

From Father Terence Hogan, director, archdiocesan Office of Worship

Today, July 7, Pope Benedict XVI issued his Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificium* to Bishops throughout the world. In this letter the Holy Father addresses the question of the permission for use of the Roman liturgy celebrated in Latin prior to the liturgical reforms of 1970. The purpose is to seek an “interior reconciliation” with those who have demonstrated a sincere attachment to liturgical forms used by the Roman Catholic Church prior to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. In order to accomplish this the Holy Father defines two Forms of the Roman Rite: a.) the **ordinary form** found in the *Missale Romanum* of Pope Paul VI, with its most recent edition in 2001 promulgated by Pope John Paul II; and b.) the **extraordinary form** as contained in the *Missale Romanum* of Pope Saint Pius V and found most recently in the *Missal* of Blessed John XXIII (1962). Pope Benedict is clear that the extraordinary form was never abrogated and the two Forms make up the liturgy of the one Roman Rite.

As of September 14, 2007 any priest of the Roman Catholic Church may celebrate the extraordinary form of the *Missale Romanum* in a Mass without people except during the Sacred Triduum, the three days leading to Easter. If members of the faithful wish to join in these celebrations, they are permitted to do so. However, the priest must suitably demonstrate a minimum rubrical and linguistic ability in Latin to celebrate this extraordinary form. It is also clear that Pope Benedict XVI envisions that the *ordinary* Form found in the 2001 edition of the Roman Missal will certainly remain as the norm for most parish communities and that full, conscious, and active participation both interiorly and externally be desired whenever either Form of the Roman Rite is celebrated. In addition for the good of souls, a pastor may grant permission for the use of the *extraordinary* Form to celebrate the other Sacraments, Christian Funerals or other occasional celebrations.

It is to be noted, the wider use of the extraordinary Form does not reflect a change in the Church’s teaching on anti-Semitism since the 1962 *Missale Romanum* that must be used by the priest when celebrating the extraordinary Form already reflected Blessed John XXIII’s revision of liturgical language. When saying the prayers for Good Friday which mentioned the Jewish people and other non-Christians, the priest must use the modern-day text and not the Tridentine text. Pope Benedict XVI remains committed to the need of overcoming past prejudices and misunderstandings through continued Jewish-Christian dialogue

Finally, The Holy Father is clear that if some question or problem arises regarding these Forms the local Bishop is to intervene, since he is the moderator of sacred liturgy in his own Diocese.

The Apostolic Letter and Summary Questions may be found at: www.nccbuscc.org