

THE INTERNATIONAL UNA VOCE FEDERATION

History and Current Status

by Michael Davies

The following information may be useful to those wishing to establish an Una Voce association at national or local level.

History and Aims of the Federation

The International Una Voce Federation has affiliated associations in twenty countries. It is a lay movement, and its principal aims as stated in Article 2 of its statutes are:

- to ensure that the traditional Roman Mass as codified in the Missale Romanum edited by Pope John XXIII is maintained - both in practice and in law - as one of the forms of liturgical celebration which are recognised and honoured in universal liturgical life
- to obtain freedom of use for all the other Roman liturgical books enshrining "previous liturgical; and disciplinary forms of the Latin tradition" cf. Ecclesia Dei, n. 5)
- to safeguard and promote the use of Latin, Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony in the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church
- actively to encourage the establishment of non-territorial parishes and/or chaplaincies in which only the liturgical books used in 1962 are employed.

The first initiative to preserve the Latin heritage of the Church came not from a predominantly Catholic country but from a lady in Norway, a nation with one of Europe's smallest Catholic populations. In the summer of 1964, Dr. Borghild Krane, an eminent psychologist in Oslo, sent out an appeal to concerned Catholics to group together in defence of the Church's liturgical heritage. As a result of that appeal a number of national associations came into being in 1964/65, starting with France, where, by a most happy inspiration, it was named UNA VOCE. The official date of its foundation is 19th December 1964.

Realising the need for coordinating their efforts, delegates from six European associations met in Rome in early 1965 and agreed to create an appropriate supra national structure. This was the beginning of the FEDERATIO INTERNATIONALIS UNA VOCE (FIUV). It was formally erected in Zurich on

January 8th, 1967, when delegates from by then twenty associations approved the draft statutes and elected the first Council. At that meeting Dr Eric de Saventem was unanimously elected as President. He was reelected, again unanimously, at every subsequent General Assembly and would still be President today but for his decision to step down prematurely for personal reasons in January 1995. Michael Davies from Great Britain was elected to succeed him.

The principal objective of the FIUV, i.e. to ensure that the traditional Roman Mass is retained and honoured in universal liturgical life, was moved a decisive step forward with the promulgation of the Motu Proprio "Ecclesia Dei" by His Holiness Pope John Paul II on 2nd July 1988. Since then, member-associations of the FIUV worldwide are experiencing an influx of enthusiastic new members many of whom were not born when the Federation was founded. Thanks to their presence in its ranks the FIUV will remain an effective force within the Church in the coming Millennium. The Federation is recognized by the Holy See, its views are received with courtesy and respect by the relevant Roman Congregations, and its representatives are received by them in the same manner. Making known our spiritual needs and desires to our spiritual shepherds is a right granted to us in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - Lumen Gentium - of the Second Vatican Council (no, 37), and repeated in the Code of Canon Law (Canon 212):

The laity have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their sacred pastors the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the Word of God and the Sacraments. Every layman should openly reveal to them his needs and desires with that freedom and confidence that befits a son of God and brother in Christ. An individual layman, by reason of the knowledge, competence, or outstanding ability which he may enjoy, is permitted and sometimes even obliged to express his opinion on things which concern the good of the Church.

Quattuor abhinc annos - The 1984 Indult

Even before the publication of Ecclesia Dei, every bishop in the world had been authorized to permit the celebration of the Tridentine Mass by the indult Quattuor abhinc annos of 3 October 1984, but this document contained extremely restrictive conditions. The Federation, while welcoming the document as a positive step forward, made clear to the Holy See that it considered these conditions to be incompatible with the indult's intent. far too restrictive. As a result of these

representations, Cardinal Mayer, then Prefect of the Worship Congregation, asked Dr. de Saventhem to conduct a world-wide investigation into the practical implementation of the indult.

This took several months and the resulting report was so convincing that Cardinal Mayer obtained the Pope's permission to convoke a special Commission of Cardinals to evaluate the Indult and suggest amendments. Dr. de Saventhem was then asked to submit proposals for new rules to govern the use of the 1962 Missal, which he did after consulting the Council of the FIUV. These suggestions were reflected to no small extent in the norms elaborated in 1986 by the Commission of Cardinals, which concluded unanimously, as Cardinal Mayer pointed out in a letter to the American bishops dated 20 March 1991 (Protocol No, 500/90), that "the conditions laid down in Quattuor abhinc annos were too restrictive and should be relaxed".

The Motu Proprio "Ecclesia Dei" 2 July 1988

On 2nd July 1988 His Holiness Pope John Paul II promulgated his Motu Proprio "Ecclesia Dei" in which he expressed his will to guarantee respect for the rightful aspirations of those attached to the Latin liturgical tradition, and in order to achieve this aim he established the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei. On 18th October 1988, Pope John Paul II granted to Cardinal Mayer special faculties to facilitate the working of the Commission, the first of which reads:

The faculty of granting to all who seek it (omnibus id petentibus) the use of the Roman Missal according to the 1962 edition, and according to the norms proposed in December 1986, by the Commission of Cardinals constituted for this very purpose, the diocesan bishop having been informed.

It is important to note that this faculty refers to all who seek the 1962 Missal. as President of the Ecclesia Dei Commission, Cardinal Mayer provided an authoritative interpretation of the Motu proprio. In a letter to the Bishops of the U.S.A. dated 20 March 1991. In this letter he explained that the Holy Father:

...addressing himself "to all those Catholic faithful who feel attached to some previous liturgical and disciplinary forms of the Latin tradition", and not just to former adherents of Archbishop Lefebvre, he expressed his will to "guarantee respect for their rightful aspirations" (no. 5. c). In order to provide for these legitimate desires

of the faithful he established this Pontifical Commission and indicated his mind with regard to its primary task by stating:

respect must everywhere be shown for the feelings of all those who are attached to the Latin liturgical tradition, by a wide and generous application of the directives already issued some time ago by the Apostolic See for the use of the Roman Missal according to the typical edition (no. 6, c).

Consequently, Your Excellency, we wish to encourage you to facilitate the proper and reverent celebration of the liturgical rites according to the Roman Missal of 1962 wherever there is a genuine desire for this on the part of the faithful.

You will note that Cardinal Mayer, quoting directly from *Ecclesia Dei*, refers to "rightful aspirations" and "legitimate desires", and adds that "it would seem unnecessary, even unduly painful, to impose further restrictions upon those who wish to attend such celebrations". Many bishops have responded to this admonition in a very positive manner, and in most dioceses where this has been the case there are no longer any restrictions attached to the celebration of the Tridentine Mass. Hundreds of such Masses are now celebrated in parish churches, in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and throughout the U.S.A. They are scheduled public Masses fulfilling the Sunday obligation which any member of the faithful is welcome to attend.

A Right to the Traditional Mass

In a letter to the *Ecclesia Dei* Society of Australia dated 11 May 1990, Cardinal Mayer stated that the faithful now have a right to the Traditional Mass:

Certainly, no one has the right to the acquisition of a privilege, but once a privilege is duly granted the subject indeed has the right to benefit from it (cf. C.I.C. #77). In *Quattuor abhinc annos* (3 October 1984) The celebration of the 1962 Order Of Mass was presented as a privilege which might be requested from the competent authority (b). In *Ecclesia Dei*, however, the Roman Pontiff spoke of the 1962 Order of Mass in terms of its "lawfulness" (*auctoritas*) and "richness" (*thesaurus* cf. 5,a) and qualified the desire both to celebrate and assist at this Mass as a "legitimate aspiration" (*appetitio* cf. 5, c). Hence a privilege in the canonical sense of the term was granted to the faithful by the Supreme Legislator of the Church (cf. C.I.C. #76.1).

Traditional Parishes

On a practical level, some bishops are now moving beyond simply granting permission for a regular Sunday Mass, and in Europe and the United States they have established flourishing parishes where only the Traditional Mass is celebrated, and where all the sacraments are administered according to the Liturgical Books in use in 1962. This is particularly the case in parishes under the auspices of the Fraternity of St. Peter or the Institute of Christ the King. There are now at least ten priestly societies approved by the Holy See, and attracting many vocations, in which the young, enthusiastic seminarians will celebrate only the Traditional Mass after their ordination, thus guaranteeing its ever-increasing use well into the next millennium. Many students in diocesan seminaries are being taught, or are teaching themselves, to celebrate the Traditional Mass and intend to do so as often as possible after their ordination.

The Holy Father has also authorized the two most flourishing Benedictine monasteries in France, at Fontgombault and Le Barroux, to use the 1962 Liturgical Books exclusively. These monasteries are also attracting many vocations. There are also monastic communities of women in which only the 1962 liturgical books are used. In September 1990 the Holy Father received in audience the Abbot of Le Barroux, together with a number of his monks, and praised the work that they are doing. In September 1995 Cardinal Ratzinger, accompanied by Monsignor Camille Perl, Secretary of the Pope's Ecclesia Dei Commission, visited the monastery and celebrated a Pontifical Mass in the traditional rite for the monks. This can only be interpreted as an endorsement of their apostolate from the very highest level in the Church.

On Pentecost each year Chartres Cathedral has an overflow congregation of about 15,000 fervent Catholics with an average age of twenty, who sing the Traditional Mass in Gregorian Chant, mandated by the Second Vatican Council to be the norm for sung Masses, and manifesting to the highest possible degree that active participation called for by the Council. These young pilgrims march for three days, sleeping out at night. Each year they receive a message conveying the blessing and encouragement of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. The youthfulness of the congregations is a striking characteristic of many Tridentine Masses.

A final but important point is that some bishops who were at first apprehensive about permitting the Traditional Mass in their dioceses, fearing that it might cause division, have been much encouraged by the fact that the opposite has occurred, and that permission for this Mass, particularly within the context of a parish in which all the sacraments are celebrated in the pre-Vatican II rites, heals divisions and builds up a community of devout Catholics loyal to their bishop and to Rome. In the letter from Cardinal Mayer to the American Bishops, His Eminence states specifically that the very fact that Catholics wish "to come to celebrations authorized by the Bishop of the diocese may be considered a sign of good will and desire of full ecclesial communion."

The Importance of Local Initiative

The FIUV is not an organization run from above by a central committee. Each associate is an autonomous body which is encouraged to do all that it can to achieve the objectives of the Federation at the local level. In any one country, up to three national associations can be admitted as members of the Federation. The ideal is for any such national association to build up a network of regional chapters in the country concerned to further its work at the local level. As members of the Federation, national associations are able to work together through receiving the Federation Newsletter, by exchanging national newsletters, and by appointing delegates to the Federation's bi-annual General Assembly in Rome and jointly elect the President of the Federation and its Council. Over a period of several days, each association then reports on its progress and initiatives and learns, above all, by personal contacts, of ways in which their own defence of tradition can be made more effective. When national associations wish to contact the Vatican Congregations on their own behalf, and with specific reference to the problems that they encounter on a national level, the Federation can offer advice and assistance from its 30 years' experience of dealing with the Church's central authorities. Above all it can represent the common concerns of traditional Catholics world-wide at the highest level of Church government. This is its primary statutory purpose and despite all the progress made since 1967 it remains an indispensable function in furthering the cause of Tradition throughout the world.

A Message from Cardinal Ratzinger

On 25 July 1996 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, addressed the following message to the Federation:

The International Una Voce Federation has played an important role in supporting the use of the 1962 edition of the Roman Missal in obedience to the directives of the Holy See. For this valuable service I express my gratitude to the members of the Federation and extend my blessing.