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Editor's Note: *The following is the text of a lecture as prepared for delivery at the Paix Liturgique conference in Rome (Oct. 28, 2022).*

Whenever traditionalists object to or reject a particular papal determination on the liturgy — be it the creation of novel liturgical books or the severe limitation of the use of customary rites — our so-called conservative opponents are ready to assail us with a battery of proof-texts drawn from popes like St. Pius X or Pius XII, or from Vatican II, or from neo-scholastic manuals, to the effect that "the pope has the right to change the liturgy, to institute this or that rite as he pleases" etc., because, as Vatican I teaches, he has supreme, universal, and immediate jurisdiction over the Church. There is obviously some truth to such an assertion, but it doesn't prove as much as those who say it think it proves.

First, any statement like this is governed by certain implicit norms. For example, that the pope can institute or alter rites has never been taken to mean he can abolish a rite altogether, e.g., one of the Eastern rites of the Church over which he is technically the supreme head with universal and immediate juridical authority. And if he were to do so, the Byzantine Catholics would be fully within their rights to ignore his action altogether and carry on as if nothing had changed. There are misuses or abuses of authority that cancel out its action, and we are capable of formulating criteria for such cases.

Second, the pope may arguably have the authority to institute new rites, but these would be supplemental to, and not in contradiction to, traditional rites. Put it this way: the only basis on which a pope can justly introduce a new edition of a liturgical book that supplants a former edition is if there is manifest continuity between the old and new books, so that one can truthfully say: "It is the same book, only augmented with new feasts, or edited in minor ways, or purged of typographical errors," etc. That is why we can say each *editio typica* or official edition of the missal of St. Pius V — the 1604 *editio* from Clement VIII, the 1634 from Urban VIII, the 1884 from Leo XIII, and the 1920 from Benedict XV — is still the same missal, containing the same Roman Rite. When, however, we reach Pius XII's severe alterations to Holy Week, which made their way into the *editio typica* of John XXIII, we are already looking at a seriously problematic situation: it is not possible to claim that the Pacellian Holy Week is essentially in continuity with the cumulative preceding tradition. So, in the 1962 missal there is already a compromising "crack" in the structure, as it were, and this was interpreted by many liturgists at the time as the anticipation of (and invitation to) a total alteration, a substantial change, yet to come. Once we get to the *Novus Ordo* missal, in which only 13% of the euchological or prayer-text material is identical to that which is found

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in the 1962 missal, we are manifestly dealing with a different missal, having of course some generic resemblances, but certainly not "in the same line" of development, not another individual of the same species. Hence it is a *new rite* of Mass (and the same can be said of the other new sacramental rites), and so logically its introduction does not abrogate or obrogate the old rite of Mass; it simply joins it as a sibling (again, I'm giving here the most positive interpretation possible). In no way, shape, or form could Paul VI's action be construed as a replacement of one Roman Missal with another edition of it. And he himself seems to have recognized this fact quite clearly because, for the first time, he did not include St. Pius V's bull *Quo Primum* at the head of his missal, signifying that it no longer belongs to the family of papally sponsored missals inaugurated (but not created) in 1570. As Alfons Cardinal Stickler said:

> "It cannot … escape experts of the old liturgy what a great distinction exists between the *corpus traditionum*, which was alive in the old Mass, and the contrived *Novus Ordo* — to the decided disadvantage of the latter. Shepherds, scholars, and lay faithful have noticed it, of course; and the multitude of opposing voices increased with time.… It is becoming clearer and clearer that the radicalism of the post-Conciliar reformers did not consist of renewing the Catholic liturgy from its roots [as one might do by applying a well-chosen fertilizer], but in tearing it from its traditional soil. [The reform] did not rework the Roman rite, which it was asked to do by the Liturgy Constitution of Vatican II, but uprooted it."[1]

Hyperpapalists Ignore the Actual Historical Record

Hyperpapalist apologists — those who defend the idea that the pope has a virtually unlimited power to change the liturgy[2] — are wrong precisely because of the way they have framed the conversation. To start by placing the liturgy on the operating table like an anaesthetized patient with the pope as the head surgeon is to begin with so fundamental an error that one will not be able to avoid a cascade of absurd conclusions.[3] Since the belief that the liturgy is the "pope's toy" (to use the colorful expression of Bishop Mutsaerts) is out of the question before any discussion begins, there need not be a laborious inquiry into whether he can smash his toy or replace it with a toy he likes better. Indeed, the hyperpapalists never seem to ask themselves a very simple question: If what they maintain were true, then why has no pope prior to modern times ever behaved *as if* it were true? Put differently, how does one explain the fact that, of 266 popes, only a handful have made significant changes to the liturgical rites, while the vast majority have been content to hand on what they have received, with a default conservatism? And of those that made the most

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significant changes, why should it be the case that most of them are concentrated in the 20th century, indeed, in the second half of the 20th century? And can we explain why, if we take *all* the changes of the popes prior to Paul VI and put them together, they would still weigh less in the balance than those that *Paul VI alone* pushed through?

Judging from the actions and words of popes (that is, when they spoke of it at all) and the general practice of the Church, the impression one gains from Catholic history is that the sacred *rites* — not just the "form and matter" of the sacraments — are a hallowed inheritance to be revered and followed with humility. The idea that a pope, especially after a long period of stability, could draw up new rites from scratch was unthinkable. So, the problem I have with some of today's apologists who dig up old scholastics who go on at length about how the pope can do practically anything he wants with the liturgy is that they — both the apologists and the scholastics, on this point — are acting like ivory-tower intellectuals who are defending a principle that, in fact, is *irrelevant* to the actual historical record and life of the Church. If a pope were to change everything but the matter and form of a sacrament, he would deserve total condemnation from an ecclesiological, anthropological, spiritual, and every other point of view, regardless of whatever arguments might be made for his supposed "authority" to do so. Nor would the Christian people have tolerated something like that in healthier times, before the mental corruption of hyperpapalism had infected both their brains and the brains of the popes with a legal positivism that destroys habits of mind and affections of heart.

Shouldn't we take more seriously the fact that *for fifteen centuries* (that's a rather long time, you know) the Church was able to proceed in her liturgical life *without* the need for a centrally curated, papally-promulgated missal? For fifteen centuries Christendom had tens of thousands of missals scattered on tens of thousands of altars, copied by hand from one generation to the next, without the *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* (so to speak) of the Roman Pontiff. I'm not saying that there wasn't an emergency situation that called for the Council of Trent's and St. Pius V's centralizing moves, but rather, that we can see from three-fourths of the Church's history that the liturgy was obviously something that belonged to (and was seen to belong to) *the Church as a whole*. It was not anyone's property to dispose of, but everyone's privileged inheritance to receive and hand on. Certainly the pope can insert himself into this process, but precisely on the condition that he too, as a member of the Church, a recipient of tradition, and a guardian of the *status ecclesiae*, does not treat the liturgy as his own property to dispose of (by which I mean: radically alter or abolish[4]). This is why some older authors say the pope could become "schismatic" by attacking the rites of the Church.[5] It's not simply a question of bare validity, which is what a materialist, reductionist mentality would find sufficient or perhaps exhaustive; it's about the honorable standing of the rites of divine worship in the sight of God and of the Church, which endows

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them with a certain priority over *any* member of the Church. It is for this reason that a Catholic should prefer to have someone like Alexander VI as pope over Paul VI or Francis any day. Alexander may have been a bad man, morally speaking, but he did not dare to touch the traditional rites of the Church. He celebrated the papal Mass with respect for the rituals and rubrics, as any believing Catholic would do.

What we are dealing with, I suppose, is a typically modern (Enlightenment, liberal, individualist, secularist) failure to understand or even to acknowledge the concept of tradition as such. What room is there for *paradosis* or *traditio* in a worldview of nominalism and voluntarism, where the Roman Rite can be whatever the pope says it is, regardless of continuity or rupture with the past? It seems to obliterate any positive meaning to Christian history in itself, seeing only the present moment as having any weight. The reason why popes did not act in accordance with the theories of Franzelin (or whoever) is that they actually had a healthy, inherited, almost instinctive understanding that rites are an expression of the living faith of the Church and of the working of the Holy Spirit across the centuries. To change them substantively would therefore be to undermine the stability of the *lex credendi* and to reject the gifts of Providence.[6] Needless to say, this is a serious crime.

Quo Primum vs. Vatican II

With this perspective in mind, let us return to the great Pope St. Pius V. The *Missale Romanum* hepromulgated in 1570 was, as you all know, not a new book at all, but one that definitively embodied and represented the cumulative millennial tradition of Rome as well as the Council of Trent's dogmatic confession, which this missal enshrined for all times and places. That is why *Quo Primum* is not "merely disciplinary" in nature: Pius V was canonizing the Roman Rite of Mass because it flawlessly contains and transmits the authentic Catholic Faith, over against the errors of the Protestants (and many other heresies besides, from ancient times onward). In contrast, Vatican II, though a valid council, defined nothing dogmatically and anathematized no errors. It is therefore impossible to see Paul VI's new missal as a *dogmatic* synthesis mandated by a dogmatic Council. Moreover, nearly everyone by now is aware of the huge gap between what the Second Vatican Council asked for and what Paul VI approved, which would mean that, by any objective rational standard, the Mass of Paul VI cannot even be considered "the Mass of Vatican II."

Moreover — and this is the crucial point — if the supposed "Mass of Vatican II" is so different from the "Mass of Trent" (or, in other words, the Mass of the whole of the Latin tradition) that it cannot be celebrated by the same priests and the same faithful but must definitively *replace, supplant, and cancel out* the old liturgy, then it *must* be a false liturgy,

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one that departs from tradition, from the witness of the saints, councils, and popes that used it before and confessed the one true Faith through it.

If we take Pope Francis's claim in *Traditionis Custodes* seriously — that there is only "one unique Roman Rite" — it does not have the effect of cancelling out the *old* Mass; it has the effect, rather, of cancelling out the *new* Mass as well as his own authority (at least in regard to this matter). It is a brilliant example of someone sawing off the branch on which he is sitting: one cannot declare the past liturgical tradition to be no longer reflective of the theology of the Church without implying necessarily that this theology has changed in so decisive a manner that it is no longer essentially the same. In short, the Church would have fundamentally altered her *lex credendi*, and that is why a new *lex orandi* was required. But if that is true, then the "new theology" and the "new worship" are false and must be rejected. In short, papal authority has to at least be logically consistent and theologically coherent, and if it is obviously otherwise, it self-destructs.[7]

Papal Authority During Times of Doctrinal Crisis

Do we say, then, that Francis has no authority? That he is not pope? If he is pope, surely his documents are magisterial and his determinations — as with a motu proprio on liturgical law — carry force? To this, I reply with Fr. John Hunwicke that St. John Henry Newman has offered us a powerful explanatory principle when he spoke of the "suspension" of episcopal authority during the Arian crisis, inasmuch as most bishops no longer openly professed and passed on the Catholic Faith in the divinity of Christ. Fr. Hunwicke says that in our time, the pope's magisterium, analogously to that of the Arian or Semi-Arian or complicit bishops, is in a "state of suspension." At least in regard to matters on which the pope has gone astray, his teaching and his decrees are empty, void, without force, without standing; they are prevented by intrinsic defects from taking effect. This can be argued about a large number of statements and actions of Pope Francis over the past decade. Michael Charlier explains this point well:

> "We assume that due to the Argentinean's style of government, accurately described by Gagliarducci, the papal magisterium is currently in a state of suspension. The Pope talks and writes a lot; some of it agrees with the traditional Magisterium of the Church, some of it directly contradicts it, and some of it eludes immediate classification because of its incoherence. Dealing with this situation is unfamiliar and highly irritating for Catholics, but by no means impossible, and without succumbing to the illusion of a 'Magisterium in constant flux' created by Francis.

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> To put it very briefly, when Francis repeats something that the Church has always taught, we are happy to hear it without recognizing in it a magisterium of the pope's own. It is nothing but unbroken tradition. Where he says something that directly contradicts the traditional Magisterium and Tradition, we take note of it with chagrin as his personal opinion — an opinion, however, that does not bind Catholics in any way. And where he says something that seems incomprehensible or incoherent, we will recognize in it — at best — an impetus for reflection.
>
> In this reflection on papal contradictions, however, we will in no case let ourselves be guided by the ludicrous construct of his Jesuit colleague Spadaro that 'in theology' '2 + 2 can also add up to 5.' Theology is not mathematics, that is true; but '2 + 2 = 5' is in any case nonsense, it is untruth, and therefore a blasphemy against the divine order. Such a thing cannot become the content of the ecclesiastical teaching authority even if a pope should say it."

In this connection it is worth bringing up a key distinction made by Fr. Chad Ripperger. He says that in a period of time in which some ecclesial documents no longer have "any connection to the positions held by the Magisterium prior to the Second Vatican Council," the Catholic is faced with a choice: he must be either a "magisterial positivist" who believes that "whatever the current Magisterium says is always what is 'orthodox,'" or a "traditionalist" who takes "Scripture, intrinsic tradition, extrinsic tradition, and the current Magisterium as the principles of judgment of correct Catholic thinking." The positivist is ready to change his mind — literally to contradict himself or any authoritative source of the past, including dogmatic definitions and immemorial monuments of faith — if an authority says he must do so, whereas the traditionalist receives and abides by all authoritative sources, according to their inherent weight, seeing them as permanent witnesses to the truth. Fr. Ripperger says that each of us must take a stand: Do I believe that "[the newer] is necessarily better…because it is *present* (Hegelianism), because it *comes from us* (immanentism)," or do I "hold to the extrinsic tradition as something good, something which is the product of the wisdom and labor of the saints and the Church throughout history"?[8]

Thus, when someone challenges us: "Do *you* know better than the pope?", our response is quite simple: "Why, yes, in this matter, we certainly do." Just as St. Athanasius of Alexandria (and every layman who supported him) knew better than Pope Liberius; as Justinian knew better than Pope Vigilius; as King Philip VI of Valois knew better than Pope John XXII; as the French laity knew better than Leo XIII's *ralliement* to the anticlerical Masonic government; so, too, the traditionalist laity, clergy, and religious know better than Paul VI's liturgical reform or Francis's assault on the common good of the People of God. We don't even need

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to be half as intelligent or brave as our forefathers in the movement, who, from the mid-1960s onward, *predicted* the disasters that would befall the Church if the reform continued in the direction Paul VI had set. Today, more than fifty years after the infamous promulgation of the *Novus Ordo Missae* and the rest of the novelties, we can see with our own shocked eyes and hear with our assaulted ears the global catastrophe, the abomination of desolation, that has replaced Catholic divine worship and driven away millions of the baptized. I will not bore you with the kind of statistics and horror stories with which all of us are, I'm sure, much too familiar already.

Obviously, the equivalent of "2+2=5" in the liturgical domain is the statement that "[t]he liturgical books promulgated by Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II, in conformity with the decrees of Vatican Council II are the unique expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman Rite." That's a quotation, of course, from *Traditionis Custodes.* It is perfect nonsense, an untruth, and therefore a blasphemy against the divine order.

Even as a habit of lying begins with "white lies" and moves on to more and bigger lies, gathering momentum along the way like a boulder rolling down a hill, so too, starting from this primordial falsehood, Pope Francis, Cardinal Roche, and other enemies of the liturgical heritage of the Church gain momentum as they seek the eventual abolition and extinction of the *usus antiquior* from the face of the earth. Yet we know well, as Joseph Ratzinger said many different times, that it is contrary to the spirit of the Church to actively abolish or persecute any of her orthodox rites. The entire framework of *Traditionis Custodes* and the *Responsa ad Dubia* is constructed on the basis of the assumption that the rites of the Church are the pope's toy.[9] All further structures based on this erroneous notion of papal power are equally invalid. In dealing with the fallout of these documents, we are permitted to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16), in other words, to be pragmatic and find workarounds and temporary compromises, but we must never forget there are questions of truth at stake. To compromise the truth for the sake of expediency or comfort is cowardly and unworthy of the One Whom we wish to serve, the One Whom the office of Compline calls *Deus veritatis.* Gabriel Marcel observes: "Bravery by no means consists in deluding oneself about a given situation. It reaches its zenith, on the contrary, when the situation is most clearly appreciated."[10] Let us clearly appreciate our situation, that we may act bravely.

Weaponizing the Law and Obedience

Remember: the thugs in charge use law as a weapon and obedience as an arena for psychological manipulation. Motu proprios and the like are, for them, smokescreens for their agendas. They do not care about logical consistency. They do not care about following

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the rules that they themselves establish (as we can see when Francis, in arbitrarily removing bishops he doesn't like, refuses to follow due canonical process, violating the very rules he approved). They do not care about unity or the good of souls. They care about power over people and they will use that power to advance a modernized neo-Catholicism. A Canadian commentator quite rightly points out:

> "The people who do these things — this pope and his collaborators — have never in their lives been constrained by the letter of any laws, neither civil/secular, nor moral nor divine law, nor even any law they themselves have written. These are people of criminal minds with only their own goals and purposes before them.
>
> This is the key we must understand: they know the law is important to the people they are attacking**,** which is why they're using it as a weapon against the remaining faithful. But they themselves don't care about the law, and do not understand it. They have a completely prescriptive, deterministic, positivist view of the law. The mind of a tyrant is like the mind of a six-year-old child; the law is what is written down and you must obey it. There is no 'higher law,' no concept that the law serves a higher set of purposes or [has] principles that lead or guide it. Though they will happily mouth such nostrums, not one of them has ever conceived of laws as servants to any greater good. Law = power."[11]

Knowing this — knowing that rulers in the Church are abusing their authority and weaponizing canon law — we also know that our principled resistance is not a matter of "being disobedient." It's recognizing with one's faith and reason what is inherently right and doing it, in the fear and love of God, without begging, wheedling, or apologizing. Obedience, after all, is grounded always in reason and in the *sensus fidei fidelium*. It can never contradict them, cancel them out, or trample on them. Our thoughts and actions must be rooted in *true principles*, so that we may avoid or escape the trap of an exaggerated, overly-spiritualized and even fetishized "obedience" that derives from the dubious blind "*perinde ac cadaver*" obedience cultivated in Jesuit religious life.[12]

Appeal to Priests

Dear priests of God who offer the old Mass and the old rites of the sacraments, who use the *Rituale Romanum* and pray the *Breviarium Romanum*: you who know what the *usus antiquior* means in itself; what it has come to mean to you personally; what it means to the people to whom you minister — you cannot stand by and comply with this tyranny. Your promise of "obedience to the bishop" must never serve as a blanket cover for the modernist

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takeover of the Church, which is exactly what we are witnessing. It is not “the Church” or “the bishop” that is asking you to renounce what is noble, great, beautiful, holy, true, nourishing to you and to the faithful. Neither Jesus Christ Who bestowed upon us the bimillennial heritage of the Church nor His immaculate Bride would ever ask such a thing, nor would any shepherd who walks in the footsteps of the Lord and who loves His Bride.

No, it is the “prison-guards of treachery,” *custodes traditionis* — that is, the progressives, liberals, and modernists who have occupied high positions, the lavender mafia who use threats, blackmail, and bribes — these are the ones who command you now (and who manipulate bishops lower on the roster) to throw away the wisdom of Benedict XVI, to abandon your missals and your flocks, to grovel for a permission they will eagerly deny. These men would rather see a dying Church wedded to a dying modern West than a living Church rediscovering the joy of her youth. To bind yourself to them is to bind yourself to death, and to abandon the wellsprings of spiritual and ecclesial life.

We know that the liberals, progressives, and modernists are wrong in what they are saying and doing precisely because it is uncatholic or anti-Catholic. The traditionalists are the ones who are striving to live and fight for what is and has always been and will always be Catholic. Do not let conservatives get away with claiming there is a logical parallel between, for example, dissenters from *Humanae Vitae* and so-called dissenters from *Traditionis Custodes*. There is no parallel. The situations are, in fact, contraries. We obey *Humanae Vitae* for the same reason we reject *Traditionis Custodes*: that is, we adhere to the constant teaching and practice of the Church, which has ever been against contraception, and ever in favor of liturgical tradition.

There is a mentality of legal positivism that must be overcome if Catholicism is to flourish again. It is a tremendous sickness to reduce the treasury of the Faith to a schoolroom exercise in connecting canonical dots or checking off boxes of compliance. There are higher laws and higher goods at stake. Just as philosophy and reason itself have nearly been asphyxiated by scientific positivism, so theology and faith are being asphyxiated by legal positivism. I say this to all tradition-loving Catholics across the world, who are or may soon be faced with unjust and burdensome restrictions (like those imposed on the faithful in Washington, DC; Arlington, Virginia; Chicago, and Savannah): yes, *pray* for your bishops, *pray* for the pope, *pray* for your enemies and persecutors, fast and pray that the demons may be cast out and peace restored; but do *not* put your own salvation at risk by obeying that which must never be obeyed, that which must be resisted if you expect to look at yourself in the mirror and not flinch because you have denied what you know to be right and true.

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Look to Our Tradition-Loving Forefathers

In many ways, our situation is bleak. Is it time for us to surrender to despair? Of course not. We pray more than ever. We support the TLM and its priests more than ever. We give our money only to good causes. We show up at public events and protests. We learn from our tradition-loving forefathers in the 1970s. We never give up the fight. We take our inspiration from the clear-thinking and courageous priests of the decades immediately following Vatican II who refused to comply with what they knew was disastrous to the life of the Church: the brilliant Fr. Bryan Houghton; the formidable Fr. Roger-Thomas Calmel; the monastic founder Fr. Gerard Calvet; the forthright Abbé Georges de Nantes; Fr. Gommar dePauw; Fr. Yves Normandin; Fr. George Kathrein; of course, Archbishop Lefebvre; and many others, including priests who tried to say the new Mass for a while and then gave it up as a lost cause.[13] We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all of these priests (and a few bishops, too) for keeping the flame of tradition burning bright in a dark time, when it almost seemed as if, after all, Hannibal had conquered Rome. Because of them, we are able to say today: The liturgical tradition of the Roman Church has never been totally and irreparably broken; it continues, alive, alongside the inorganic, incoherent Montinian Rite that sought to replace it. It has always been right and just to give thanks to God for the heroes who resisted the rupture with tradition, but now, after July 16, 2021, we should express our debts all the more. I would like to pay homage in a particular way to Michael Davies, who was a huge personal inspiration to me in taking up the work I have been doing now for many years. In a 1976 letter to Bishop Hugh Donohoe of Fresno, California, Davies wrote the following words, which have gained a new relevance 46 years later:

> "A law can cease to bind without revocation on the part of the legislator when it is clearly harmful, impossible, or irrational. If forbidding faithful Catholics to honor God by worshipping Him in the most venerable and hallowed rite in Christendom does not meet those conditions, it would be hard to imagine anything that did."[14]

Inspired by "so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1), we are preparing ourselves for a period like the early 1970s, when lovers of Catholic Tradition — in spite of their own instincts and wishes! — had to set themselves against the institution's abusive leaders in order to carry forward the full inheritance of the saints. And this perseverance, which stalwartly ignored "disciplinary action," is what led eventually to the *Pax Benedictina*, that is, to *Summorum Pontificum*, with its still-burgeoning fruits. In the words, once again, of Michael Charlier:

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> "If Francis does attempt to completely displace the authentic Roman rite from the Church of Rome, and if one or more successors should follow him in this, the question will arise sooner rather than later for all who know that this rite cannot and must not be abandoned, as to how they are to accomplish the maintenance of an independent 'rite church,' even if this should bring great difficulties, distress of conscience, and the slander of being 'schismatics.' The recognition of such a church of the rite of Pope St. Gregory by the pope of Rome will then follow someday. Perhaps a future Gregory XVII is already a seminarian of a faithful community."[15]

This is what it looks like today to rely on Divine Providence: not to throw away the Faith or its highest and noblest expressions because a pope or a bishop tells us to, owing to his own hatred of the past, which stands in judgment over our modern vices and errors, but rather, to hold fast to all that is true, good, beautiful, and holy, relying on God to deliver us from our enemies, to make straight our paths, to prosper the work of our hands. When we do what is within our hands to do, He will bless our fidelity to Him and raise up in the future the structures of support and recognition we deserve and desire.

Principled Resistance: A Battle Over the Faith

The question of what to do exactly is and cannot avoid being an intellectual struggle, because we do not know what the future holds, either for diocesan clergy or for the Ecclesia Dei institutes. It is my considered opinion that the policy of *Traditionis Custodes* will eventually be reversed and that the Ecclesia Dei institutes will endure; but this pope is capable of any irrational and cruel act, and his successor — may God forbid it! — might be cut from the same cloth. We have to think in the long term.

Conservative apologists for the papacy seem to think that a villainous pope means the refutation of Catholicism itself. If they actually believe this — and it seems they've painted themselves into that corner intellectually due to a simplistic reading of Vatican I — then it's understandable why they defend the pope even when he acts to destroy the very thing he is obliged by his office to uphold and protect. Concerning the "way out" of this unprecedented crisis of an ecclesiastical autoimmune disorder, I think it's fair to admit no easy answer presents itself; and no solution may emerge for years or even decades. It is fair to say, I think, that Catholicism cannot persist indefinitely without a pope who actually does his job, and at the very least does not actively carry out villainy by attacking the thing he is supposed to defend. But it seems to me that such a state of dysfunctionality is possible for a long period of time. How long? There's no way to know. Yet there are truths — luminous, majestic, imperishable, utterly reliable — that we can *know*; that we have a *duty* to know;

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and that we have a *right* to embrace, cherish, act upon, and hand down, as we build our lives upon the rock of truth. In the stirring words of Fr. Kevin Cusick:

> "If there is one thing which is irreducibly and irrevocably Catholic, it is the official prayer, revealed by Our Lord, handed down under obedience by His Apostles, sanctified by the Holy Spirit through the ages and offered at one time everywhere by everyone. Only one liturgy meets this definition: the traditional Latin Mass. For this reason, the ancient form of the Mass is part and parcel now and always of the Catholic Faith. Because this is so, no man, pope or lay, may alienate the faithful, by any means, from this most sacred ritual. There is no power on this earth which can violate the Divine Will manifest in this or any other form of revelation.
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> The new Mass, by contrast, has never been accepted by everyone in the Church, beset as it has been from the beginning by controversy, bringing with it rampant abuses, scandal, sacrilege and loss of faith. The only constant by which it can be measured is a continuing decline in attendance. Men may try [to oppose the *usus antiquior*], as they have tried before and failed, but the Mass of all time will never be extirpated from the earth any more than the Faith itself can be erased. All that is necessary is the perseverance of one faithful soul. There is an army of such souls who keep the flame of faith alive throughout the world, now as always."[16]

The opponents of the Western liturgical heritage can thunder and fulminate, call names and wag fingers, ghettoize and demonize, threaten, cancel, suspend, and suppress — they can try all of that, as their forebears did decades ago after the Council, using the same tactics. Yet they will ultimately fail, because those of us who hold on to the traditional Roman liturgy (and with it, the traditional Catholic Faith *in toto*) do so as a matter of *principle*, not as a pragmatic "take it or leave it" affair, and there are more of us all the time — far, far more than there were in the dark days of the 1970s. Moreover, our human enemies are much less diplomatic and guarded about their intentions; they have made no attempt to hide their modernist agenda. They have made it easy for us to see through their specious reasons and disdain their illicit acts. It might have been possible once upon a time for some to imagine that our disputes were only about liturgical fine points, but now we can see that they implicate the integrity and truthfulness of the Catholic Faith, the unity of the Church with herself over time. This is, as it has always been (but never so clearly), a battle over the Faith.

Even as it is said that the devil cannot comprehend any human action springing from

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humility, the anti-traditionalists too have a fatal blind spot. Owing to intellectual and moral impediments, they do not understand the precise kind of “attachment” or “adherence” we have to the traditional rites of the Church. Because this is the secret strength of our movement, compensating for our minority status and our relative lack of worldly resources, I would like to delve into it for a few moments.

The Nature and Role of *Pietas*

The virtue of *pietas*, piety in its deepest meaning, is the love one has for one’s country in all its concrete beauty and complexity, the *patria* or fatherland for which one is prepared to suffer and die; it is obviously bound up with the love one has for family members to whom one is bound by the most intimate ties of generation, familiarity, longevity, homage, gratitude, and devotion. We have (or should have) piety toward that which suckles and nourishes us, educates us, and lifts us up. We are links on a living chain going back and going forward. This piety is something so deep that it can barely be accurately described: it is both psychological and ontological, in one’s bones as well as in one’s soul, a matter of the heart more than of the head (which is not to say that one could not argue for it when hard-pressed; yet words will never do it justice).

We could say that our love for the traditional worship of the Church is just this kind of thing: a *pietas* for our spiritual fatherland as Catholics of the Latin rite or of an Eastern rite. This piety is what animates Catholics who know and love the millennium-spanning liturgy of the Church. This piety grows over time as we are, so to speak, grafted more and more into the family of the saints and the wisdom of the centuries. It is not some kind of “preference” in a marketplace of merchandise, or a “consolation” we seek for selfish reasons. After a while, it is simply *who and what we are* as Catholics worshiping God and loving the beauty of His holiness, which we experience in this awe-inspiring gift of His Providence — and which, as we put our roots deeper into the tradition, we simply do not find in even the best of the best of the *Novus Ordo*; for it is a different rite, a different family and bloodline, a different world. At least that is how I would describe it, after decades of experience in each — much of that time, attending both as a choir director, until I could not endure the dissonance any more.

We would just as soon give up the ancient rites of the Church as we would give up our mothers and fathers, our husbands and wives, our sons and daughters. Because we are dealing with a spiritual-ethical-existential bond at the core of a person, we can see that the attacks on the traditional Latin liturgy are destined to fail, broadly speaking, and indeed will even backfire. So far from being a battle over “externals,” this war is about what is deepest in the human heart — the place in which faith becomes flesh, and beauty becomes life, and

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prayer becomes real. We have an *immediate* attachment to traditional rites that are constitutive of Catholicism and prior to papal will. (As I mentioned earlier, the Roman liturgy flourished for fifteen centuries before any pope decided to codify and centrally regulate it.)

But those who are on the outside, who have not yet tasted this gift, cannot understand us; they will think it's enough (or "should" be enough) to have a command from an authority, and then we'll all just fall in line. They will think it's enough to add the "smells and bells," as if our interest was so superficial as the merely sensible — as if we are liturgical materialists, so to speak. How foolish, how blind they are! I do not blame the fanciers and apologists of new liturgical forms for their misjudgment of their brethren. The new forms are period fabrications, machines for praying, baubles and books changeable at will, imposed in a moment and disposed of in a moment. There can be no deep, abiding, heart-gripping devotion to such things, no *pietas*. They are like pieces of clothing you put on and take off.

Thus, the stalwart adherents of the *Novus Ordo* — most especially where they have been barely touched by Benedict XVI's dream of a "mutual enrichment," which was never more than a hopeful expedient to jump-start a new liturgical movement (and if you look at how Pope Francis says Mass, you will see that Benedict's vision has barely even rubbed against his shadow) — these new-rite adherents at a fundamental level *cannot* understand their traditional brethren, and that is why, as they try to "help" or, perchance, to "discipline" them, they continue to make the most egregious self-cancelling and martyr-creating blunders. The more they rage against the tradition, the more free advertising they give us, leading more souls to raise the essential questions that must be raised and to seek convincing answers, which will not be found either in the progressivist ideology or in the conservative compromise.

Conclusion: Traditionalists Agree That Unity in Worship is Necessary

In conclusion, Pope Francis and his court say they want "unity" in the worship of the Latin-rite Church. We can absolutely agree with him! Unity is something we all want and need.

- **Unity in language:** Holy Mass should be celebrated in Latin in every corner of the Catholic world where the Latin rite exists, so that it is experienced as always the same, always familiar: everywhere we are at home, instead of being lost in a welter of translations.
- **Unity in ritual:** Holy Mass should be offered with beauty, solemnity, and orderliness, a stable prayer within which one can pray freely and deeply, without chaotic options or trendy inculturations.

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- **Unity in clergy:** Holy Mass should be celebrated in a fixed, constant, reliable way, according to strict and detailed rubrics, so that it makes little or no difference which priest is offering it — rather than varying wildly depending on the celebrant's degree of reverence, taste, and theology (or lack thereof).
- **Unity in orientation:** Holy Mass should be offered eastward, with priest and people alike facing the same direction, a single body looking in hope for the coming of the Lord — not a self-enclosed circle of horizontal humanism.
- **Unity in music:** Holy Mass should be adorned with the same sacred chant that has been sung for centuries, even millennia — not a cacophony of second-rate imitations of modern styles.
- **Unity in tradition:** Holy Mass should be offered in continuity with the worship known by Western saints and sinners across the ages, our brothers and sisters in the Mystical Body — not in rupture from it.

That's a campaign for unity that all of us, I am sure, would enthusiastically support! It is, at least in good part, the reason we are here this weekend. May Our Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2), bless and multiply the efforts of traditional Catholics around the world to help restore to our beloved Catholic Church the visible manifestation of the marks we profess in the Creed — *unam, sanctam, catholicam, et apostolicam* — which are under such assault from the forces of darkness. May Our Lady smile upon us, her children, in this vale of tears.

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[1] See "Recollections of a Vatican II Peritus," *New Liturgical Movement*, June 29, 2022.

[2] See the prolifically hyperpapalist work of Michael Lofton. Tim Gordon is an example of one who defends the superiority of the traditional liturgical rites but simultaneously defends the pope's absolute power of disposal over the liturgy.

[3] As John Monaco has shown very well: see "Was the Sacred Liturgy made for the pope, or the pope for the Sacred Liturgy?," *Catholic World Report*, July 28, 2021; "Are There Limits to Papal Power?," *Catholic World Report*, Oct. 13, 2021; "The Church of the Papal Fiat," *Crisis Magazine*, Jan. 20, 2022.

[4] See Matthew Hazell, "'All the Elements of the Roman Rite'? Mythbusting, Part II," *New Liturgical Movement*, Oct. 1, 2021.

[5] Cardinal Juan de Torquemada (1388–1468), for example, states that if a pope fails to observe "the universal rite of ecclesiastical worship" and "divides himself with pertinacity from the observance of the universal church," he is "able to fall into schism" and is neither to be obeyed nor "put up with" (*non est sustinendus*). For this and other examples, see my lecture, "The Pope's Boundedness to Tradition as a Legislative Limit: Replying to Ultramontanist Apologetics," *Rorate Caeli*, Aug. 3, 2021.

[6] See Peter A. Kwasniewski, *The Once and Future Roman Rite: Returning to the Traditional Latin Liturgy after Seventy Years of Exile* (Gastonia, NC: TAN Books, 2022), pp. 33–77.

[7] The only way a new rite can have legitimacy is if it comes from the same Father (God in His Providence) and Mother (Holy Mother Church in her tradition), and if it peacefully joins its older brothers, the traditional rites of East and West. Otherwise, it is a rebellious bastard.

[8] "Conservative vs. Traditional Catholicism," *Latin Mass* magazine, Spring 2001.

[9] And when you let the pope make the liturgy his "toy," you end up with a situation in which everything is politicized. The liturgy need not be a political football, but a pope can easily make it such.

[10] *Mystery of Being* 2:178.

[11] Hilary White, "Don't be afraid of the Big Bad 'Traditions Custodes,'" *World of Hilarity*, Jan. 15, 2021.

[12] See John Lamont, "Tyranny and Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church: A Jesuit Tragedy," *Catholic Family News*, Oct. 27, 2018. We can make our own the truth declared by the Stoic Epictetus: "When presented with valid principles, treat them as if they were the law and it would be sacrilegious to go against them." *Handbook*, ch. 50; in Kevin Vost, *Memorize the Stoics* (Brooklyn: Angelico Press, 2022), p. 97.

[13] See, *inter alia*: Fr. Bryan Houghton, *Unwanted Priest: The Autobiography of a Latin Mass Exile* (Brooklyn: Angelico Press, 2022); Père Jean-Dominique Fabre, *Le père Roger-Thomas Calmel, 1914-1975: un fils de saint Dominique au XXe siècle* (Suresnes: Clovis Fideliter, 2012); Yves Chiron, *Dom Gérard Calvet, 1927–2008: tourné vers le Seigneur* (Le

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Barroux: Éditions Sainte-Madeleine, 2018); *Pastor Out in the Cold: The Story of Fr. Normandin's Fight for the Latin Mass in Canada* (St. Marys, KS: Angelus Press, 2021); *The Story of Fr. George Kathrein* (St. Marys, KS: Angelus Press, 2022); *Priest, Where Is Thy Mass? Mass, Where Is Thy Priest?*, expanded ed. (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 2004).

[14] "Michael Davies to bishop of Fresno in 1976: 'My Lord, this is not the action of a good shepherd but a bad bureaucrat,'" *Rorate Caeli*, Aug. 30, 2022.

[15] "The amorphous 'Roman rite' and the authentic Roman Rite: A keen analysis by Michael Charlier," *Rorate Caeli*, July 6, 2022; cf. "Interview with Dom Alcuin Reid on his ordination, his community, the diocese of Fréjus-Toulon, and *Desiderio Desideravi*," *Rorate Caeli*, July 15, 2022.

[16] "The Death of a Parish," *Rorate Caeli*, Aug. 4, 2022.

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