

**The Bull -- *Quo Primum* [Apostolic Constitution]**  
of Pope St. Pius V  
Pius Bishop Servant of the Servants of God

For a Perpetual Memorial of the Matter Upon Our elevation to the Apostolic throne, We gladly turned Our mind and energies, and directed all Our thoughts, to the matter of preserving incorrupt the public worship of the Church; and We have striven, with God's help, by every means in Our power to achieve that purpose.

Whereas amongst other decrees of the holy Council of Trent, We were charged with revision and re-issue of the sacred books, to wit, the Catechism, the Missal and the Breviary; and whereas We have with God's consent published a Catechism for the instruction of the faithful and thoroughly revised the Breviary for the due performance of the Divine Office, We next, in order that the Missal and Breviary might be in perfect harmony, as is right and proper (considering that it is altogether fitting that there should be in the Church only one appropriate manner of Psalmody and one sole rite of celebrating Mass), deemed it necessary to give Our immediate attention to what still remained to be done, namely the re-editing of the Missal with the least possible delay.

We resolved accordingly to delegate this task to a select committee of scholars; and they, having at every stage of their work and with the utmost care collated the ancient codices in Our Vatican Library and reliable (original or amended) codices from elsewhere, and having also consulted the writing of ancient and approved authors who have bequeathed to us records relating to the said sacred rites, thus restored the Missal itself to the pristine form and rite of the holy Fathers.

When this production had been subjected to close scrutiny and further amended We, after mature consideration, ordered that the final result be forthwith printed and published in Rome, so that all may enjoy the fruit of this labor; that priests may know what prayers to use, and what rites and ceremonies they are to observe henceforward in the celebration of Masses.

Now therefore, in order that all everywhere may adopt and observe what has been delivered to them by the Holy Roman Church, Mother and Mistress of the other churches, it shall be unlawful henceforth and forever throughout the Christian world to sing or to read Masses according to any formula other than that of this Missal published by Us; this ordinance to apply to all churches and chapels, with or without care of souls, patriarchal, collegiate, and parochial, be they secular or belonging to any religious Order, whether of men (including the military Orders) or of women, in which conventual Masses are or ought to be sung aloud in choir or read privately according to the rites and customs of the Roman Church; to apply, moreover, even if the said churches have been in any way exempted, whether by indult of the Apostolic See, by custom, by privilege, or even by oath or Apostolic confirmation, or have their rights and faculties guaranteed to them in any other way whatsoever, saving only those in which the practice of saying Mass differently was granted over 200 years ago simultaneously with the Apostolic See's institution and confirmation of the Church, and those in which there has prevailed a similar custom followed continuously for a period of not less than 200 years; in which cases We in no wise rescind their prerogatives or customs aforesaid. Nevertheless, if this Missal which We have seen fit to publish be more agreeable to these last, We hereby permit them to celebrate Mass according to its rite, subject to the consent of their bishop or prelate, and of their whole Chapter, all else to the contrary notwithstanding.

All other churches aforesaid are hereby denied the use of other missals, which are to be wholly and

entirely rejected; and by this present Constitution, which shall have the force of law in perpetuity.

We order and enjoin under pain of Our displeasure that nothing be added to Our newly published Missal, nothing omitted therefrom, and nothing whatsoever altered therein.

We specifically command each and every patriarch, administrator and all other persons of whatsoever ecclesiastical dignity, be they even Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church or possessed of any other rank or preeminence, and We order them by virtue of holy obedience to sing or to read the Mass according to the rite and manner and norm herein laid down by Us, and henceforward to discontinue and utterly discard all other rubrics and rites of other missals, howsoever ancient, which they have been accustomed to follow, and not to presume in celebrating Mass to introduce any ceremonies or recite any prayers other than those contained in this Missal.

Furthermore, by these presents and by virtue of Our Apostolic authority We give and grant in perpetuity that for the singing or reading of Mass in any church whatsoever, this Missal may be followed absolutely, without any scruple of conscience or fear of incurring any penalty, judgment or censure, and may be freely and lawfully used.

Nor shall bishops, administrators, canons, chaplains, and other secular priests, or religious of whatsoever Order or by whatsoever title designated, be obliged to celebrate Mass otherwise than enjoined by Us.

We likewise order and declare that no one whosoever shall be forced or coerced into altering this Missal and that this present Constitution can never be revoked or modified, but shall for ever remain valid and have the force of law, notwithstanding previous constitutions or edicts of provincial or synodal councils, and notwithstanding the usage of the churches aforesaid, established by very long and even immemorial prescription, saving only usage of more than 200 years.

Consequently it is Our will, and by the same authority We decree, that one month after publication of this Our constitution and Missal, priests of the Roman Curia shall be obliged to sing or to read the Mass in accordance therewith; others south of the Alps, after three months; those who live beyond the Alps, after six months or as soon as the Missal becomes available for purchase.

Furthermore, in order that the said Missal may be preserved incorrupt and kept free from defects and errors, the penalty for non-observance in the case of all printers resident in territory directly or indirectly subject to Ourselves and the Holy Roman Church shall be forfeiture of their books and a fine of 100 gold ducats payable by that very fact to the Apostolic Treasury.

In the case of those resident in other parts of the world, it shall be automatic excommunication and other penalties at Our discretion; and by Our Apostolic authority and the tenor of these presents, We also decree that they must not dare or presume either to print or to publish or to sell, or in any way to take delivery of such books without Our approval and consent, or without express permission of the Apostolic Commissary in the said parts appointed by Us for that purpose. Each of the said printers must receive from the aforementioned Commissary a standard Missal to serve as an exemplar and agree faithfully therewith, varying in no wise from the first impression printed in Rome.

But, since it would be difficult for this present Constitution to be transmitted to all parts of the world and to come to the notice of all concerned simultaneously, We direct that it be, as usual, posted and published at the doors of the Basilica of the Prince of Apostles, at those of the Apostolic Chancery, and at the end of the *Campo dei Fiori*; moreover, We direct that printed copies of the

same, signed by a notary public and authenticated with the seal of an ecclesiastical dignitary, shall possess the same unqualified and indubitable validity everywhere and in every country that would attend the display there of Our present text.

Accordingly, no one whosoever is permitted to infringe or rashly contravene this notice of Our permission, statute, ordinance, command, direction, grant, indult, declaration, will, decree and prohibition. Should any person venture to do so, let him understand that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at St. Peter's, Rome, in the year of Our Lord's Incarnation one thousand five hundred and seventy, on the fourteenth day of July in the fifth year [14 VII 1570 A.D.] of Our Pontificate. Caesar Glorierus H. Cumin

[Translated by John Warrington]

## COMMENTARY

There has in recent years been an attempt, by those trying to justify the *Novus Ordo Missae* (New Order of Mass) juridically, to argue against the perpetual, even infallible and irreformable, force of the bull *Quo Primum*, issued in solemn form "in perpetuity" by a saint-pope, who was carrying out the decrees of one of the Church's most important dogmatic councils [Trent] and who imposed the censure of excommunication upon any, "of whatever ecclesiastical rank," who should dare violate its provisions. The arguments used against the perpetual force of *Quo Primum* typically fall into one or more of the following categories:

- (1) Even though Pope St. Pius V decreed that his bull be "valid in perpetuity," he didn't really mean, or couldn't really have meant, "in perpetuity."
- (2) Pope St. Pius V didn't mean to impose excommunication on violators, but the phrase "shall incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul" was a meaningless formula used in all papal documents of the time.
- (3) The Mass is simply an ecclesiastical law, a matter of discipline for the Latin (Western) Church, not of faith and morals; therefore, no pope can bind a successor in such matters, as all popes have equal power.
- (4) The Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* (April 3, 1969), by which Paul VI, according to the common wisdom, promulgated the New Mass, abrogated the dogmatic decree *Quo Primum* of Pope St. Pius V.

## Replies to these four arguments

### REPLY TO (1)

Such an argument implies an ignorance of the principles of canon law. As to content, the perpetuity is confirmed by three characteristics: 1) The aim in view, which is that there should be but one missal so that the unity of Faith may be protected and manifested by unity of public prayer. 2) The method of its establishment, which is neither that of an artificial creation devised from a number of possibilities nor even a radical reform, but the honest restoration of the ancient Roman Missal: the honest restoration of a well-proven past being the best guarantee of a tranquil future. 3) Its authorship, which is that of a pope acting with all the force of his Apostolic authority, in exact conformity with the express wish of an Ecumenical Council -- in conformity with the uninterrupted

Tradition of the Roman Church -- and, so far as concerns the principal parts of the missal, in conformity with the Universal Church. (Fr. Raymond Dulac, "The Jurisdiction of the bull *Quo Primum* of Pope St. Pius V, Supplement to *Itinéraires* No. 162, reproduced in Michael Davies' *Pope Paul's New Mass*, pp. 571-580)

The canonic principle is that laws are interpreted by the legislator (here the Pope) and in accord with their proper meaning considered in their text and context (Canon 16.1, 17 [1983]). The strict censures imposed by the Pope, even including excommunication upon printers who introduce defects and errors into their printings of the Roman Missal, leave no doubt that the Pope considered the force of the bull perpetual and most grave. The clear signification of the words in this solemn declaration leave no room for any positive doubt about what is meant. The clause, "We likewise order and declare ... this present Constitution can never be revoked or modified, but shall for ever remain valid and have the force of law," expresses a precise and unequivocal meaning: namely, that the document cannot ever be revoked or modified -- it is an irreformable document.

The clause cannot legitimately be construed to mean anything other than that which it clearly and unequivocally states. It cannot be legitimately maintained, for example, that "this present Constitution can never be revoked or modified" means that no one under the rank of Pope may revoke or modify, but that a pope can revoke or modify *Quo Primum*.... *Quo Primum* is solemnly declared to be intrinsically incapable of revocation or modification: the irrevocability of *Quo Primum* is a proper attribute pertaining to the very nature of the document itself. By declaring *Ex Cathedra* that *Quo Primum* can never be revoked or modified, St. Pius V infallibly defined that *Quo Primum* is of itself irreformable. -- Fr. Paul L. Kramer, B.Ph., S.T.B., M.Div., *A Theological Vindication of Roman Catholic Traditionalism* (Nazareth, India: Apostle Publications, 1997).

Historically, it was because the Faith had been undermined and destroyed in Germany and England through the gradual desecration and destruction of the Mass that the dogmatic Council of Trent decreed that the pope should produce and publish a missal, so that priests would know exactly how to celebrate Mass for all time to come. Consequently, Pope St. Pius V, to safeguard all future generations of Catholics from the tragedy that befell the Catholics in Germany and England, decreed by virtue of his Apostolic Authority that THIS Roman Missal should be used forever in the Church without any change or alteration, and that no priest should ever be required to offer Holy Mass in any other way.

### **REPLY TO (2)**

Such an argument implies an ignorance of Latin. It is an easy thing to disprove such a contention. In addition to *Quo Primum*, two other documents have traditionally been printed at the front of every approved Roman Missal: Pope Clement VIII's *Cum Sanctissimum* (1604) and Pope Urban VIII's *Si Quid Est* (1634). Although both of these papal bulls renew the censure of excommunication imposed by Pope St. Pius V, neither of them contains this most grave imprecation.

### **REPLY TO (3)**

Such an argument implies an ignorance of basic theology. Even laymen are familiar with the principle enunciated by Pope St. Celestine I to the bishops of Gaul (422): "*Legem credendi, lex statuit supplicandi*" [the law of praying has established the law of believing], often shortened to "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*" [the law of praying (is) the law of believing]. In other words, it is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that teaches us our theology, not the other way around. The Mass comprises the Apostolic Tradition of faith and morals in its very essence.

Every doctrine essential to the faith is taught in the text of the Mass. The notion that one pope can "overrule" his predecessors in such a matter is in implicit denial of the credal dogma that the Church is Apostolic. The traditional Roman Mass in all its essentials was passed on by St. Peter, the first Pope, to the Church, was according to St. Ambrose elaborated by the Apostles themselves, and reached its complete perfection with Popes St. Damascus (fourth century) and St. Gregory the Great (sixth century).

As the great liturgical scholar Fr. Adrian Fortescue wrote, this Mass is "the most venerable in all Christendom, with a history of unbroken use far longer than that of any Eastern rite, there being no doubt that the essential parts of the Mass are of Apostolic origin." Thus, the Mass that Pope St. Pius V was confirming in *Quo Primum* was not some new construct like the *Novus Ordo Missae*, but was essentially the Apostolic Mass of Sts. Peter and Paul at Rome. Nor is it the Mass of some particular area of the Church like the Eastern rites, but it is the UNIVERSAL rite of the Church, the rite of the Roman See, the Papal See.

*Quo Primum* is no "merely ecclesiastical law" (Can. 11 [1983]) that can be revoked, but has been enacted into law and declared *Ex Cathedra* to be irreformable, and is therefore a solemnly defined moral doctrine which is also of itself infallible and irreformable (DB 1829). *Quo Primum* has been declared to be infallibly declared to be irreformable because the rite of Mass codified in the Tridentine Missal is the "received and approved rite of the Roman Church" that has been "handed down by the Holy Roman Church." The status of *Quo Primum*, therefore, pertains to Divine Law insofar as they constitute a particular application of the Divine Law. -- Fr. Paul L. Kramer, B.Ph., S.T.B., M.Div., *A Theological Vindication of Roman Catholic Traditionalism* (Nazareth, India: Apostle Publications, 1997).

Moreover, according to the common opinion of Catholic theologians throughout the centuries, any pope who "wished to overturn the rites of the Church based on Apostolic Tradition" would become a schismatic, not to be obeyed. (For example, Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), S.J., "Most Exalted and Pius Doctor," *De Charitate, Disputatio XII de Schismate, sectio 1.*) The *Novus Ordo Missae* is no less than a change in the entire structure of the Mass. If it were true that another pope or council could set aside the solemn decrees of a former pope or council, there would be no Apostolic authority in the Church, and we could not believe Christ's promise to be with the Church "all days" until the end of time. Any pope or council that attempts to set aside the authoritative teachings of a previous pope or council is acting in defiance and disobedience to the authority of the Church. "We need once again to take into account that these various conciliar regulations [of the dogmatic Council of Trent on the Mass, Chapter XXII] do not only have a disciplinary character. They are based on a doctrinal, theological foundation that involves the Faith itself." (Alfons Cardinal Sticker, May 1999)

#### **REPLY TO (4)**

Such an argument implies an ignorance of canon law. What does the Apostolic Constitution actually say. And here we must work from the official Latin text from the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, since the vernacular translations appear to have been "doctored." The promulgating clause reads as follows: "*Nostra haec autem statuta et praescripta nunc et in posterum firma et efficacia esse et fore volumus.*" Literally translated, this means: "We will, moreover, that these our statutes and prescriptions be firm and efficacious now and be [so] in the future." And what are "these" [*haec*] statutes and prescriptions that Paul VI refers to? They refer to what precedes this paragraph, that is precisely two things: the three new optional "Eucharistic prayers" and the phrase "*quod pro vobis*

*tradetur*" [which is given up for you] added to the words of the consecration of the bread (a violation of Sacred Tradition).

Thus, neither in this document (nor in any other one) does Paul VI impose the New Mass on the Church. As Fr. Raymond Dulac, French canonist and founder of the French seminary at Rome from 1920 to 1926, wrote (*Itinéraires* September/October 1970 and April 1972) in a canonical consultation summary of the New Order of Mass, when the New Mass was first issued: The bull *Quo Primum tempore* of Saint Pius V is not at all abrogated in its totality by Paul VI's constitution *Missale Romanum* of April 3, 1969. That constitution brings nothing more to the obligation of the Tridentine Missal than, at the very most, particular derogations.

One can ask the question: for what reason would the Pontiff in 1969 will to abrogate a law of four centuries [*Quo Primum*], a law that he praises greatly; a law that he did not at all criticize; a law that, at its origin, sanctioned an ancient custom already, in its essential part, of a thousand years; a law, finally, clothed, in its terms, in the most solemn formalities?

### **Summary of errors and their corrections**

ERROR: The Traditional Latin Mass was established only after the Council of Trent by Pope St. Pius V.

CORRECTION: Pope St. Pius V merely canonized the Roman Rite for all time, according to the practice of the Holy See, as it had been handed down by Sacred Tradition, essentially from the beginning of the Church.

ERROR: The Church always felt free to change the liturgy and did so countless times before Vatican II.

CORRECTION: The Roman Rite remained unchanged in almost all respects since the pontificate of Pope St. Gregory the Great ca. 600. It remained unchanged in all essential respects from much earlier.

ERROR: The Mass of the first Christians was vague, undefined, and largely improvised. Fixed, written liturgies are late developments.

CORRECTION: Scholarly research has shown that there was a striking uniformity in the elements of the Sacred Liturgy from the earliest times. Improvisation was minimal. Evidence of early written liturgies is substantial.

ERROR: Before the Council of Trent, there was no uniform Roman Rite, but many independent local rites.

CORRECTION: These mediaeval "uses" were not independent rites, but local deviations from the Roman Rite. Pope St. Pius V restored the uniform Roman Rite according to the practice of the Holy See.

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This is the **2nd** of **3** papers central to the Church crisis that became transparent during & after Vatican II. The other 2 papers are: (1) *NOM*: by B. Dryden (3) *De Defectibus*

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