

## TRADITIONIS CUSTODES : THE KEY IS IN THE TITLE

In a *motu proprio*, *Traditionis Custodes*, issued on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Pope Francis has purported to limit the entitlement of priests to offer, and of the faithful to attend, Mass in the Roman rite guaranteed to them forever by Pope Pius V in the Bull *Quo primum* of July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1570

The title of Pope Francis's *motu proprio*, translated, is "Guardians of tradition..." To what tradition is he referring? Is it the tradition of the Catholic Church which concluded with the death of the last Apostle, St John, and was defined by the Fathers of the (First) Vatican Council (invoking the Council of Trent, Session IV) in *Dei Filius*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, as—

"that which has been received by the Church from the mouth of Christ Himself, or through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and has been handed down by the Apostles themselves and has thus come to us" [Dz. 1787] ?

Is it the tradition which they refined with this further statement of principle ?

"[T]he doctrine of faith which God revealed has not been handed down as a philosophic invention to the human mind to be perfected, but has been entrusted as a divine deposit... to be faithfully guarded and infallibly interpreted. Hence, also, that understanding of its sacred dogmas must be perpetually retained which Holy Mother Church has once declared; and there must never be recession from that meaning under the specious name of a deeper understanding 'Therefore... let the understanding, the knowledge, and wisdom of individuals as of all, of one as of the whole Church, grow and progress strongly with the passage of the ages and the centuries; but in its own genus alone, namely in the same teaching, with the same sense and same understanding (*eodem sensu, eademque sententia*)'." [Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*, 23, 3]. [Dz. 1800]

Or, is the tradition to which Pope Francis is appealing the understanding of it exposed in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* n. 8?

"The tradition that comes from the apostles progresses in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth."

Contrary to Vatican II's teaching the Church's tradition does not progress, in the sense of becoming something new. It does not develop as a result of the experience of believers. It is not, as Pope John Paul II asserted in his Apostolic Letter, *Ecclesia Dei*, something *living*. It is not something to be perfected by the human mind. The only development it admits is of realisation of what the Church has ever taught, consistent with that teaching, consistent with that sense, consistent with that understanding. Those who hold that revelation could have been nothing other than the consciousness acquired by man of his relation to God, or that revelation was not completed with the apostles [Dz. 2020-2021], proceed in peril of their souls, because they incur the censure uttered by Pope Pius X in the Decree *Lamentabili* (July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1907). [Dz. 2065a]

From the context of *Traditionis Custodes* and its accompanying letter there can be no doubt that ‘the tradition’ to which the Pope appeals—the *Traditio* which is part of its title—is not the tradition of the Catholic Church, but the ersatz, Modernist, version promoted by Vatican II.

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Since the close of the Second Vatican Council, every bishop in the Church has found himself exercising, willy nilly, two offices: the one, as a lawfully constituted bishop of Christ’s Church; the other as a functionary of its counterfeit, an entity which may, with reason, be labelled ‘the Synodal church of Vatican II’. The former Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, put the issue well in October 2020:

“For sixty years, we have witnessed the eclipse of the true Church by an anti-church that has progressively appropriated her name, occupied the Roman Curia and her Dicasteries, Dioceses and Parishes, Seminaries and Universities, Convents and Monasteries. The anti-church has usurped her authority, and its ministers wear her sacred garments; it uses her prestige and power to appropriate her treasures, assets, and finances.”<sup>1</sup>

The first of these offices is of God, and orthodox; the second is of man, and heterodox (Modernist). In weighing any bishop’s actions, then, it is critical for the faithful Catholic to assess whether he is acting *as a bishop of Christ’s Church* or as a mere functionary of this schismatic church. This is the issue we face with Pope Francis and *Traditionis Custodes*.

The Pope’s appeal in that document to the Church as his authority is false. The ‘Church’ to which he is appealing is its counterfeit. When he addresses the Church’s bishops and calls them ‘guardians of tradition’ he is speaking the truth, *for they are* Catholic bishops. But, because his understanding of tradition is the false understanding taught by Vatican II, his words hide the reality which is that he is *not* appealing to them as bishops of Christ’s Church at all, *but as functionaries of this counterfeit church*.

In the same October 2020 conference Archbishop Viganò highlighted the dilemma for those Catholics who eschew the *novus ordo missae* and its serial irregularities in favour of the Mass of Pope Pius V of 1570 by relying on recent papal authorisation:

“The Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*... while granting the celebration in the extraordinary form, demands *saltem impliciter* [at least implicitly] that we accept the Council and recognise the lawfulness of the reformed liturgy. This ploy prevents those who benefit from the Motu Proprio from raising any objection, or they risk the dissolution of the *Ecclesia Dei* communities. And it instils in the Christian people the dangerous idea that a good thing, in order to have legitimacy in the Church and society, must necessarily be accompanied by a bad thing, or at least something less good. However, only a misguided mind would seek to afford equal rights to both good and evil.”<sup>2</sup>

This dilemma has now been realised with *Traditionis Custodes*.

Those who adhere to the form of Mass canonised by Pope Pius V in the Bull *Quo primum* (July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1570) act in accordance with what the Church has ever taught, consistently with that

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<sup>1</sup> *Address to the Catholic Identity Conference*, 24.10.2020

<sup>2</sup> In his address to *the Roman Forum* on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, Dr Peter Kwasniewski exposed more of the shortcomings of *Summorum Pontificum*, including its claim of the existence of an ordinary and an extraordinary form of celebration of Mass. <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2021/07/beyond-summorum-pontificum-work-of.html>

teaching, with its sense, with its understanding. Those who reject the strictures contained in that Bull *that its terms are to remain forever in force*—those who prefer Vatican II’s understanding of tradition as something that progresses, admits of change,—reject the Church’s teaching.

*The Issue of the Validity (and Legitimacy) of Vatican II*

In his explanatory letter accompanying the *motu proprio* Pope Francis says this:

“To doubt the Council is to doubt the intentions of those very Fathers who exercised their collegial power in a solemn manner *cum Petro et sub Petro* in an ecumenical council, and, in the final analysis, to doubt the Holy Spirit himself who guides the Church.”

This puts well the issue that his action has precipitated. Not only has he brought about a revolt among the faithful against dictates which owe their provenance to Vatican II, he has raised the issue of the Council’s very legitimacy, something a minority of the Catholic faithful has long desired. It’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good: this is the one good effect of this appalling document.

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A week or two before the Pope issued his *motu proprio* Pietro Cardinal Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, is reported to have said of the Mass canonised by Pope Pius V in an address to a group of cardinals: “We must put an end to this Mass forever!” These are not the words of a bishop of the Catholic Church: they are the words of a heretic and a schismatic. No. More than this: they are the words of Satan.

Michael Baker

July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 — *Anniversary of the death of Pope Leo XIII in 1903*