



September 13, 2007

Dear Brother Priests,

As you well know, on July 7, 2007, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, promulgated an Apostolic Letter given *Motu Proprio* entitled *Summorum Pontificum* (*The Care of the Supreme Pontiffs for Divine Worship: On the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970*). In this Apostolic Letter, the Holy Father decrees that the celebration of the Mass in the Roman Rite encompasses two forms: the ordinary form, as contained in the *Missale Romanum* (the Roman Missal) of Pope Paul VI, promulgated in 1970; and an extraordinary form, as contained in the *Missale Romanum* first promulgated by Pope Saint Pius V following the Council of Trent and which, after several revisions under subsequent popes, was promulgated again in 1962 by Blessed John XXIII.

In *Summorum Pontificum*, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that the Mass celebrated according to the Missal of Paul VI (the *Novus Ordo Missae*) remains the ordinary expression of the Church's law of prayer (*lex orandi*), while the Mass celebrated according to the Missal of Blessed John XXIII is to be regarded as the extraordinary expression of the law of prayer and should enjoy due honor "on account of its venerable and ancient use" (*Summorum Pontificum*, art. 1). Thus, these two forms are "two uses of the one Roman Rite" (*Ibid.*).

Before reflecting further on this Apostolic Letter and its implications for us, in light of my authority and responsibility as the moderator of the liturgy in this diocesan church (cf. *Sancrosanctum Concilium*, 22), I want to underscore, as both a reminder and an exhortation, that the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, whether in the ordinary or in the extraordinary form, be marked by a profound reverence for the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in our midst. As our Holy Father states, the Church of Christ should "offer worthy worship to the Divine Majesty 'for the praise and glory of his name' and 'for the good of all his Holy Church'" (*Summorum Pontificum*, paragraph 1).

In his "Letter to Bishops Accompanying *Summorum Pontificum*," Pope Benedict notes the pastoral value, riches and holiness of the normal form – the *forma ordinaria* – of the Eucharistic Liturgy. "It is clearly seen that the new Missal will certainly remain the ordinary Form of the Roman Rite, not only on account of the juridical norms, but also because of the actual situation of the communities of the faithful" (Letter Accompanying

Summorum Pontificum). Therefore, the Holy Father reminds us, “The most sure guarantee that the Missal of Paul VI can unite parish communities and be loved by them consists in its being celebrated with great reverence in harmony with the liturgical directives. This will bring out the spiritual richness and theological depth of this Missal” (Letter Accompanying *Summorum Pontificum*).

Even as Pope Benedict XVI clearly envisions that the ordinary form – the Missal of Paul VI – will continue to be widely celebrated, he acknowledges that “in many places celebrations were not faithful to the prescriptions of the new Missal” (Letter Accompanying *Summorum Pontificum*). Moreover, the Pope also makes clear that “not a few of the faithful, including many young persons, have found in the Mass celebrated according to the Missal of Blessed John XXIII – the extraordinary form – a prayerful and spiritually uplifting encounter with the Lord, one that is nourished by the rules of the Church’s tradition. For this reason, as well as seeking to attain “an interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church” (Letter Accompanying *Summorum Pontificum*) with those for whom, sadly, the liturgy has become a source of division, Pope Benedict has decreed that the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite may be celebrated according to the conditions established in *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum*. I invite you to read attentively the text of *Summorum Pontificum*, not only to understand the conditions the Holy Father sets forth, but also his underlying vision of aiding the entire Church to progress in unity and organic continuity with the heritage of our liturgical tradition. In our Holy Father’s words, “What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too.... It behooves all of us to preserve the riches which have developed in the Church’s faith and prayer, and to give them their proper place” (Letter Accompanying *Summorum Pontificum*).

Since 1969, priests have been trained in the seminary for the proper celebration of the Mass in accord with the Missal of Paul VI. In his “Letter Accompanying *Summorum Pontificum*,” the Holy Father referenced the need for “a certain degree of liturgical formation and some knowledge of the Latin language” in order that the Mass celebrated according to the Missal of Blessed John XXIII be carried out worthily and well. When permission was given in the spring of 2006 for the celebration of the Mass according to the 1962 Missal in two of our parishes (Saint Lawrence, Alexandria, and Saint John the Baptist, Front Royal), I appointed several priests to celebrate that form of the Mass with the request that they be sufficiently prepared. Other priests may have also received training in the past. In keeping with the spirit of our Holy Father’s desire that the Mass in its extraordinary form be celebrated “worthily and well,” I request that priests send me a letter outlining the manner of their preparation prior to celebrating the Mass in its extraordinary form. In this way, I and our faithful will be assured that priests are capable of celebrating the extraordinary form of the Mass in a fitting and deserving manner. Moreover, I have asked our Office of Sacred Liturgy to arrange opportunities for training in the celebration of the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite and the celebration of the sacraments according to the older ritual. Such training is intended to assist you in responding with generosity to the requests of the faithful and in serving their pastoral and spiritual needs. Further details will be communicated to you when such arrangements have been finalized.

Several of our pastors have received requests from their parishes to celebrate publicly the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite (cf. *Summorum Pontificum*, art. 5, §1). I ask that pastors inform the Office of Sacred Liturgy of their decision to celebrate publicly the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite. An updated list may then be maintained and will also be posted on the diocesan web site in order that the faithful may know in what parishes public celebrations of the extraordinary form occur.

May the two expressions of the law of prayer (*lex orandi*) bring about a renewal in our love and reverence for the liturgy!

Faithfully in Christ

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Paul S. Loverde". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde
Bishop of Arlington