published with the authority of Blessed Pope John XXIII in 1962 and used during the Council will now be able to be used as a *Forma extraordinaria* of the liturgical celebration.”

Further, he mentions that the “use of the old missal presupposes a certain degree of liturgical formation and some knowledge of the Latin language; neither of these is found very often.” In these new regulations for use of the old missal, he allows priests to celebrate with the people who request it. He also gives permission to use the old ritual in administering the Sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick as the good of souls may suggest.

Behind these new regulations is the Pope’s desire to make every effort to make it possible for all those who truly desire unity to remain in that unity or to attain it anew. He states: “It is a matter of coming to an interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church.”

I am delighted that the Holy Father has reached out to those whose attachment to the missal of Pope John XXIII has made them feel alienated from the Church after the Second Vatican Council. I do hope that this will bring back many who have distanced themselves from our Church and faith because of their love for the former form of celebrating the mass. It will be some time before we see what concretely this permission for use of the old missal will mean for our Diocese.

On a practical level here in the Diocese of Santa Rosa, I have asked our priests if any of them can and are willing to offer the mass according to the old Missal. Only one priest came forward. This is most understandable since the few of us who were ordained before 1970 and had some familiarity with the old Missal have not celebrated that form of the mass since 1970. The many priests ordained after 1970 have no experience of offering the mass according to the old missal. So we have the challenge of finding priests who are capable of offering the mass according to the old Missal.

Also recognizing that the extraordinary form can now be used on Sundays, we also recognize that our parishes and priests already have full schedules on Sundays. Obviously the old missal and the accompanying rituals will have to be reprinted. I hope these challenges can be overcome for those who seek to celebrate the holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the extraordinary form.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am

Your Brother and Servant in the Lord,

Most Reverend Daniel F. Walsh
Bishop of Santa Rosa