One of the stages of intellectual life is realizing that, practically speaking, one can formulate a "response" to any proposition, and what really matters is the reasoning behind those responses.

Just because a response is given, doesn't mean that the assertion is correct. Often, people switch positions or even churches based on who had the last word, who had the unanswerable assertion. But such a thing doesn't exist. If you go chasing after this, you will always be disappointed.

The document below, which attempts to respond to concerns about the TLM shutdown in Charlotte already is and will be used to say, "Look, your concerns have already been answered, get with the program."

But this is the problem with Legal Positivism (often just termed Legalism) in the spiritual and ecclesiastical life.

"I am the law, and I have said it! Now follow it or we will beat you with a stick!" One would think in our so-called enlightened era of renewal in the Church, we would have stopped using such fallacies.

Does this not contradict what is at the core of the Gospel? One could then claim anything by authority, even contradicting the rulings that came before, or even undermine its own authority, and we will be forced to accept it merely because "The Bishop said so." All of a sudden, the Hermeneutic of Continuity is being used to undermine the Hermeneutic of Continuity. The Liturgical "Re-form" undermines the liturgy it was supposed to reform. The Roman Rite itself is banned, and the Church's defenses of it are contradicted.

This is a fundamentally different version of reality, without stable essences, and is exactly why this sort of reasoning cannot stand in the Catholic Church. There is a reason why the pre-conciliar pontiffs went to great lengths to establish the truth of what they were saying in their encyclicals; they believed in one truth.

What must be seen vividly is that the responses here given are operating under false assumptions

"Francis was right, Benedict was wrong, the pre-conciliar Church was even more wrong." or worse yet, an Orwellian "Benedict and the pre-conciliar pontiffs were merely stating what Francis said. The Novus Ordo is better for the Church than the Traditional Mass. It has always been this way until we reverse it again."

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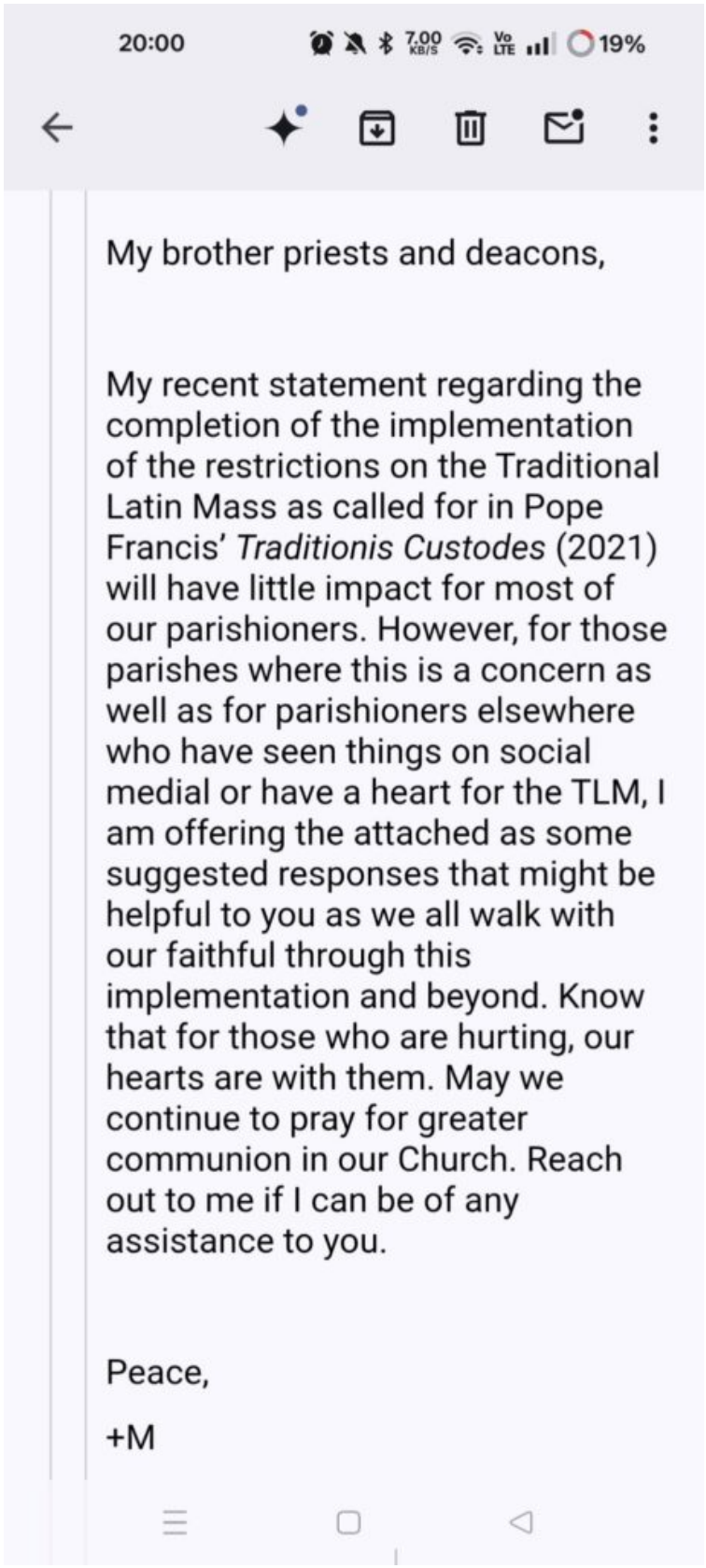
But there is also a notion that the only thing that matters in the spiritual life is merely following the law. Catholicism is a mere game of Simon says. If one stops playing the game and leaves the Church, we are immediately met with a contradiction: “Oh well, that’s too bad. Donate more money to the Church and do penance! Get with the program!” and yet when met with Protestants, Orthodox or any brand of non-Catholic, such churchmen roll out the red carpet, establishing Ecumenical offices, apologizing profusely, and demeaning Catholic doctrine.

In either case, there doesn’t even seem to be a care for the person’s *soul* or his working towards theosis, or towards growing in devotion. There is no pastoral care here, there is no respect for the human person. And yet I thought that was what the renewal of the post-conciliar period was supposed to be all about? *Walking together?*

It is not for me to judge what those of the TLM community there in Charlotte do regarding whether they go to the SSPX in Charlotte, go to this TLM ghetto, or go to underground masses. There are communal divisions that aren’t just doctrinal at play in every traditional Catholic community. But what I know is that these responses make me more assured that Catholics must have a more nuanced approach to following legal commands than a mere “follow the leader.”

Below are the leaked responses:

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Traditionis Custodes
Implementation in the Diocese of Charlotte 2025
Responses to Concerns

Bishop Martin isn't listening to us.
Listening and agreeing aren't the same thing. Since the publication of *Summorum Pontificum* (2007), the publication of *Traditionis Custodes* (2021), and more recently upon coming to Western North Carolina (2024), Bishop Martin has had numerous conversations with those who prefer the TLM and has read (and responded to) many letters written to him on this topic. Bishop Martin's agreement or disagreement with the norms established by the Church does not come into play when carrying out the directives of the Church as he is called to do as the local ordinary.

Bishop Martin doesn't understand how we feel.
Bishop Martin cares deeply for everyone in western North Carolina as is the mandate of every shepherd of the Church. He also feels for those who are saddened by the decision of the Roman Catholic Church to restore the limits on the TLM. He accepts that this is a time that will be difficult for some, and is working with local pastors to try to bring about healing where there is hurt, even though that will not mean a lifting of the Church imposed restrictions on the TLM. He prays that everyone will be open to the work of the Holy Spirit at this time and trust that even when we cannot see any good coming from this, God has the power to bring greater good from any hurt.

Why is this happening now?
Bishop Jugis began the implementation of TC in 2023, two years after Pope Francis called for the renewed limitations on the celebration of the TLM. Bishop Jugis first step reduced the celebration of the TLM from 6 locations to 4, and asked for a 2-year extension of time to manage the rest of the diocesan implementation. That 2-year extension is expiring and Bishop Martin is bringing the diocese into full compliance with the motu proprio.

Bishop Martin will be further restricting access to the TLM.
The restrictions are not in addition to what Traditionis Custodes called for. Rather, they are the completion of the implementation of the norms that were established by the Church in 2021. Bishop Martin is only implementing the restrictions to access to the TLM that the Church has recently (2021) declared. Bishop Martin's implementation plan is in complete accord with the new norms established in TC - nothing more and nothing less.

Implementation of TC will limit the possibility of people to celebrate the TLM.
That is correct and is clearly what was intended by Pope Francis in issuing TC. After a number of years of experience in the universal Church of Pope Benedict XVI's motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum* (2007), Pope Francis consulted with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which had "carried out a detailed consultation of the bishops in 2020. The results have been

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carefully considered in the light of experience that has matured during these years."(TC) TC then goes on to require the limitations that we are implementing for the purpose of preserving unity in the Church.

Implementation of TC will only cause more division and may even cause people to leave the Church.
It is clear that Pope Francis' consultation through the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith saw it differently, believing that allowing a more widespread celebration of the TLM was causing more division universally in the Church. While it is sad that some may leave the Church, it appears that the direction that the Congregation recommended and Pope Francis required was implemented to cause less division over the longer term. The truth of that direction remains to be seen and may be addressed differently by subsequent popes.

People will have to travel farther to attend the TLM?
TC has stated that the TLM is not to be celebrated in parish churches. That limitation automatically requires that people will have to travel farther to attend. For some, however, the drive will be shorter. For example, the drive will be shorter for people in Boone to travel to Mooresville than their current commute to Greensboro for the TLM. Regardless of travel distance, the purpose of the new norms is clearly to limit access to the TLM and thus further travel was clearly anticipated.

This change will be a new burden for those in the Mountains, especially those impacted by Helene.
That this is a new burden upon those impacted by the hurricane is not true since the TLM has not been celebrated in the mountain areas of our Diocese since 2023 when Bishop Jugis began to implement TC. In fact, as mentioned above, the Mooresville location will be closer for some of those in the mountain areas that want to attend.

Why doesn't Bishop Martin wait and see if Pope Leo XIV changes the established norms?
If Pope Leo decides to abrogate the norms of TC, Bishop Martin will certainly then abide by those new norms and implement them as directed. He is simply completing the implementation process begun by Bishop Jugis of the norms as they now exist in the life of the Church. To wait for the possibility of a new Pope to somehow change Church norms could have us waiting a rather long time or forever. We asked for a two year extension in 2023 and we are now ready to be in full conformity to Church norms.

Why doesn't Bishop Martin ask for another extension like other Bishops have done?
An extension is a temporary accommodation for a particular purpose. The only purpose for an extension in the Diocese of Charlotte at this time is to allow those who prefer the TLM to continue to celebrate the Mass in that form in the four parish churches where it is currently being offered. That is not the purpose of an extension. Regardless of when we do this, it will be painful for our faithful. Pope Francis knew that when he promulgated TC and still established limiting norms. Asking for extensions when none are warranted only prolongs the pain and

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uncertainty for these faithful. Other Bishops can have their own reasoning that does not necessarily speak to the reality in Western North Carolina.

Why was Mooresville selected?
If you look at the three largest population centers in the Diocese of Charlotte (The Triad, Asheville, and Charlotte), Mooresville is "somewhat" in the center of a triangle of those three locations - certainly not equidistant to all three. Mooresville is the only location in the diocese where we owned an already existing church that was not already a parish or mission. Thus, we have been able to use this location for this purpose.

The selection of a former non-denominational Church is an affront to those who prefer the TLM.
The Diocese has often used (and is even currently using) already constructed churches used by other denominations and transformed them into Catholic worship spaces. The universal Church has done similar transformations (the Pantheon comes to mind easily). When the new Chapel is finished it will be appropriately appointed for the celebration of the TLM and blessed for worship with no remnant of its former use. In fact, once completed, from the outside or inside one would never know that it was anything other than a Catholic chapel.

The new chapel in Mooresville is not large enough.
Currently in the entire Diocese of Charlotte only about 1,000 people attend the TLM each Sunday. Given that only one location will be available after July 8, it is believed that fewer people will probably travel to the one location and that two Sunday Masses in a chapel that will hold approximately 350 people for each Mass will be sufficient. If it is not, an additional Mass could be considered at that location.

The timing of this is curious and out of the blue.
The process of implementation of TC was begun by Bishop Jugis after it was promulgated in 2021. When Bishop Martin was named Bishop of Charlotte, he took time to further listen and learn about the process as well as to read the many letters that were shared with him. The decision to complete the implementation of TC was begun early in 2025 and shared with diverse consultative bodies of the Diocese. That Pope Francis died and Pope Leo XIV was elected since this process was in motion does not impact this process at all. If Pope Leo decides to issue a new motu proprio, Bishop Martin will comply with that as well.

Implementation of TC will reduce the number of seminarians that are coming to the Diocese of Charlotte.
The Charlotte Director of Vocations, the Charlotte Diocesan Admissions Board, and the formators of the multiple seminaries where our seminarians are trained have never accepted nor promoted young men for formation to the priesthood who have not been committed to the celebration of the Liturgy and Sacraments of the Church in the primary means by which they are celebrated in the Universal Church (the Novus Ordo). Any young man who is only or primarily interested in the celebration of the TLM is not nor has ever been a viable candidate for ordination to the transitional diaconate or priesthood in the Diocese of Charlotte.

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Implementation of TC will cause people to withhold their giving to the Church.
All people are free to give in whatever way that they choose. However, Catholics in particular are called to give in support of the Church not out of charity, but as a response to the call of the Holy Spirit to be faithful and committed members of the one Body of Christ. If they choose to do that based upon a transactional model (I give when I get what I want), that is a perspective that is more modeled by our culture than by the Good News proclaimed by Jesus in Scripture. Regardless, even those who may be tempted by this worldly model, it is clear that the teaching of the Catholic Church and the carrying out of its norms by a local Bishop cannot be swayed by these considerations.

What can people do who find the TLM to be a blessing?

1. Find ways to see the work of the Holy Spirit in the Novus Ordo given that it may be more difficult to attend the TLM. If we find ourselves holding onto resentment and anger while attending Mass in a form that is not your preference, the less we are able to open ourselves to the gift of God's love that comes to us in so many diverse ways.
2. Avoid social media where division is the goal, not communion.
3. Reach out to a priest or spiritual director to walk with you on your journey.
4. Renew your faith commitment to the Roman Catholic Church. One of the reasons that TC was promulgated was to stem a growing tide of TLM adherents who were denying "the validity and the legitimacy of the liturgical reform, dictated by Vatican Council II and the Magisterium of the Supreme Pontiffs". (Art. 3 #1) Many who participate in the TLM in the Diocese of Charlotte are in complete communion with Vatican II, the Magisterium of the Church and her Supreme Pontiffs and do not deny the legitimacy of the liturgical reform. However, there are those who deny these truths. This is evidenced most frequently in social media posts, blogs, and letters written that definitively declare such. All of us can call on the Holy Spirit to purge our hearts of division and the anger it foments. All of us can call on the Holy Spirit to go beyond our personal preferences to the heart of communion that is made manifest in the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist.
5. Engage in some acts of penance and charity for the healing of the Church. The more we go outside ourselves (the nature of love) the less we are tempted to demand that our own needs be the center of our lives.

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