

The Extraordinary Form of the Latin Rite: aka The Tridentine Rite, the Old Mass, the Latin Mass, or the Old Latin Mass

On July 7, 2007 (777), Pope Benedict (now Pope Emeritus Benedict) issues a “Motu Proprio” (a teaching document of his highest ordinary magisterium) declaring that the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church (which is our Rite) would now have two forms of Liturgy. The official Mass now being celebrated since the Second Vatican Council officially called the *Novus Ordo* (new order), which under certain circumstances may be celebrated in the vernacular (the common language of the people instead of Latin), would now be called the “*Ordinaria expressio*” (ordinary expression or form) and ancient usage (The Tridentine Mass, the Old Mass, or the Old Latin Mass) would now be called the “*extraordinaria expressio*” (extraordinary expression or form). So we now have two expressions or forms of our one Latin Rite. The ordinary form (*Novus Ordo*) most frequently celebrated in the vulgar or vernacular language, although it is properly to be done in Latin, and the extraordinary form (*Usus Antiquor, Vetus Ordo, Ordo Tridentinis*) always done in Latin.

Before this document, priests had to make a special petition through the Papal Commission “*Ecclesia Dei*” to their Bishops to be able to celebrate the Extraordinary Form. Sadly enough, that in spite of verbal reprimands from both John Paul II and Pope Benedict many Bishops refused to grant the permission and so many of the faithful who loved that Mass were forced outside the Church to attend it. Now with this document having been issued by the supreme authority of the Church; any priest, properly trained, can celebrate this mass pretty much any time. In this same document Pope Benedict goes on to require that any stable group of the faithful who want this Mass should be provided for. If not on the parish level, at the very minimum on the Diocesan level. That is why Bishop Morlino, being a fully obedient and loyal Bishop to the Holy Father, encourages all of the priests of the diocese that don’t know how to celebrate in the Extraordinary Form to learn it, and is now requiring all of the seminarians to learn it.

Many people, including priests and bishops, have said many disparaging and even sacrilegious things about the Extraordinary Form in these last 50 years. First, anyone who truly understands what occurs in either form of the Mass could never disparage either of them, and secondly, when we allow ourselves to criticize the Extraordinary Form, we are saying that God was wrong for over 1,700 years and thankfully He got His act straight at Vatican II. That is not the God of our Faith, Our God is perfect, all knowing and all powerful. What Pope Benedict so beautifully points out at the beginning of this document is that the Extraordinary form is a smooth completely organic development of worship in the Latin Rite under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for nearly 2000 years. The ordinary form, while drawn out from the Extraordinary form and still maintaining the essential elements, is very much an institutionalized mass. It was just suddenly instituted, it did not develop gradually over time. Pope Benedict also stresses that even though the two Masses are two expressions of the “*Lex Orandi*” (law of prayer) they must and do form one unified “*Lex Credendi*” (law of belief). The super vast majority of the saints throughout the history of the Church worshiped by way of the

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Extraordinary Form. That is why it also has the title of “Usus Venerabilis” (the Venerable Usage). Next week I will discuss the spiritualities of the two forms.