

**THE TRIDENTINE MASS**

Our Holy Father has addressed the matter of the Tridentine Mass. With his issuance of a *Motu Proprio*, taking effect on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI has allowed priests of the Roman Catholic Church to celebrate Mass according to the 1962 Missal.

This is not simply a Mass celebrated in Latin. Rather, it is the Mass as it was celebrated prior to the Second Vatican Council. In his *Motu Proprio*, the Pope reminds the Faithful that the Mass as we now know it continues to be the ordinary form of our worship.

The “new order” of Mass that we now follow is actually the older form of Mass, even though it is new to many of the Faithful. What the Second Vatican Council did was to return to the format used in much earlier times. In those days, the altars faced the people and the actions of the Mass took place in various parts of the sanctuary. This can be seen when visiting Rome.

However, some members of the Faithful have had a difficult time leaving the Mass with which they grew up. Consequently, both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have attempted to reach out to them by making it possible for them to attend a Tridentine Mass.

When the Tridentine Mass is celebrated, it has to be done in accord with its own liturgical directives. This includes special vestments, specific actions and postures, the exclusive use of Latin, prayers, only male servers, Holy Communion under one form on the tongue and kneeling, etc. The Roman Canon is always used. Any priest can celebrate that Mass privately, provided that he knows how.

Should a pastor decide to celebrate or allow the celebration of the Mass in accord with the 1962 Missal in his parish, it must be in response to a request from a group (*coetus/association*) within his particular parish (*member parishioners*) that has consistently been attached to the previous liturgical tradition (*stabilliter existit*). He may not do so as a result of his own personal preference or in response to curiosity on the part of some individuals. Also, the Pastor should consult with his parish pastoral council, as this affects the whole parish.

A priest celebrating Mass according to the extraordinary form may not do so exclusively; - but, needs to celebrate also the Mass in the ordinary form as an expression of his not denying the validity of the Mass commonly used today. The entire schedule of Masses in a parish may not be in accord with the extraordinary form, as this would make it a “personal parish” for which the diocesan bishop’s permission is required. Bringing in another altar or changing the existing one also needs the permission of the bishop, as this changes the worship space.

There are Churches that do not recognize the Pope as their head but, yet, celebrate the Liturgy in a similar way to the Tridentine Mass. These do not fulfill a Roman Catholic’s obligation to assemble on the Lord’s Day.

In his wisdom, the Holy Father has asked us to reach out to those alienated from the Church and has provided guidance for that. Nevertheless, there needs to be an appropriate reverence and harmony in celebrating the Mass according to either form, ensuring the unity of which it is to be a sign.