



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

4800 Union Deposit Road | Harrisburg, PA 17111-3710
bishopsoffice@hbgdiocese.org | (717) 657-4804 ext. 354 | www.hbgdiocese.org

December 28, 2023

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Pope Francis issued a decree *motu proprio*, on July 16, 2021, entitled *Traditionis custodes* regulating the use of the 1962 *Missale Romanum* and establishing norms for the communities adhering to this antecedent form of liturgical worship. At that time, my predecessor, Bishop Ronald W. Gainer, prudently spent time reviewing the document and began to formulate the Diocesan approach to its implementation.

On January 1, 2024, after careful review and reflection, and having received the consent of the Presbyteral Council, I will issue a decree implementing *Traditionis custodes* in the Diocese of Harrisburg. This decree seeks to be faithful to the norms issued by the Holy Father while respecting the customs of the established communities in our Diocese who celebrate Holy Mass according to the 1962 *Missale Romanum*.

This decree will take effect immediately on January 1 and supplants the previous permissions and norms established by my predecessors. Any concerns or questions regarding the decree may be directed to Very Rev. Joshua R. Brommer, Director of the Office for Divine Worship, whom I appoint as my delegate for the implementation of *Traditionis custodes*, exercising pastoral care for individuals and communities for whom it applies.

During this holy season of Christmas, as we rejoice in the manifestation of the Incarnate Word, I pray that we will continue to deepen our love and reverence for the Lord, truly present among us, through the gift of the Holy Eucharist and the celebration of Holy Mass. Be assured that you and your loved ones remain in my prayers.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg

Decree Implementing the *Motu Proprio*
***Traditionis custodes* in the Diocese of Harrisburg**

Upon reflection and consultation regarding the Apostolic Letter issued *motu proprio* “On the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970,” issued by Pope Francis on July 16, 2021, the following norms are to be followed throughout the Diocese of Harrisburg in accord with the decree that the diocesan bishop bears the exclusive competence “to authorize the use of the 1962 Roman Missal in his diocese according to the guidelines of the Apostolic See” (art. 2).

In accord with Article 3, §2, recognizing the fruitfulness of existing communities for the spiritual growth of the faithful, while affirming that those communities and individuals listed below affirm the validity of the Second Vatican Council (§1), I declare the following:

1. The *Mater Dei* Latin Mass Community was canonically erected by Bishop Kevin Rhoades on December 2, 2007, as a public diocesan association of the Christian faithful (c. 312, §1, 3^o), with juridic personality (c. 313). The community, since established as Saint Lawrence of Rome Quasi-Parish by my predecessor (c. 516), continues to celebrate Holy Mass according to the *Missale Romanum* of 1962 at Saint Lawrence Chapel, Harrisburg. While entrusted to the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter (FSSP), this community enjoys the special permission granted by the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to celebrate all of the sacraments and its liturgical life according to the antecedent form.
2. The Latin Mass Community gathering at Saint Joseph Church, Lancaster, formerly of Saint Anthony of Padua Church, Lancaster, established by Bishop Rhoades on May 24, 2008, will continue to offer Holy Mass according to the *Missale Romanum* of 1962. In a letter dated July 6, 2023, this community has been dispensed by the Dicastery for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments from Article 3, §2 of *Traditionis custodes* allowing them to celebrate the antecedent form of Holy Mass in a parish church for a period of two years. No other sacraments are permitted to be celebrated in the antecedent form here.

3. In the northern tier of the Diocese, the community of faithful who gather for the celebration of Holy Mass according to the 1962 *Missale Romanum* has gathered at the former Carmel of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in Elysburg until the sale of that property. Since October 2023, this community has been transferred to the former Saint Peter Church, Mt Carmel, now the Oratory of Saint Elijah the Prophet, where permission for the celebration of Holy Mass in the antecedent form continues. No other sacraments are permitted to be celebrated in the antecedent form at this place.
4. A daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist according to the *Missale Romanum* of 1962 has for some time existed throughout the greater Lancaster area. For a period of time, this was celebrated in the mission Chapel of Our Mother of Holy Purity (Saint Mary's), Wrightsville. Since early 2022, this Holy Mass is celebrated Tuesday through Saturday in the Holy Family Chapel of the former convent of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Historic Saint Mary's), Lancaster, where permission continues for the celebration of Holy Mass according to the 1962 usage. No other sacraments are permitted to be celebrated in the antecedent form.
5. The Carmel of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, formerly of Elysburg and now located in Fairfield, was established by Bishop Rhoades on August 29, 2009, as a monastic foundation. The Carmelite nuns and the faithful who support them continue to enjoy the privilege of offering Holy Mass according to the *Missale Romanum* of 1962 and, through special dispensation, the antecedent form of the Carmelite Rite. No other sacraments are permitted to be celebrated in the antecedent form, except those necessary for the life of the monastic community in their places of worship.
6. Additionally, the Hermits of Mount Carmel, the Franciscan Missionaries of Saint Mary of the Angels, and individually professed members living the eremitical life within the Diocese of Harrisburg whose charism and spirituality includes offering Holy Mass according to the *Missale Romanum* of 1962, continue to enjoy that privilege wherever they live throughout the Diocese. No other sacraments are permitted to be celebrated in the antecedent form.

In accord with Article 3, §3, the Eucharistic celebrations using the *Missale Romanum* of 1962 may take place in these communities and permission is granted for individual priests to celebrate these Masses any and all days of the year. In these celebrations the readings are to be proclaimed in the vernacular language,

using the translations of the Sacred Scripture approved for liturgical use by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (art. 3, §3).

Very Reverend Joshua R. Brommer, the Director of the Office for Divine Worship, is appointed as the delegate of the bishop, “entrusted with [oversight of] these celebrations and with the pastoral care of these groups of faithful” (art. 3, §4).

Priests who celebrated Mass according to the *Missale Romanum* of 1962 in the Diocese of Harrisburg prior to July 16, 2021, are authorized to continue to enjoy this faculty upon request (art. 5). This privilege is not to be exercised at any Mass of obligation in any parish church except in those communities designated above. The privilege to celebrate liturgies according to the *Missale Romanum* 1962 will not be granted to anyone ordained after the publication of *Traditionis custodes*.

In accord with the “*Responsa ad dubia* on certain provisions of the Apostolic Letter *Traditionis custodes*” published by the Dicastery for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments on February 20, 2023: “The Parish Priest or chaplain who – in fulfillment of his office – celebrates weekdays with the current *Missale Romanum* ... cannot binate by celebrating with the *Missale Romanum* of 1962, either with a group or privately.” The justification given by the Dicastery is the lack of “just cause” or “pastoral necessity” required by canon 905 §2. This provision does not apply to days of obligation, for which both the shortage of priests capable of celebrating the antecedent form and the pastoral necessity of the faithful gives the local ordinary the authority to permit the celebration of Holy Mass “even three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation” in accord with the same canon cited above (c. 905 §2).

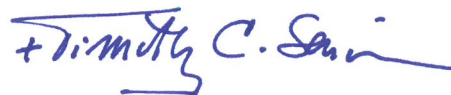
A serious concern of the Holy Father’s letter accompanying the *motu proprio* comes from the liturgical abuses in places that celebrate the current *Roman Missal*. Such abuses obscure the dignity of the Sacred Liturgy. Many concerned lay faithful point to these abuses as well as a systematic minimalism within the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council as the principal rationale for choosing communities which celebrate Holy Mass according to the *Missale Romanum* of 1962. It is necessary and prudent for us to reflect on this concern and review our approach to celebrating the Sacred Liturgy in our parishes, schools, and institutions.

Participation in the celebration of Holy Mass is “the source and summit of the entire Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11), as decreed by the Second Vatican Council. For this reason, priests, particularly those who are entrusted with the care of souls as pastors, are to safeguard the celebration of Holy Mass from any abuses that distort the Eucharistic Sacrifice as a faithful expression of the Church’s Faith and a unique manifestation of the beauty of holiness and prayer.

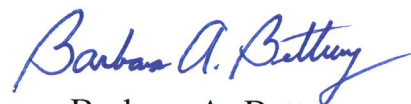
The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states clearly that “the Priest, will remember that he is the servant of the Sacred Liturgy and that he himself is not permitted, on his own initiative, to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of Mass” (no. 24). Since the Sacred Liturgy expresses the Church’s rule of prayer (*lex orandi*) as consistent with the Church’s rule of faith (*lex credenda*), it is considered a grave matter to add, omit, or change any aspect of the Sacred Liturgy, textual and rubrical. Additions, omissions, and changes distort the Faith proclaimed, obscure the perennial beauty of prayer, and diminish the sacred instrument of grace effected through the Sacred Liturgy. Personal innovation and local creativity conflict with the liturgical law and exceed the authority of the priest and such practices are to be discontinued immediately. Study and ongoing formation in the Sacred Liturgy is an obligation placed upon those who assist with the Sacred Liturgy. Therefore, I ask any priest, deacon, and lay minister assisting with the planning and celebration of the Holy Eucharist to be renewed in their attentiveness to the liturgical laws and instructions that govern the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy in accord with the lawful reforms of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent implementation of the conciliar legislation.

At the same time, I encourage every member of the clergy and those lay faithful assisting them with the execution of the Sacred Liturgy to make fuller use of the options provided by the *Roman Missal* of 2002, among which are the use of the Latin language for dialogues, acclamations, and responses; the use of incense, fitting vestments, and other ritual signs; and the great treasury of sacred music, especially Gregorian chant and the prescribed chants of the *Roman Missal*. None of these were discarded by the Second Vatican Council. On the contrary, they remain part of the Church’s living rule of prayer and form part of the unique expression of the Roman liturgical tradition. The invitation of the Holy Father’s letter reveals itself as a call to return the sacred, reverential, and dignified celebration of Holy Mass according to the full tradition of the Roman Rite.

This decree is effective upon promulgation by publication on the website for the Diocese of Harrisburg, notwithstanding anything to the contrary to universal law or particular law decreed or established by my esteemed predecessors.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Timothy C. Senior". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Barbara A. Bettwy". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Barbara A. Bettwy
Chancellor

Given at the Diocesan Center
in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
the 1st day of January 2024,
on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.