

# ARCHBISHOP ROCHE ON *TRADITIONIS CUSTODES*: "THE HOLY FATHER HAS SPOKEN"

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Archbishop Roche on the implementation of Traditionis Custodes: "What is important to realize

now is that the Holy Father has spoken; the liturgical possibilities are in place; the challenge is to get on with it without licking one's wounds when no one has been injured. "

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In the wake of [Responsa ad dubia](#) (responses to questions—11 in total), a papally approved clarification of Pope Francis' July 16th Motu Proprio [Traditionis Custodes](#) (Guardians of the Tradition), which [roiled and disturbed](#) the traditionalist Catholic community, more questions have emerged. The Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Archbishop Arthur Roche, has recently addressed concerns of the faithful.

In an [interview](#) with the *National Catholic Register's* Edward Pentin, he confirmed that when it comes to ordinations within ex-Ecclesia Dei Institutes, such as the [SSPX](#), "The universal law regarding the antecedent liturgy prior to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council has now been established by the Motu Proprio, *Traditionis Custodes* of 16 July 2021, which supersedes all previous legislation," adding that "this Congregation has not made any statement about these Institutes. However, the principle has been established that ordinations in the Latin Church are conferred as directed by the Rite approved by Apostolic Constitution in 1968 [[New Rites of Sacred Ordination issued by Pope St. Paul VI](#)].

An abrogation of the [Pontificale Romanum](#) is understood, the Prefect declared, while stressing that "a concession has been made for the use of the [Rituale Romanum](#) in the personal parishes, but which excludes the Sacrament of Confirmation, which was replaced by the Apostolic Constitution in 1971."

In response to the observation that canonists have criticised the *Responsa* as “illicit,” arguing that the document “has no force” and can therefore “be ignored,” the Archbishop curtly replied that “the responses to the various dubia are evidently legitimate and fully compliant with Canon Law in their elaboration by this Congregation whose authority in this matter is undisputed.”

On the issue of placing restrictions on the traditional Liturgy, and thereby marginalizing traditional Catholics, causing division instead of unification (the document’s stated goal), Archbishop Roche explained:

*the liturgy is never simply a matter of personal tastes or preferences. It is the lex orandi of the Church, which in faithfulness to the tradition received from Apostolic times, is determined by the Church and not by individual members. The Roman Missal of the saintly Popes, Paul VI and John Paul II, is witness to an unaltered faith and uninterrupted and living tradition.*

When further pressed on the matter—that traditional Catholics claim to have been left out of consultations, which appears to contradict the supposed “spirit of synodality,” the Prefect answered that “the promotion of the antecedent liturgy has been curtailed but does not characterise discrimination. Neither *Ecclesia Dei* of St. John Paul II nor *Summorum Pontificum* of Pope Benedict XVI foresaw the promotion of these liturgies which, having happened subsequently, became problematic to what the Council, which is the highest form of legislation in the Catholic Church, had decreed.”

What is exactly meant by “problematic” remains unclear. However, Roche’s meaning in the following statement was clear:

*What is important to realize now is that the Holy Father has spoken; the liturgical possibilities are in place; the challenge is to get on with it without licking one’s wounds when no one has been injured. As for your point on synodality, the word*

*means “walking together,” which is the precise purpose of the Motu Proprio expressing the direction in which the Church is to walk in its prayer.*

In light of what the implementation *Traditionis Custodes* will actually look like, “walking together” appears to be unlikely in some places. Cardinal Blase Cupich announced a new policy for the Archdiocese of Chicago on December 27th which requires “priests, deacons, and ordained ministers who wish to use the ‘old rite’ [to] submit their requests to Cardinal Cupich in writing and agree to abide by the new norms. Those rules specify that the Traditional Latin Masses must incorporate scripture readings in the vernacular, using the official translation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In addition, such Masses cannot take place in a parish church unless both the archbishop and the Vatican agree to grant an exemption.”

<https://twitter.com/dianemontagna/status/1475825209328480258>

In response to the Motu Proprio, the French-based Fraternity of St. Vincent Ferrer has released a Christmas letter to the faithful, which states, among other things:

*The traditional liturgy is our very being! To ask us to abandon it is to recommend that we kill what has shaped our spiritual being for decades. The traditional Latin liturgy is part of the immemorial wealth of the Church, which cannot disappear, because it is part of its unalienable patrimony. To want to eliminate it from the ‘visible horizon of the Catholic Church’ (as Jean Madiran used to say) is an impossible endeavor, because it is contradictory to the essence of Tradition. . . . Such a process of liturgical mutation would be gravely damaging for a significant number of the faithful. Already they do not understand the restrictions placed on the celebration of the traditional Mass. Their distress at the loss of a liturgy that nourishes their interior life would be immense. And how could they stand by and watch hundreds of priests, religious men and women, and seminarians who—with clear consciences and based on the word of previous pontiffs—have remained faithful to the Catholic hierarchy for thirty-three years, sometimes at great*

*sacrifice, being treated in this way?*

Murmurs are heard within the upper echelons of the Church hierarchy as well. Disagreement with Pope Francis's ordinations came from Cardinal Sarah, Roche's predecessor as Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

In an [interview](#) with *Valeurs Actuelles*, the highly respected cleric said he shares the opinion of former Pope Benedict XVI:

*What was holy and sacred yesterday cannot be condemned to disappear today. What harm does the Traditional Mass cause? What harm? If somebody can learn to encounter Christ in a Mass celebrated in silence, in respect for the sacred, let them not hesitate. Everyone wants to grow in God, why prevent them from doing so? This is not a revolt. They are not in any way denying the Second Vatican Council, quite the contrary.*