

Letter from Fr Cummins to
his Bishop: Why Keep Tradition.

P.O. Box 23
Lorne, Vic. 3232
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The Most Rev. Bryan Gallagher, D.D., D.Ph.
Bishop's House,
Port Pirie, S.A. 5540.

My dear Lord Bishop,

In compliance with your request that I set out in writing how I justify my activities in your diocese of Port Pirie, I wish to submit the following statement.

First, I want to recall that in March 1974 I sent a letter to the Apostolic Delegate, the Most Rev. Gino Paro, explaining my problems with respect to the Novus Ordo and asking for clarification with regard to the 'law' alleged to be enforcing it. I included my reasons for believing that the Bull 'Quo Primum' of Pope St. Pius V had never been abrogated, which meant that every priest was free to use at all times the so-called Tridentine Mass which was promulgated through it. I concluded with the questions - "Has the Holy Father (Pope Paul VI) actually and expressly abrogated 'Quo Primum'? If so, what did he say and when did he say it?"

The Apostolic Delegate replied by saying that he had no power to grant dispensations (something I did not ask for); but he did suggest that I write either to Cardinal Villot or Cardinal Knox, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. I decided to write to Cardinal Knox. In due course I received a reply from his Secretary, Archbishop Bugnini. While Bugnini tried to convince me that I should be saying the Novus Ordo (which was only to be expected since he was the architect of it), he nevertheless made no attempt to answer my questions, nor did he try to refute any point I made.

The conclusion which I then naturally came to was that Pope Paul had never abrogated 'Quo Primum', which was what I had understood all along.

Now I would like to quote just two paragraphs from the above-mentioned letter of mine to the Apostolic Delegate, which relate to local decisions -

- (a) "I am aware of the decision made recently at the Australian Episcopal Liturgical Commission that all Masses said in Latin must be in the New Ordo. But I fail to see how this decision of the Bishops can be reconciled with the words of Pope St. Pius V in his Bull 'Quo Primum' which states: *"At no time in the future can a priest, whether secular or religious, ever be coerced into using any other way of saying Mass. And so as to preclude once and for all any scruples of conscience and fear of ecclesiastical penalties and censures, We hereby declare that it is in virtue of Our Apostolic Authority that We decree and enjoin that this Our present Order and Decree is to last in perpetuity and can never be legally revoked or amended at some future date."*
- (b) "Also I fail to see how this decision of the Bishops can be reconciled with the 'concession' of the Holy See mentioned by Mgr. Antonio de Castro Mayer, Bishop

of Campos, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a pastoral letter to his priests. Referring to the Instruction containing the 'concession', he recalls: "*The Sacred Congregation of Divine Cult grants to every priest (throughout the world) celebrating in Latin, the faculty of keeping to the Ordo Missae of St. Pius V, that is to say, the traditional Mass known to all, that in large part dates back to Apostolic times.*" He adds: "*The text of the Instruction, read by the Pope himself, Paul VI, to the faithful, on 26 Nov. 1969, can be seen in L'Osservatore Romano, 21 Dec. 1969, p. 1103. (Italian Edition).*"

Now, in view of the fact that the Australian Episcopal Commission insisted that all Masses said in Latin must be in the New Ordo, what would be the use of my asking permission from any Australian bishop to go into his diocese for the purpose of celebrating the traditional Tridentine Mass for the people? It would just simply be a waste of time; because the answer would have to be: "No. The Australian Episcopal Liturgical Commission has forbidden it."

But now, a further question; Why do I go into the various dioceses in open defiance of the bishops?

The answer to that rests on a principle which overrides every other consideration, namely, that the genuine traditional faith of Catholics must at all times and at all costs be preserved. *This is Divine Law.* St. Thomas Aquinas explains: *Important as the moral virtue of obedience is, yet the theological virtue of faith is even more important; and therefore any obedience practiced towards bishops at the expense of faith, is really disobedience to God Himself.* (Summa Theologica II-II, Ques. 104, art. 345. Also St. Thomas' Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles, 2 Thess 34). St. Peter put it in another way when he wrote: "*We must obey God rather than men*". (Acts, 5, 29).

That the faith of Catholics is a very real and serious issue at the present time is evidenced by the fact that Catholics are falling away from authentic Catholic beliefs and leaving the Church in great numbers, and this includes many of the clergy. Also priests and religious are abandoning their vocations as never before.

Applying now the principle enunciated by Christ in the Gospel: "*By their fruits you shall know them*", the obvious conclusion which everyone must surely draw is that grace is not flowing from the modernized Mass as it used to when Mass was celebrated in the traditional manner. As a matter of fact, I can't see any good fruits that have come from the modern Mass; though we do see a lot of bad ones. At the same time, how can one be surprised at this when we recall the words of Cardinal Ottaviani in his letter to Pope Paul VI of 25 Sept. 1969? - "*The Novus Ordo represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session XXII of the Council of Trent*". So it is not just the language or the liturgy that has been changed, but the *theology*

of the Mass too has been seriously altered; and God does not give His graces and blessings through erroneous worship. In a word, the Novus Ordo, as it is being celebrated in our churches today, *IS NOT THE CATHOLIC MASS*; and the simple faith and Catholic sense of many of the laity tell them exactly that.

However, these good Catholics are determined to preserve their traditional Catholic faith for both themselves and their children, as indeed they are obliged to do by Divine Law. Some of them are in the Diocese of Port Pirie; and they have asked me to come to them from time to time for the purpose of celebrating for them the traditional Mass and administering to them the Sacraments in the traditional manner.

The Catholic Church, in Her legislation, gives support to these Catholics in their just requests for the traditional Mass. In fact, She gives to all Catholics a strict right to it, as expressed in Canon 682: "*The laity has the right to receive from the clergy the spiritual benefits and especially the necessary means of salvation, according to the rules of ecclesiastical discipline.*" Since 'Quo Primum' has never been abrogated, as explained above, it still forms part of ecclesiastical discipline, and still provides us with the traditional Mass of St. Pius V as a 'spiritual benefit' and 'means of salvation'.

Furthermore, I feel myself obliged in charity to comply with the requests of these good people to bring to them the traditional Mass and Sacraments.

It is true that the obligation to supply these necessary spiritual helps devolves primarily upon the bishops and pastors by reason of their office (ex officio). But if they fail to provide them, then any priest who sees the great danger to the faith and salvation of Catholics deprived of them, and who is able to do something about it, is obliged by charity to do so (ex caritate); and I believe he is gravely obliged because of the eternal issues at stake. That is how I see my role in these difficult times.

Finally, the question - Where do I get faculties for hearing Confessions?

I have always had faculties for hearing Confessions in the Diocese of Ballarat and the Archdiocese of Melbourne, which have never been withdrawn; but I have no faculties from bishops for administering the Sacraments anywhere else.

However, in certain circumstances the Catholic Church Herself gives faculties for hearing Confessions, namely, "*in common error, or in positive and probable doubt, whether of the law or fact*", (Canon 209). But how does this apply to my situation?

It applies, because bishops will not grant me faculties for their dioceses unless I conform to the new 'legislation' requiring me to use the Novus Ordo when saying Mass in public and administering the Sacraments - (conditio sine qua non).

But the validity of that 'legislation', which is so contrary to the traditions of the Church to which we are all obliged to adhere (*Therefore, brethren, stand fast: and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle.* II Thess. 2, 14.), and so contrary, too, to the just aspirations of many good Catholics, and so disastrous to the faith of many others; that 'legislation' is extremely doubtful to say the least; and yet, according to Canon 209, any positive and probable doubt in that regard is all that is required for the Church to grant faculties to priests for the 'spiritual benefit' and 'salvation' of the faithful.

Briefly, it comes to this: charity gravely obliges me to take the True Mass and Sacraments to the faithful, especially those who ask for them; and the Church then grants me faculties for hearing Confessions, when the bishops refuse to do so on account of my traditional convictions.

My Lord, I would much prefer to go into your Diocese of Port Pirie with your permission and blessing, rather than to act contrary to your wishes and to rely on the general law of the Church for faculties. I would be grateful, therefore, for the sake of those good Catholics in your diocese whom I visit every month, if you grant me permission to enter your diocese, and faculties for hearing the confessions of these people. None of them wish to be at odds with their Bishop; but at the same time, they all know well that they cannot compromise their faith and endanger their salvation through a false obedience.

On their behalf now I plead that you will grant to us all your blessing, and also your support in our efforts to uphold the Church's traditions in your diocese. For our part, we promise you loyalty and a prominent place in our prayers.

Asking your Lordship's blessing, yours sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Augustine J. Cummins, C.Ss.R.

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