

VATICAN

With letter to French Bishops Leo XIV makes move towards liturgical peace

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Are we close to a liturgical peace? The letter that Pope Leo XIV sent to the French bishops yesterday via Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin is a cause for great optimism. At the French Episcopal Conference, which is meeting in plenary assembly

until tomorrow, the Pope provided precise guidelines on liturgy. This is a delicate issue to which the Holy Father is particularly attentive, given the growth of communities linked to the *Vetus Ordo*.

Leo's words definitively bring a close to the era of harshness marked by *Traditionis Custodes* and the even more restrictive measures signed by Arthur Roche and Vittorio Francesco Viola. Having concluded the pontificate of Pope Francis — who never managed to understand the liturgical sensibilities of those bound to the extraordinary form of the Roman rite — the leadership of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments will have to adapt to the new line set out by Prevost in the letter to the French bishops. 'It is worrying that a painful wound continues to open within the Church regarding the celebration of Mass, the very sacrament of unity,' the letter signed by Parolin reads.

This is an acknowledgement of the rifts caused by the repeal of the liberalisation granted by Benedict XVI in *Summorum Pontificum*. In the face of this wound, the Pope's intention is clear: 'To heal it, a new way of looking at one another is certainly needed, with a greater understanding of each other's sensibilities; a way of looking that allows brothers and sisters, enriched by their diversity, to welcome one another in charity and in the unity of the faith'. This is a spirit far more in tune with the intent of the 2007 *motu proprio* and far removed from the conclusions drawn in *Traditionis Custodes* in 2021.

'May the Holy Spirit suggest concrete solutions that allow for the generous inclusion of those who sincerely adhere to the *Vetus Ordo*, in accordance with the Second Vatican Council's guidelines on liturgy,' concluded the Secretary of State, conveying the Pope's guidance. It is well known that the former *Ecclesia Dei* institutes and the communities of the faithful linked to them have never questioned the validity of the Council. Indeed, for this very reason, they have been the target of heavy criticism and attacks over the decades from those who contest their legitimacy.

***Traditionis Custodes* and the other measures of recent years have caused insult** as well as injury. The Pope seems aware that those who have remained faithful to Rome have been treated harshly and unjustly, as noted in the letter to the bishops presenting *Traditionis Custodes*, which mentions the attribution of non-existent responsibilities. Not to mention the murky affair of the questionnaire on the implementation of the *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, which was drawn up by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the time. It is no coincidence that Leo's shift on the so-called Latin Mass comes in a letter to the French bishops. In France, communities linked to the ancient liturgy are growing at a dizzying rate and the percentage of new 'trad' priests out

of the total number of priestly ordinations is ever increasing.

Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, president of the French Bishops' Conference, is well aware of this. He celebrated in the *Vetus Ordo* even after *Traditionis Custodes* came into force, and adopted a policy of broad tolerance in his Archdiocese of Marseille. This is not a question of progressives versus conservatives, as Aveline is a prelate known for his interpretation of a synodal Church. How, on the other hand, will those bishops react who continue to prohibit or restrict celebrations according to the 1962 Missal? Some in France will likely be displeased by the Pope's words, as written by Parolin. However, there are people who are grateful for Leo XIV's pastoral concern, which demonstrates that he harbours no ideological prejudice towards the religious faithful with traditional sensibilities.