

Let the war of the rites cease



Dom Gérard Calvet of blessed memory, the famed Abbot of Sainte-Madeleine-du-Barroux can best be remembered for his work for those who love and desire the Traditional Latin Mass.

He can be seen in the two pictures above that were taken at his 50th jubilee anniversary as a priest. One particular address he gave at the ten-year anniversary for Ecclesia Dei at their conference held in Rome on October 24, 1998 was titled, “Let the war of rites cease”.

The address by the Abbot of Sainte-Madeleine-du-Barroux

by Dom Gérard Calvet

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Your Eminence, We are gathered here first of all to express our thanks to the Holy Father for signing and promulgating the motu proprio, Ecclesia Dei. This great document is a solemn Magisterial act which has made access to the traditional liturgy possible and which has liberated a centuries-old rite. Secondly, it is to you, Eminence, that we must express all our gratitude for being at the center of all the interventions on the part of the Holy See to end what might be called a fearful liturgical disorder on one hand and, on the other, the reaction which was out of place on the part of some traditionalist circles who felt offended, it must be admitted, in their attachment to the old rite.

Finally, I must mention the devotion which the successive cardinals-president, the secretary and staff of the Pontifical "Ecclesia Dei" Commission have shown under conditions made sometimes even more difficult by their often limited room for manoeuvre.

Allow me, however, to give voice to the very great dismay of very many faithful, especially the young, who write to us in their hundreds from all over France of their sadness at the silence of the bishops in response to the "cry of the poor". As far as some priests are concerned, they have been marginalized as if they were second-class citizens for choosing the traditional catechism and form of worship. Many faithful have in any case abandoned the Church (or, at least, the churches), quietly slipping away. The damage is so obvious that you yourself, Eminence, wrote "I am convinced that the ecclesial crisis in which we find ourselves today is largely owing to the collapse of the liturgy, which is sometimes conceived 'etsi Deus non daretur' ..."1.

But a solution to the crisis was provided by the Holy Father on July 2, 1988 in the Apostolic Letter, *Ecclesia Dei*, which states "To all these faithful Catholics who feel bound by some previous liturgical and disciplinary forms of the Latin tradition, I would like to express my own will - and I ask bishops and all those who fulfill the pastoral ministry in the Church to join their will with mine - to facilitate their ecclesial communion by means of measures to guarantee respect for their just aspirations ... Furthermore, the spirit of all those who feel tied to the Latin liturgical tradition must be respected everywhere by the far-ranging and generous application of the directives which the Apostolic See already issued some time ago on the use of the Roman Missal according to the *editio typica* of 1962"2.

Unfortunately, too few bishops have joined their will with that of Pope John Paul II and so, in France, only half of the dioceses have conceded at least one place of worship for faithful attached to the traditional forms of the Latin liturgy. I must also stress that a restrictive interpretation of the *motu proprio Ecclesia Dei* has resulted in most bishops limiting the use of the place of worship to the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice only and to the Sacrament of Penance, to the exclusion of all the other Sacraments.

In general, furthermore, Mass is allowed to be celebrated only on Sundays and sometimes even only on one Sunday in the month. Few bishops authorise priests engaged in the "traditionalist" ministry to take catechism, to prepare couples for marriage and so on.

So can one still talk about "respect for our just aspirations" and "far-ranging and generous application"? Fortunately, there are exceptions such as the dioceses of Versailles, Paris, Lyons, Saint-Dié, Fréjus-Toulon, Perpignan-Elne, Gap and Strasbourg to name just the major ones. Some bishops argue that a more liberal attitude would cause division in their dioceses. But does this not mean, perhaps, that they are forgetting what Ecclesia Dei declares when it says that "all pastors and other faithful should be aware not only of the legitimacy but also of the richness that the different charisms represent for the Church, as well as the traditions of spirituality and apostolate also constituting the beauty of unity in variety of the 'symphony' that, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, the earthly Church raises to heaven"?³ So, why are they being rejected without any consideration of their requests as Catholics who seek a different liturgy from that usually practised? And, in any event, are we really sure that there is only one of this liturgy? In how many French parishes is Paul VI's liturgy still celebrated in strict conformity with the 1970 edition of the Missal?

In his Apostolic Letter *Apostolos suos*, His Holiness reminds us that "It is the task of the diocesan Bishop in the diocese assigned to him to apply all the ordinary, proper and immediate authority required for the exercising of his pastoral office except for causes which, by right or decree of the Supreme Pontiff, are the reserve of the supreme or other ecclesiastical authority"⁴.

An urgent request, then, must go out to the supreme authority for an authentic interpretation which would define how Ecclesia Dei should be applied from the juridical point of view. For example, a letter from the Holy See to all diocesan bishops could indicate various and proper solutions. I would now like to illustrate some of these potential solutions. At a higher level, it seems vital to extend the powers of the Pontifical "Ecclesia Dei" Commission to unblock the numerous situations of stalemate. At a lower level, we would cite a statute inspired by that of the military ordinaries and developed by the Apostolic Constitution, *Spirituali militum curae*. This juridical figure which is extremely open would have the advantage of allowing those faithful who wish to answer to the authority "of traditionalist rite" as far as the "traditionalist acts and places of worship are concerned, and to continue to answer to the diocesan bishop for other acts and places of worship. We regret that this solution, already proposed by our American friends, was not further explored either at national or international levels.

Another solution similar to the latter could be the creation of a sort of apostolic vicariat for the "traditionalists" and this would put the *motu proprio*, *Ecclesia Dei*, into practice. Still today, we do not know the Holy See's position on this proposal which dates back to 1990. More blandly, one could also envision an apostolic delegate answering to the Pontifical "Ecclesia Dei" Commission and who would be an itinerant representative, so to speak, proposing to local bishops either a solution devised by them themselves (as has been the case in many dioceses) or, should they prefer to have nothing to do with "traditionalist" worship, a solution that does not come from them but from the apostolic delegate who would consider each case on an individual basis. In this new form, this hypothesis is extremely interesting to us.

Three further solutions may be considered which have already been put into practice successfully at local level. The first envisions that the parish be shared by two priests in *solidum*, one of whom guarantees the celebration of the new rite while the other celebrates according to the old. This system has been functioning for the past nine years in the Church of Saint-Eugène in Paris. The second proposes that the parish priest guarantees both rites and this is the solution currently applied in that same church. The third hypothesis is that a quasi-parish be entrusted entirely and exclusively to the care of a community of priests subject to the Pontifical "Ecclesia Dei" Commission. This is the case of Notre-Dame-des-Armées and of Port-Marly in the diocese of Versailles. We must thank the bishop there, Jean-Charles Thomas, for devising these solutions which meet with our approval. But what to do when a bishop refuses to apply such solutions? And here we find ourselves with the problem I mentioned at the beginning. But if the Holy See were to prove to so far reticent bishops that these solutions function in the best possible way, then no doubt others would be persuaded. It would be preferable, however, if the possibility of all priests to celebrate either by freely following the 1962 Missal or the 1970 version were to be given new consideration. As we await the enactment of this disposition, we would like at least that the 1962 *Ordo Missae* be included as a supplement *ad libitum* in all the editions of the new Missal for priests in their celebration of Holy Mass. This would have the advantage not only of satisfying in part the aspirations of faithful who have affection for the old rite but would also sustain in their piety the priests who celebrate according to the new one. It has happened that about 200 priests, French and non and above all the young, have come to our monastery to learn⁵ how to celebrate Mass according to the old Missal. They include an American priest who has confessed to us that his initiation in the classical rite allowed him better to celebrate

the new one, to which he usually had to adhere. This example demonstrates the extent and the educational virtue of our great traditional liturgy.

To conclude, we insist in our request that this war of the rites which is lacerating individuals and families cease once and for all. The faithful called into play by the *motu proprio Ecclesia Dei* hope with all their hearts that the currently widespread persecution may give way to a period of stable and lasting liturgical peace whereby no one can be accused of betrayal and whereby, in keeping with the Holy See's promises, "all measures will be taken to guarantee their identity in the full communion of the Catholic Church"⁶. The scandal provoked by the division must cease so that concord, harmony and unity may be restored. It was in this spirit of peace and communion that, on April 27 1995, I agreed to celebrate Mass together with the Holy Father. It had been my desire to show that all of us who fight to conserve the old Missal believe in the validity and orthodoxy of the new rite. However as Joseph Madec, Bishop of Fréjus-Toulon, put it "A review of the liturgical reform is ... feasible and something one hopes will happen for it would, perhaps, restore peace to souls and hearts"⁷.

To summarize the three main solutions which we continue to propose:

1. an extension of the powers of the Pontifical "Ecclesia Dei" Commission, or the institution of an intermediate authority answerable to the Commission and taking the form of an apostolic delegation which would regulate each case at the local level together with the diocesan bishops;
2. the creation on the part of the episcopal authorities or of the Holy See of quasi-parishes of a personal nature in every diocese where a minimum number of faithful have requested them;
3. the insertion of the old *Ordo Missae* "ad libitum" in all the new Missals if not the granting of permission to all priests to celebrate according to the 1962 Missal.

We would conclude by quoting the famous adage, *Opus iustitiae pax*. Liturgical peace is also the work of justice and, we would add, of charity.

Notes

1. J. Ratzinger, *La mia vita* (My Life) Cinisello Balsamo, Ed. San Paolo 1997, pages 112-113.
2. *Motu proprio Ecclesia Dei*, Nos. 5c and 6c. Calvet's italics.
3. *Ibidem* No. 5a.

4. Canon 381 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law quoted in the Apostolic Letter in the form of *motu proprio*, *Apostolos suos*, No. 19. Calvet's italics. This is, however, an appeal to a dogmatic truth.
5. Or re-learn in the case of older priests.
6. Informative Note of the Holy See on the Lefebvre Case, June 16 1988. Calvet's italics.
7. J. Madec, *Enquête sur la messe traditionnelle*, Paris, la Nef, 1998, page 74.