



**Pastoral Letter
to the Clergy and Faithful of the Archdiocese of Perth**

Traditionis Custodes

Monday, 4 December 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

After five weeks in Rome attending the Synod of Bishops and two weeks in Sydney and Canberra for commitments relating to my role as president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference I have returned to Perth.

I am very grateful to all those who took on the extra burdens of responsibility during my absence to ensure the smooth running of the diocese. Thank you to you all.

Since returning from Rome, I have become very aware of just how closely so many of you followed the work of the Synod. I am also aware, even more than I was while in Rome, of the prayerful support I and all the members of the Synod received from so many people here in the Archdiocese. The first assembly of the Synod has been judged by the vast majority of people to have been very successful, and I believe I can say that, almost without exception, all the members of the Synod are looking forward very much to the second assembly in October next year. At that assembly the fruits of our ongoing prayer and reflection will help us to formulate some proposals and recommendations for Pope Francis to consider.

The presence of Pope Francis at so many of the Synod sessions was a special blessing and a source of encouragement for us all. His presence made concrete one of the central themes of the Synod, that of communion. To have a significant representative group of the world's bishops gathered with many lay women and men, religious brothers and sisters, and priests and deacons, around the Holy Father helped us to remember who we are as a Church: not just a gathering of like-minded individuals but the coming together of a true community of faith, consciously and humbly seeking to discern the will of God for his Church together and ready to commit ourselves to God's will no matter how challenging it might prove to be. This sense of belonging to something greater, something universal, was particularly powerful at the opening and closing Masses of the Synod. The Holy Father presided over these celebrations of the Eucharist, the central liturgical act of our faith and the source of our communion with the Lord and with each other as his disciples.

It is within the context of this theme of communion that I write this letter to take you, the people of the Archdiocese, into my confidence. I feel the need to take you all into my confidence concerning a particular issue which I as the Archbishop must address. It is an issue which affects a relatively small, though not for that reason unimportant, group of Catholics in the Archdiocese. At the same time, it also has significant implications for us all. I am referring to recent changes in the universal law of the Church in relation to the celebration of what is often referred to as the Tridentine Mass



or the traditional Latin Mass. More formally it is known as the Mass celebrated according to the *Missale Romanum* promulgated by Pope Saint John XXIII in 1962. This is the celebration of the Mass familiar to those older Catholics whose memory goes back to their experience of the Church prior to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council inaugurated by Pope Saint John XXIII and continued by Pope Saint Paul VI.

In the Archdiocese of Perth, the majority of Catholics who seek to celebrate Mass according to this form do so at Saint Anne's church in Belmont. A small group also gathers at the old Good Shepherd church in the parish of Kelmscott. Both of these groups were authorised by Archbishop Hickey. In more recent times this form of the liturgy was also celebrated in the Chittering parish, but this has now been discontinued.

The availability of the Traditional Latin Mass, quite severely restricted in the years following the Second Vatican Council, was permitted on a much wider basis by Pope Benedict XVI. On 7 July 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued what is called a *motu proprio*. This is a formal, binding change to the Church's law, issued under the pope's personal authority. The name of this *motu proprio* was *Summorum Pontificum*. It was in fidelity to Pope Benedict's decision, and in recognition of the pope's authority to make such binding laws, that Archbishop Hickey allowed the celebration of the Mass according to the missal of Pope Saint John XXIII here in our Archdiocese. Specific locations where this was to be permitted were eventually established both at Belmont and at Kelmscott. For those who are interested, Pope Benedict's *motu proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum*, can be accessed on the website of the Holy See, as listed below¹.

Over time, especially at Belmont, a regular community of worshippers was established, and under the rectorship of Fr Michael Rowe began to provide not just the Mass, but other activities commonly associated with parishes. However, Archbishop Hickey did not establish this community as a parish of the Archdiocese, although this option was open to him.

When I was appointed Archbishop in 2012, I was made aware of the arrangements at Belmont and at Kelmscott. As they were established under the authority of Archbishop Hickey, and in accordance with the laws promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI, I saw no need to change the arrangements Archbishop Hickey had put in place. At the same time, after consultation with the Council of Priests, I also decided not to proceed with the establishment of this community as a parish of the Archdiocese.

In 2020 Pope Francis consulted all the bishops of the world, seeking information on the situation at the local level in relation to the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass. I, like so many other bishops, responded to the Pope. I explained the situation as it then existed in Perth and indicated that while some of the clergy and people of the diocese were uncomfortable with those arrangements, I saw no urgent need to change them.

Having received and considered the results of the consultation of the world's bishops, Pope Francis issued a new *motu proprio*, *Traditionis Custodes*, on 16 July 2021, in which he

¹ [Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum on the "Roman liturgy prior to the reform of 1970" \(July 7, 2007\) | BENEDICT XVI \(vatican.va\)](#)



promulgated new laws for the Church in relation to the celebration of the Mass according to this rite. For those who are interested, Pope Francis's *motu proprio*, *Traditionis Custodes*, can be accessed on the website of the Holy See, as listed below².

At the same time, the pope also wrote to the bishops of the world, explaining his reasons for the decisions he had made. He also asked us to "share the burden" of implementing these decisions with him. In doing so, he recognised that these new laws would be difficult for many to accept, and he asked the bishops to be pastoral in their response.

He also asked us, where appropriate, to make provisions for the ongoing celebration of the Mass according to the traditional rite, but to do so in full compliance with the new laws of the Church. For those who are interested, the pope's letter to the bishops of the world can be accessed on the website of the Holy See, as listed below³.

On 19 September 2022, and after seeking extensive canonical advice, including from the relevant authorities in Rome, I issued a decree which formalises for the Archdiocese of Perth the way in which this new law of the Universal Church is to be applied. For those who are interested, the decree can be accessed on the website of the Archdiocese of Perth, as listed below⁴.

It is understandable that many Catholics in the Archdiocese, who have found the celebration of the Mass according to the missal of Pope Saint John XXIII to be spiritually uplifting and rewarding, should find the pope's decision difficult to accept. It is for that reason that I have moved slowly and patiently in implementing the regulations which give effect to the pope's clear directives. My hope has been that in moving cautiously I would give time to both the clergy and the laity to come to accept, even if reluctantly, the pope's decision. Sadly, this has not been the case for everyone concerned, and I now find myself in the position of having to choose between loyalty and obedience to the pope, and the deeply felt desires of many who would prefer to continue celebrating the Mass according to the missal of Pope Saint John XXIII.

As a Catholic bishop my choice is clear. In our Catholic faith, communion with the pope, made real and concrete through communion with the local bishop, is an absolutely essential aspect of our Catholic identity. This is especially true in relation to the celebration of the Mass, which is the very centre of our faith. The Liturgy, including and especially the Mass, is a gift of God to us, given in and through the Church. It is our responsibility to receive it as a gift and not presume to decide for ourselves how it is to be celebrated. The pope has now exercised his authority to determine how the Church will celebrate the liturgy, and under what clearly enunciated conditions it may be celebrated according to the missal of Pope Saint John XXIII.

² [Apostolic Letter issued "Motu proprio" by the Supreme Pontiff Francis "Traditionis custodes" on the use of the Roman Liturgy prior to the Reform of 1970, 16 July 2021 | Francis \(vatican.va\)](#)

³ [Letter of the Holy Father to the Bishops of the whole world, that accompanies the Apostolic Letter Motu Proprio data "Traditionis custodes" \(16 July 2021\) | Francis \(vatican.va\)](#)

⁴ - [Letter re Traditionis Custodes \(perthcatholic.org.au\)](#)



Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth

It is now time for all in the Archdiocese to accept the Pope's decisions and abide by them as they are set out in our diocesan regulations. I have asked my delegate in this matter, Monsignor Michael Keating, to work with my office in bringing this about.

I am conscious that some of the decisions I must now make, and the consequences of them, will upset and anger some people. I can only appeal to everyone to put aside their personal preferences and work together to ensure that our communion with the Holy Father, made concrete through our communion with the local bishop, is realised in practice as well as in words.

Please continue to pray for the gift of communion in our Archdiocese, and for those people for whom the Pope's decisions are difficult to accept.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB DD
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