



SECRETARIAT FOR THE LITURGY

Twenty Questions on the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*

1. What is the purpose of Pope Benedict XVI's *Apostolic Letter, Summorum Pontificum*?

By this Apostolic Letter, promulgated *motu proprio*, the Holy Father seeks an “interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church”¹ with those who have demonstrated an attachment to preconiliar liturgical forms, making “it possible for all those who truly desire unity to remain in that unity or to attain it anew.” Thus does he exhort the whole Church to “generously open our hearts and make room for everything that the faith itself allows.”²

2. How does the Apostolic Letter describe the preconiliar edition of the *Missale Romanum*?

The Holy Father begins by defining two forms of the rule of prayer (*Lex orandi*) of the Latin church of Roman Rite: an ordinary form, as contained in the *Missale Romanum* of Pope Paul VI,³ and an extraordinary form, as contained in the *Missale Romanum* of Pope Saint Pius V.⁴ He notes that the extraordinary form was never abrogated and the two forms make up the Liturgy of the one Roman Rite.⁵

3. When may a Priest celebrate the *extraordinary form* in a Mass without the people?

Any Priest of the Latin Church may, without any further permission from the Holy See or his Ordinary, celebrate the extraordinary form of the *Missale Romanum* in a Mass without the people at any time except during the Sacred Triduum.⁶ If members of the faithful wish to join in these celebrations, they are permitted to do so.⁷

4. May the extraordinary form be used in religious communities?

Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life who wish to do so may celebrate according to the extraordinary form in their own oratories.⁸

1 Pope Benedict XVI, Cover letter to the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*.

2 Ibid.

3 This *Missal* was most recently promulgated in 2001 as the third typical edition, by the Servant of God, John Paul II.

4 This *Missal* was most recently promulgated in 1962 as the seventh typical edition by the Blessed John XXIII.

5 Cf. Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum* [SP], article 1.

6 Cf. SP, no. 2.

7 Cf. SP, no. 4.

8 Cf. SP, no. 3.

5. When may the extraordinary form be used in parishes?

In parishes where a group of the faithful are attached to the extraordinary form of the Mass, they may approach the pastor, who is to support their petition willingly. No permissions are required.⁹

6. May the extraordinary form of the other sacraments also be celebrated?

For the good of souls, a pastor may also grant permission for the celebration of the other Sacraments, Christian Funerals or other occasional celebrations according to the extraordinary form, when requested to do so by priests or a group of the faithful.¹⁰

7. If a priest fails to demonstrate a minimum rubrical or linguistic ability to celebrate the extraordinary form, may he still celebrate the 1962 *Missale Romanum*?

No. In order to celebrate the extraordinary form, a Priest must be suitably qualified for and not prohibited by any impediments to the celebration of the Mass according to the 1962 *Missale Romanum*.¹¹ This means he must have the minimum knowledge and ability required for a legitimate use of the extraordinary form.

8. As a rule, is it possible for a priest to abandon the ordinary form entirely?

No. The Holy Father states unequivocally that “in order to experience full communion, the priests of the communities adhering to the former usage cannot, as a matter of principle, exclude celebrating according to the new books. The total exclusion of the new rite would not in fact be consistent with the recognition of its value and holiness.”¹²

9. What happens if a pastor is unable to fulfill the request of the faithful?

“Should some problem arise which the parish priest cannot resolve, the local Ordinary will always be able to intervene, in full harmony, however, with all that has been laid down by the new norms of the *Motu Proprio*.”¹³ Should the local ordinary be unable to respond to the request, it may be referred to the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission.¹⁴

10. Is the role of the Diocesan Bishop in supervising the Sacred Liturgy diminished by this Apostolic Letter?

No. The norms “do not in any way lessen the Bishop’s own authority and responsibility, either for the liturgy or for the pastoral care of [the] faithful. Each Bishop, in fact, is the moderator of the liturgy in his own Diocese.”¹⁵ As such, he is required both to implement the universal norms of the Church as well as to intervene to prevent abuses from arising with regard to liturgical celebrations in his diocese.

9 Cf. SP, no. 5§1.

10 Cf. SP, no. 5§3 and 9§1.

11 Cf. SP, no. 5§4.

12 Pope Benedict XVI, Cover letter to the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*.

13 Ibid.

14 Cf. SP, no. 7.

15 Ibid.

11. What other provisions are made for use of the extraordinary form?

The Bishop may celebrate the *Rite of Confirmation* according to the extraordinary form as found in the edition of the *Roman Pontifical* in effect in 1962.¹⁶ Clerics in Holy Orders may use the *Roman Breviary* of Blessed John XXIII promulgated in 1962.¹⁷

12. When the extraordinary form is celebrated, what calendar and Lectionary may be used?

Whenever the extraordinary form of the Roman Liturgy is celebrated, the vernacular edition of the *Lectionary for Mass* may be used, while the calendar of the Missal of Blessed John XXIII is followed.¹⁸ The *Ecclesia Dei* Commission has been charged with studying the eventual incorporation of new saints and some of the prefaces of the revised *Missale* into the *Missale Romanum* of Blessed John XXIII.

13. Who regulates the implementation of this Apostolic Letter?

The Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* is charged with assuring proper observance and application of the norms of the Apostolic Letter.

14. Does the wider use of the extraordinary form of the rites of Holy Week reflect a change in the Church's teaching on anti-Semitism ?

No. The 1962 *Missale Romanum* already reflected Blessed John XXIII's revision of liturgical language often construed as anti-Semitic. In 1965, the watershed statement *Nostra Aetate*, of the Second Vatican Council then repudiated all forms of anti-Semitism as having no place within Christian life. When Pope Paul VI issued the *Missale Romanum* of 1969, the only prayer for the Jewish people in the Roman liturgy was completely revised for Good Friday to reflect a renewed understanding of the Jews as God's chosen people, "first to hear the word of God."

Throughout his papacy, John Paul II worked effectively to reconcile the Church with the Jewish people and to strengthen new bonds of friendship. In 1988, Pope John Paul II gave permission for the Mass to be celebrated according the *Missale Romanum* of 1962 only as a pastoral provision to assist Catholics who remained attached to the previous rites, thereby hoping to develop closer bonds with the family of the Church.

By this new Apostolic Letter, Pope Benedict XVI is merely extending such permission for wider pastoral application, but remains committed to "the need to overcome past prejudices, misunderstandings, indifference and the language of contempt and hostility [and to continue] the Jewish-Christian dialogue...to enrich and deepen the bonds of friendship which have developed."¹⁹

15. Where may Bishops turn for support and assistance with the implementation of the Apostolic Letter and the supervision of the extraordinary form of the Roman Liturgy?

The Committee on the Liturgy and its Secretariat are charged by the USCCB with the supervision of the implementation of the provisions of *Ecclesia Dei Adflicta*, and will continue to provide support and advice on this important pastoral initiative.

16. Prior to the publication of this Apostolic Letter, what provisions have been in force?

By a the letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (*Quattuor abhinc annos*, 1984), Pope John Paul II granted to diocesan Bishops the use of an indult whereby priests

16 Cf. SP, no. 9§2.

17 Cf. SP, no. 9§3.

18 Cf. SP, nos. 11 and 12.

19 Pope Benedict XVI, On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, October 27, 2005.

and faithful would be allowed to celebrate the 1962 edition of the *Missale Romanum*, providing that such priests or faithful: (1) accepted the legitimacy and doctrinal exactitude of the post-conciliar *Missale Romanum*; (2) celebrated these rites in a church designated by the bishop; (3) and celebrated these rites according to the 1962 *Missale Romanum*, without intermingling the post-conciliar rites. Pope John Paul II encouraged Bishops to make “a wide and generous application” of this indult in the *motu proprio Ecclesia Dei Afflicta* (1988).

17. How does the new Apostolic Letter differ from these previous provisions?

The Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XVI differs from the previous provisions in the following ways:

	<i>Quattuor Abhinc Annos</i> and <i>Ecclesia Dei Adflicta</i>	<i>Summorum Pontificum</i>
What books may be used?	The 1962 <i>Missale Romanum</i>	The 1962 <i>Missale Romanum</i> and all other Roman liturgical rites in force in 1962
Who may permit the use of these books?	The Diocesan Bishop may grant permission to priests or groups of the faithful at his discretion, but should be wide and generous in application of this indult	Any Priest of the Latin Church may celebrate the extraordinary form privately. Pastors are asked to receive willingly the request of groups of the faithful for the Mass and the Sacraments according to the extraordinary form.
Who supervises the celebration of the Liturgy of either form?	The Diocesan Bishop supervises the correct celebration of all liturgical rites. The Diocesan Bishop must report to the Holy See on progress of indults he has granted	The Diocesan Bishop maintains vigilance over the correct celebration of all liturgical rites, both ordinary and extraordinary. If the pastor is unable to respond to the request of a group of the faithful, the Bishop receives the request. If the Bishop is not able to respond, the matter may be referred to the Ecclesia Dei Commission, which enjoys competence over the extraordinary rite on behalf of the Holy See.
Where may celebrations of the extraordinary form take place?	The celebrations take place only in a place designated by the Diocesan Bishop, but usually not in a parish Church.	There is no restriction on where the extraordinary form may be celebrated.
Must those celebrating the older form acknowledge the current liturgical books?	A condition of granting the indult is acknowledgement of the legitimacy and doctrinal exactitude of the current <i>Missale Romanum</i> .	There is no requirement for a determination of acceptance of the current <i>Roman Missal</i> by those seeking to celebrate the extraordinary form, although this appears to be presumed.
May rites from the two forms be mixed?	No admixture of the rites of the 1962 and current editions of the <i>Missale Romanum</i> is allowed.	The vernacular edition of the Lectionary for Mass may be used in the extraordinary form, while the 1962 calendar is to be followed. The Ecclesia Dei Commission will study the eventual integration of new saints and some prefaces from the ordinary form into the extraordinary Missal.

18. Why are the present norms not adequate to meet these needs?

In his cover letter, the Holy Father notes that while the present norms have been applied to good pastoral effect in many circumstances, difficulties remain “because of the lack of precise juridical norms, particularly because Bishops, in such cases, frequently feared that the authority of the Council would be

called into question.”²⁰ The new norms are intended “to free Bishops from constantly having to evaluate anew how they are to respond to various situations.”²¹

19. Does this action call into question the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council?

No. The Holy Father makes clear that the current *Missale Romanum* is the ordinary form (*forma ordinaria*) of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The extraordinary form is found in the 1962 Missal of Blessed John XXIII.²²

20. When will the Apostolic Letter take effect?

The Apostolic letter will take effect on September 14, 2007, the feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross.



Ten Questions on the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms of the *Missale Romanum*

1. Why was the 1962 Missal of Blessed John XXIII chosen as the extraordinary form?

From the time of the Council of Trent to the Second Vatican Council there were seven official editions of the *Missale Romanum*. They were promulgated by Popes Saint Pius V (1570), Clement VI (1604), Urban VIII (1634), Leo XII (1994), Saint Pius X (1911), Benedict XV (1920), and Blessed John XXIII (1962). The 1962 edition was chosen as the last edition of the *Missale Romanum* promulgated before the Second Vatican Council.

2. Are the extraordinary and ordinary forms entirely different?

The Holy Father observes that there is “no contradiction between them and that the history of liturgical books is characterized by “growth and progress, but no rupture.”²³

What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful. It behooves all of us to preserve the riches which have developed in the Church’s faith and prayer, and to give them their proper place.²⁴

3. How does participation of the faithful in the *Missale Romanum* of Blessed John XXIII differ from the *Missale Romanum* of the Servant of God, John Paul II?

In both the ordinary and extraordinary forms of the *Missale Romanum*, full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful is to be desired above all else.²⁵ In both forms, this begins with an interior participation in the sacrifice of Christ, to which the gathered assembly is joined by the prayers and rites of the Mass. The ordinary form of the rite customarily accomplishes this participation through listening and responding to the prayers of the Mass in the vernacular, and by taking part in forms of exterior communal

20 Pope Benedict XVI, Cover letter to the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*.

21 Ibid.

22 Pope Benedict XVI, Cover letter to the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 14.

action. The extraordinary form accomplishes this participation largely through listening to the prayers in Latin and following the words and actions of the Priest and joining our hearts to “what is said by him in the Name of Christ and [what] Christ says [to] him.”²⁶

4. How does the role of the Priest differ in the *Missale Romanum* of Blessed John XXIII differ from the *Missale Romanum* of the Servant of God, John Paul II?

The major differences concerning the role of the Priest in the ordinary and extraordinary forms pertain to orientation and language. During most moments of the Mass the Priest faces the altar with his back to the people. All prayers are in Latin, with only the readings and the Homily in the vernacular.

5. What other major differences characterize the extraordinary and ordinary forms of the *Missale Romanum*?

Extraordinary Form (1962)	Ordinary Form (2007)
includes 1% of Old Testament	includes 14% of Old Testament
includes 17% of New Testament	includes 71% of New Testament
Begins with prayers at the foot of the altar prayed privately by priest and server	Begins with a greeting and communal penitential rite
One Eucharistic Prayer: the Roman Canon	Nine Eucharistic Prayers, the first of which is the Roman Canon
Faithful usually receive Holy Communion only under one kind	Allows for wider distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds to the faithful
Last Gospel and Prayers to Saint Michael the Archangel included in closing rites	Closing rites include Prayer after Communion, Blessing and Dismissal
Preserves prayers and rites of 1570 with some changes	Simplifies prayers and rites in the light of contemporary research and understanding
Only clerics or “altar boys” perform liturgical ministry	Restores lay liturgical ministries and encourages careful differentiation of roles

6. What are the reasons why people remain strongly attached to the preconciliar form?

The Holy Father suggests a number of reasons. In the case of the followers of Archbishop Lefebvre, while the preconciliar Missal became “an external mark of identity,” it is clear that “the reasons for the break, which arose over this, however, were at a deeper level.”²⁷

Some remained strongly attached to rites with which they had become familiar from childhood. A primary cause of this affection in other faithful Catholics was the false sense of creativity unfortunately practiced by some in the celebration of the postconciliar liturgical rites, leading to “deformations of the liturgy which were hard to bear.”²⁸ The Holy Father adds a personal note in his cover letter: “I am speaking from experience, since I too lived through that period with all its hopes and its confusion. And I have seen how arbitrary deformations of the liturgy caused deep pain to individuals totally rooted in the faith of the Church.”²⁹

26 Saint Pius X, in *The Daily Missal and Liturgical Manual from the Editio Typica of the Roman Missal and Breviary*, 1962, Baronius Press, London, 2004, p. 897.

27 Pope Benedict XVI, Cover letter to the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

Finally, the Holy Father describes those young people who “have discovered this liturgical form, felt its attraction and found in it a form of encounter with the Mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist, particularly suited to them.”³⁰ With this *motu proprio* he is responding to all three of these groups.

7. Won't the new norms cause division in parishes and exacerbate the tensions between those attached to the preconciliar and postconciliar forms?

The Holy Father sees such fears as “quite unfounded,” since the kind of rubrical and linguistic skills required for the preconciliar form is not found very often. It is, therefore, “clearly seen that the new Missal will certainly remain the ordinary Form of the Roman Rite, not only on account of the juridical norms, but also because of the actual situation of the communities of the faithful.”³¹

8. How will the two forms influence each other?

The Holy Father expresses his hope that the new saints and some of the new prefaces can eventually be integrated into the 1962 *Missal* by the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission, while the use of the preconciliar form will enhance an appreciation in the ordinary form for “the sacrality which attracts many people to the former usage.” In this regard he emphasizes: “The most sure guarantee that the Missal of Paul VI can unite parish communities and be loved by them consists in its being celebrated with great reverence in harmony with the liturgical directives.”³²

9. What are the challenges for those attached to the preconciliar form?

The Holy Father notes certain “exaggerations and at times social aspects” linked to “the attitude of the faithful attached to the ancient Latin liturgical tradition.” For this reason he asks for “charity and pastoral prudence.”³³

10. What mandate did the fathers of the Second Vatican Council give for the renewal of the Sacred Liturgy?

In the *Constitution on the Liturgy (Sacrosanctum concilium)*, number 50, the Council Fathers decreed that:

The Order of Mass is to be revised in a way that will bring out more clearly the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as also the connection between them, and will more readily achieve the devout, active participation of the faithful.

For this purpose the rites are to be simplified, due care being taken to preserve their substance; elements that, with the passage of time, came to be duplicated or were added with but little advantage are now to be discarded; other elements that have suffered injury through accident of history are now, as may seem useful or necessary, to be restored to the vigor they had in the traditions of the Fathers.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Pope Benedict XVI, Cover letter to the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*.

33 Ibid.