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Diocese of Santa Rosa

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July 21, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

There has already been much commentary and discussion about the impact and meaning of a July 16 Motu Proprio issued by Pope Francis titled, *Traditionis Custodes*. I understand that many are very concerned, confused and troubled by this seemingly abrupt intervention impacting the traditional form of the celebration of Holy Mass and those parishes where we have become accustomed to having this particular form of the Holy Mass celebrated. Some Bishops have already issued clarifications for their Dioceses and there is an abundance of variety in the responses.

On one hand, I do want to honor and support all those who seek the deepest and most respectful encounter with the Lord in Holy Mass. For most this is found in the Mass as it is experienced in the vernacular by a majority of the faithful. For others, there is a deep appreciation and reverence for what has come to be known as the Extraordinary Form. In both, albeit with differences, the center of our Catholic Faith, the Most Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of our faith, namely Christ Himself is made present and received. As Bishop Donald Hying of Madison wrote: "In the Mass, we hear God's Word, share in the paschal sacrifice of the Son to the Father, and receive the Sacred Body of Christ. The Eucharist both forms and feeds the Church." Like Bishop Hying, I want to assure all the priests and faithful of our diocese, especially those who feel some degree of shock and surprise by the latest Motu Proprio, of my profound respect for you. Your love for the Lord and the Church, your fidelity to the Gospel and to the Magisterium, your deep desire for holiness and your rich spirituality are well known to me.

I treasure obedience and acknowledge that it is not always easy. There may be some portions of this Motu Proprio which are more difficult to accept than others. I have determined that there is room in the Motu Proprio, based on the Holy Father's cover letter, which allows some local latitude. As Diocesan Bishop I have the responsibility to provide for the spiritual welfare of the people of the Diocese. I know and understand that many Catholics in our diocese draw tremendous graces and blessings by participating in the Mass in the Extraordinary Form. Restricting the celebration of the Extraordinary Form Masses to places other than parish churches would impose a serious inconvenience and even harm to the faithful. I also understand that those who participate in the Extraordinary Form Masses regularly join with their fellow parishioners at Mass when the Extraordinary Form is not available. I keep these things in mind as I formulate Diocesan policy.

I am disinclined to make any drastic changes unless it is determined in the future that it is necessary to do so. I do want to implement those portions which do not interfere with programs and permissions already in place. Therefore, following the lead of my brother Bishops, I choose to make some of their policies applicable to the Diocese of Santa Rosa as well.

Therefore, in accord with Articles 3 and 5 of the *Motu Proprio*, I make the following applicable to the Diocese of Santa Rosa:

Article 3. The bishop of the diocese in which until now there exist one or more groups that celebrate according to the Missal antecedent to the reform of 1970:

§ 1. is to determine that these groups do not deny the validity and the legitimacy of the liturgical reform, dictated by Vatican Council II and the magisterium of the supreme pontiffs;

(COMMENT: I trust that what I have written above regarding participation in the parish Masses when the Extraordinary Form is not available is the standard in the Diocese).

§ 2. is to designate one or more locations where the faithful adherents of these groups may gather for the eucharistic celebration (not however in the parochial churches and without the erection of new personal parishes);

(COMMENT/POLICY: According to canon 87, §1 of the *Code of Canon Law*, “A diocesan bishop, whenever he judges that a dispensation will contribute to their spiritual good, is able to dispense the faithful from universal and particular disciplinary laws issued for his territory or his subjects by the supreme authority of the Church.” I hereby, dispense the priests and people of the Diocese of Santa Rosa from that portion of § 2 of Article 3 which states: “not however in the parochial churches”). The public celebration of Mass in the Extraordinary Form, Masses can continue to be celebrated at the places in which they have regularly been celebrated throughout the diocese, (including in parish churches).

§ 3. to establish at the designated locations the days on which eucharistic celebrations are permitted using the Roman Missal promulgated by Saint John XXIII in 1962. In these celebrations the readings are proclaimed in the vernacular language, using translations of the sacred Scripture approved for liturgical use by the respective episcopal conferences;

(COMMENT/POLICY: Masses in the Extraordinary Form may continue in accord with the previously established days and times but new days and times are not to be added. The use of the Lectionary approved for the United States is required).

§ 4. to appoint a priest who, as delegate of the bishop ...

(COMMENT: I will consult about this to determine if such a delegate is necessary for our Diocese).

§ 5 concerns the establishment of “personal” parishes for the benefit of the faithful who prefer the Extraordinary Form.

(COMMENT: At the present time there are no such parishes in the Diocese and I do not envision seeking to establish one. If the Diocese was comprised of one county, perhaps such an arrangement would be suitable but it is impossible to make one such parish for the whole Diocese and it is not feasible to establish one such parish in each County where the Extraordinary Form might be desired).

§ 6. to take care not to authorize the establishment of new groups

(COMMENT/POLICY: § 6 of the *Motu Proprio* practically forbids the authorization of new groups and so those places where Mass in the Extraordinary Form has already been celebrated with some degree of regularity can continue but no new locations are to be established).

Article 5. Priests who already celebrate according to the “*Missale Romanum*” of 1962 should request from the diocesan bishop the authorization to continue to enjoy this faculty.

(COMMENT/POLICY: Priests of the diocese and other priests ministering stably in the diocese who are already celebrating Holy Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal hereby are given my authorization to continue to do so, provided that the other elements of this policy are carefully followed. In the future a request for continued authorization may become necessary).

I pray that this implementation of the Motu Proprio of Pope Francis is not deemed unduly burdensome. I have taken into account the experiences of our own Diocese, the policies of other Dioceses, the words of the Motu Proprio and the provisions of the *Code of Canon Law* in trying to apply this document to the life and experience of the faithful of the Diocese. I pray that all of us find our unity in the Eucharist, the Living Bread of Life.

Asking every good grace and blessing of God upon you, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, preceded by a cross symbol. The signature appears to read "Robert F. Vasa".

The Most Reverend Robert F. Vasa,
Bishop of Santa Rosa