



## FOURTH WOUND: “Traditionis Custodes” – the Persecution of the Traditional Mass

In order to better understand the seriousness of the Motu Proprio “Traditionis Custodes” published by Pope Francis on July 16, 2021, let us briefly recall some facts of the history of the liturgy in recent decades:

After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), a liturgical reform took place which resulted in the so-called “Novus Ordo Missae”, that form of the Roman Rite in which Holy Mass is celebrated today in the vast majority of the universal Church. The “Novus Ordo” came to replace the traditional Roman Rite, also known as the “Vetus Ordo” or “Tridentine Mass”. Although the latter name is derived from “Trent”, the traditional rite is much older than the Council held there, dating back to the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great (590-604). It underwent minor changes over the centuries until it was codified by Pope Pius V in the Roman Missal, which remained in universal use until 1969.

The significant changes introduced after the Second Vatican Council were not received with the same enthusiasm by all. There were certain sectors of the Church that wished to continue celebrating the Mass in its traditional form. Although this celebration was not forbidden “de iure”, its use was severely restricted and “de facto” resembled a prohibition.

In 1984, Pope John Paul II promulgated an indult allowing bishops to authorize their priests to celebrate Holy Mass in the pre-conciliar form. In 1988, he issued the Motu Proprio “Ecclesia Dei”, which guaranteed the possibility of attending the Tridentine Mass for those faithful who felt attached to Tradition and at the same time wished to remain in full union with Rome. In this letter the Pope asked for a “broad and generous” application of the norms for the use of the 1962 Roman Missal.<sup>1</sup>

He also established the Pontifical Commission “Ecclesia Dei” to address the demands and concerns of traditionally oriented communities and faithful.

On July 7, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued the Motu Proprio “Summorum Pontificum”, in which he allowed (or rather, affirmed the licitness of) all priests to

---

<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Motu proprio "Ecclesia Dei", n. 6: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_motu-proprio\\_02071988\\_ecclesia-dei.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_jp-ii_motu-proprio_02071988_ecclesia-dei.html)

celebrate Holy Mass and administer the sacraments in the traditional form, defining it as the extraordinary form of the Roman rite (“*usus antiquior*”).<sup>2</sup>

As a result, the Traditional Mass experienced a revival, and not a few of the faithful learned to appreciate it. The spiritual climate began to improve, and it seemed that the wise and just measures of Pope Benedict XVI would restore a certain peace within the Church, which had been seriously disturbed until then, and bring about a reconciliation with her own tradition.

This changed drastically when Pope Francis promulgated the Motu Proprio “*Traditionis Custodes*” on July 16, 2021, imposing severe and concrete restrictions on the celebration of the Traditional Mass.<sup>3</sup> Msgr. Athanasius Schneider describes the consequences in these terms:

*“Traditionis Custodes and the new document from the Congregation for Divine Worship are destroying the patient work of peace, reconciliation, and ecclesial communion accomplished by Pope John Paul II through the Motu Proprio Ecclesia Dei and by Benedict XVI through Summorum Pontificum. They truly built bridges to the Tradition and to a considerable portion of traditional clergy and faithful, showing thereby what it truly means to be a ‘pontifex.’ Whereas Pope Francis has now dismantled the bridge that his two predecessors built”.*<sup>4</sup>

In this writing, I do not intend to address the differences between the two forms of the Roman Rite, although this would certainly be a valuable and important topic. Nor do I wish to focus on my personal preference for the “*Vetus Ordo*” because of the valuable experience I have had with this rite.

Rather, my intention is to identify once again that spirit which we have already seen at work in the first three wounds of the present Pontificate; a spirit which seeks to destroy the sacred patrimony of the Church and, if it does not succeed, at least to limit it to

---

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, Motu Proprio “*Summorum Pontificum*”: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_motu-proprio\\_20070707\\_summorum-pontificum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20070707_summorum-pontificum.html)

<sup>3</sup> Revoking with immediate effect the provisions of his predecessor in this regard, *Traditionis Custodes* declares the post-conciliar Mass to be “the only form of the Roman Rite”, forbids the celebration of the traditional Mass in parish churches, establishes that permission to celebrate it should be granted to a priest only by special authorization of the bishop after consultation with the Apostolic See, prohibits the approval of new communities wishing to celebrate this Mass, among other drastic measures.

<sup>4</sup> Diane Montagna's interview with Bishop Athanasius Schneider (December 22, 2021): <https://remnantnewspaper.com/web/index.php/articles/item/5751-exclusive-bishop-athanasius-schneider-on-vatican-crackdown-on-traditional-sacraments>

such an extent that, over time, this form of the Rite will become extinct because fewer and fewer priests will receive from Rome the authorization they now need to celebrate it. Of course, this will also affect the faithful who prefer the Traditional Mass.

What kind of spirit is at work here that wants to destroy and limit what the Church herself says is her very heart, her millennial liturgy? What kind of spirit is it that at the same time does not protect the “Novus Ordo” from all kinds of experiments and distortions?

Unfortunately, it must be noted that not only is Pope Francis tightening the noose around the Traditional Mass and controlling its celebration, but he is also repeatedly making derogatory remarks about people connected to Tradition. Calling them “rigorists” and “retrograde” is the most common vocabulary he uses to express his hostility towards the Traditional Mass and its adherents.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, it can be seen that the attack and marginalization is not only directed against the Traditional Mass per se, but that the latter represents only the expression of that catholicity which has been constantly attacked by the spirit of modernism after the Second Vatican Council.

It should also be noted that the faithful who adhere to the Traditional Mass are usually less inclined to fall into modernist errors and adhere to the unchanging doctrine and traditional values of Catholic morality.

The goal of all this hostility and injustice against the traditional rite is thus made clear. The target of these attacks is the faith itself, which is expressed in all its authenticity in this rite. Thus, by attacking the Traditional Mass, the goal is to tear down a wall that protects the sanctity of the Church.

Before this background, it is clear why a resistance must be formed and is being formed on this issue, whose great intention is to prevent that the celebration of the Tridentine Mass is denied or restricted. Because it is so deeply rooted in the Catholic identity, many of the faithful are willing to travel long distances to participate in the celebration of the Sacrifice of Christ in the “Vetus Ordo”, albeit clandestinely, in the “desert”, so to speak.

6

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, in a meeting with the Jesuits of Mozambique and Madagascar (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-09/pope-conversations-jesuits-mozambique-madagascar-spadaro.html>) he made the following comment: *"Have you never seen young priests all stiff in black cassocks and hats in the shape of the planet Saturn on their heads? Behind all the rigid clericalism there are serious problems. I had to intervene recently in three dioceses with problems that expressed themselves in these forms of rigidity that concealed moral problems and imbalances"*.

<sup>6</sup> When asked in an interview about the effect that the Motu Proprio "Traditionis Custodes" could have,

Thus, this new wound inflicted on the Body of Christ, which directly attacks its heart and those who wish to be nourished by the strength of that heart, is in line with the three wounds previously treated: “Amoris Laetitia”, the Abu Dhabi Declaration, and the Pachamama cult.

It can no longer be overlooked that we are at the beginning of an intra-ecclesial persecution. Those priests who defend the traditional values of the Catholic Church and express criticism of the changes introduced by the current Pontificate must expect to be prevented from continuing to exercise their priestly ministry. Modernists have nothing to fear, even if they publicly contradict Church teaching; only those faithful who want nothing more than to live the faith and tradition of the Church as they have always been.<sup>7</sup>

What is happening is a growing disfigurement of God's holy Church. Instead of the ecclesiastical hierarchy protecting the faithful from heresy, providing clarification and guidance, we see a Church with a modernist, ecumenical and dialogical bent that begins to relativize and deform Catholic identity. If in the past it was said “*Roma locuta, causa finite*” (Rome has spoken, the case is closed), today it can almost be said that if Rome has spoken, it is better to examine carefully whether what has been said fully corresponds to the unchanging doctrine of the Church or whether, on the contrary, it creates confusion.

This is an extremely complex and difficult situation. When the heart is no longer healthy, the whole body suffers. It is therefore essential that the faithful know how to defend the Traditional Mass against attacks, even if this means fleeing into the “spiritual desert” in order to protect this treasure from those who would take it away from them.

The faithful must open their eyes and realize that we have already reached this situation. We are no longer in a normal state where we can blindly trust the representatives of the Church. Our respect and love for the sacred offices does not mean that we should close

---

Msgr. Athanasius Schneider stated: “*The many Catholic families and ever-growing number of young people and priests (...) who attend the traditional Mass, will not be able to allow their conscience to be violated by such a drastic administrative act. Telling these faithful and priests that they must simply be obedient to these norms will ultimately not work with them, because they understand that a call to obedience loses its power when the aim is to suppress the traditional form of the liturgy, the great liturgical treasure of the Roman Church. In time, a worldwide chain of catacomb-Masses will surely arise, as happens in times of emergency and persecution*”.

<sup>7</sup> Cardinal Müller criticized this disproportion: “*Given the disproportion between the relatively modest response to the massive attacks on the unity of the church in the German ‘Synodal Way’ (as well as in other pseudo-reforms) and the harsh disciplining of the old ritual minority, the image of the misguided fire brigade comes to mind, which – instead of saving the blazing house – instead first saves the small barn next to it.*”

our eyes when ministers err.

Rather, we are called to pray for them and, if possible, to help them to awaken from their blindness. Under these circumstances, it is they who need our help, lest they become more entangled in the web that has trapped them. The one who has deceived them is a dark spirit disguised as an angel of light (cf. 2Co 11:14).

May the Lord deliver them so that they may fearlessly exercise their ministry in the light of the Holy Spirit and be shepherds after God's own heart! Priests and bishops should not cooperate, either actively or passively, with the errors of the present Pontificate, even if this means withdrawing to the "desert" and serving the Church there in times of persecution. Many shepherds of previous generations knew how to resist the various forms of unjust domination. In the present ecclesial situation we are also confronted with injustice, and the faithful need shepherds to stand by their side.