



*A Pastoral Letter to the People of God in the Diocese of Broken Bay on recent liturgical developments in the Church*

Friday 29 October 2021

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

As we return to prayer and worship in our Churches, many of you would be aware in recent months that Pope Francis issued a number of new directives in regard to the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. The most spoken about has, perhaps, been *Traditionis Custodes* of 16 July 2021 in which the Holy Father has provided new guidelines for the celebration of the Mass in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, i.e. in the manner prior to the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council. There has been, however, others such as *Spiritus Domini* of 15 January 2021, modifying Canon 230 §1 of the Code of Canon Law regarding inclusion of women in the ministries of lector and acolyte, and even to some extent, *Antiquum Ministerium* of 10 May 2021 instituting the ministry of catechist.

We have a small community of people who, ordinarily, gather at St Benedict's Church in the Parish of Arcadia for the celebration of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. I have already written to the members of the community through their appointed chaplain Fr Yuhanna Azize expressing my desire to meet with them when it becomes possible to discuss how we might continue to make provision for this celebration in respect to the Holy Father's directives. Considering the Holy Father's instructions, it is not my intention to approve any further occasions in our Diocese for the celebration of the Extraordinary Form.

The publications of the Holy Father this year taken as a whole, however, invite us to consider in a deeper way both the significance and the practice of the Sacred Liturgy in the life of our Diocese. Therefore, I wish to use the opportunity, particularly on publication of *Traditionis Custodes*, to reflect with you on the importance of the fundamental link between liturgy and our understanding of the Church itself, and to begin with you a conversation about practical means by which both to strengthen and cultivate this for our own Diocese in the future.

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As Pope Francis wrote in this accompanying letter to Bishops on the publication of *Traditionis Custodes*, the reform of the Second Vatican Council must be accepted as the work of the Holy Spirit manifest in the work of the Fathers, “who exercised their collegial power in a solemn manner *cum Petro et sub Petro* in an ecumenical council . . .” The Fathers clearly intended in their resolution that, “the faithful would not assist [in the Sacred Liturgy] as strangers and silent spectators in the mystery of faith but, with a full understanding of the rites and prayers, would participate in the sacred action consciously, piously, and actively.” (*Lumen gentium*, n. 23). Throughout our Church there exists a diversity of Rites, particularly through the Eastern Churches. However, in the Latin Rite to which we, in the Diocese of Broken Bay belong, the Holy Father has now clearly stated that there is to be a unified experience of the liturgy – a “single and identical prayer” in a variety of languages that expresses the unity of the Latin Church itself, as Pope Paul VI expressed in *Missale Romanum* of 1969.

The Church is always “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.” In its communion of life, expressed through an evolving Tradition, we see manifest its divine reality. Anything that begins to rupture that communion and that works to fragment it into various groupings in opposition to each other cannot be of the Spirit. This brings us to understand also how the Sacred Liturgy expresses our understanding of the Church as a mystery of Communion. How we celebrate the Sacred Liturgy reveals our understanding of the Church itself. The way in which we celebrate the Liturgy gives expression to our understanding of Church and in so doing sacramentally presents the Church in this time and place in an embodied manner.

As the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) teaches us, “The celebration pertains to the whole Body of the Church, manifests it, and has its effect upon it” (n. 91). “The celebration of the Eucharist is the action of the whole Church” (n. 5); it is the “action of Christ and the Church” (n. 91). Subsequently, care must be taken that “all the faithful may display in the celebration of the Eucharist that full, conscious, and active participation that is required by the very nature of the Liturgy and to which the faithful, in virtue of their status as such, have a right and duty” (n. 386; see also *Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 14).

“The presence and active participation of the faithful . . . manifests more clearly the ecclesial nature of the celebration” (GIRM, 19). Through the waters of Baptism and the gift of the Spirit in Confirmation, the People of God becomes one in the priesthood of Christ. The celebration must then tell the truth in its celebration: the celebration of a variety of ministries reflecting the fullness and diversity of the local Church. The liturgical assembly then reflects the communion within the community: as the one Body of Christ the assembly gives witness to the diversity of ministries within the assembly – presider, lector, acolyte, hospitality, music . . . “In this way, the Christian people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession expresses its cohesion and its hierarchical ordering” (GIRM 91).



For this reason, the Synod of Bishops in 1985, reflecting on the Second Vatican Council, once again drew our attention to *communio* as, “the guiding idea for understanding the Church, and thus called for a deepening of Eucharistic ecclesiology wherein the various roles of pope, bishop, priest and layman are rightly contemplated together in the light of the sacrament of the Lord’s Body,” as stated by Pope Benedict XVI. (*Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, 82). As the pope went on to say, “In the Eucharist I can never demand communion with Jesus alone. He has given Himself a Body. Whoever receives him in Communion necessarily communicates with all his brothers and sisters who have become members of the one Body.”

The relationship between worship and belief is conveyed in an expression of the ancient Fathers, *lex orandi, lex credendi*. It is sometimes expanded as *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*: “the law of what is prayed [is] what is believed [is] the law of what is lived.” It signifies that prayer and belief are integral to each other and that liturgy is not distinct from theology, and from ecclesiology especially. The Catechism puts it quite starkly: “We pray as we live, because we live as we pray,” (n. 2725). The way we enter the Sacred Liturgy reveals our understanding of the Church itself – and the way in which we understand ourselves.

For this reason, there exists an acute need for ongoing catechesis both in respect to the Mystery of the Church and in Sacred Liturgy. It is the failure of such catechesis that renders distortions in our liturgical practice, one way or another. The diversity of these distortions has been highlighted by Pope Francis who calls us yet again to liturgical renewal, under the Bishop who, as he reiterates, is the “moderator, promoter, and guardian of the liturgical life of the Church.”

To this end, I wish to explore now new and engaging ways for the People of God in our own Diocese to deepen their appreciation of what we celebrate in the Sacred Liturgy and to examine together how our practice reflects more transparently the Mystery of which we are heirs. This will entail the development of new opportunities for liturgical formation and training, a new diocesan-wide impetus to promote liturgical celebrations known for their authenticity, sacredness, and beauty and mediated through architecture, symbol and music. The first step on this journey will be the establishment of a new Diocesan Liturgical Commission who can work with me through Evangelisation Broken Bay to chart a new direction for us. In so doing, the Commission will be tasked with developing a pastoral strategy for my consideration by which all the People of God might grow in their appreciation of the Sacred Liturgy and by which parish communities may be best resourced to achieve this. I shall announce the Terms of Reference for this Commission and its membership before the end of this year, so that it may commence its charter at the commencement of 2022.



May each of us recognise in a deeper way both the privilege we have to be members of the Body of Christ, the Church, and the precious gift we have in the Sacred Liturgy to realise this in time and in place.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Anthony Randazzo

Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL  
Bishop of Broken Bay