

Traditional celebration

Extraordinary form of Mass to be offered in diocese

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CHARLOTTE — Older Catholics wanting to re-experience the Catholic Mass as they remember it pre-1962, or young people curious about the “old Mass” will soon be able to attend such Masses in various churches throughout the Diocese of Charlotte.

In July 2007, in the long-awaited and much-debated document ‘Summorum Pontificum,’ the pope relaxed restrictions on the use of the Latin-language liturgy that predates the Second Vatican Council.

The pope said that Mass celebrated according to the 1962 Roman Missal should be made available in every church where groups of the faithful desire it. The Mass from the Roman Missal, in use since 1970, remains the ordinary form of the Mass, while celebration according to the 1962 missal is the extraordinary form.

“The main benefit of Pope Benedict’s document is two-fold,” Bishop Peter J. Jugis said. “It recognizes the beauty and legitimacy of the extraordinary form of the Mass and promotes the unity of the faithful because, as Pope Benedict has noted, there are people devoted to this form of the Mass.”

“Both forms of the Mass are legitimate means of worship; we don’t want to hurt or leave people behind because of their devotion to earlier liturgical forms,” said Bishop Jugis.

“We’ve had a good response from our priests wanting to celebrate using the 1962 missal,” said Bishop Jugis. “However, many of them need to learn the rubrics and details of the 1962 missal.”

Therefore, 14 priests from the Diocese of Charlotte participated in a five-day training session on the 1962 missal in Hickory Dec 17-21. They studied the rituals of the missal and the prayers, which are recited in Latin.

But diocesan priests won’t be the only ones brushing up on their Latin.

“Catechesis will be necessary for parishioners, as well, to fully appreciate the Mass of the 1962 missal,” said Bishop Jugis.

“The major differences between the ordinary and extraordinary forms of the Mass you’ll notice are the priests’ orientation during the liturgy and the use of Latin prayers,” said the bishop.

In the extraordinary form, the priest and the people face the same direction in worship, as the priest leads his flock in prayer.

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, a church's altar was placed against the wall at the back of the sanctuary. During the consecration of the Eucharist, the priest therefore faced away from the congregation.

The Second Vatican Council decreed that a church's altar should be placed in a central location in the sanctuary, allowing a priest to face the congregation during the consecration.

Bishop Jugis said that a priest celebrating the extraordinary form of the Mass will now stand in front of the altar, between it and the congregation.

The extraordinary form of the Mass will be offered in certain churches beginning in 2008. Catholics interested in attending a Mass should contact the office of their vicar forane — a priest who coordinates pastoral activities among groups of churches — to find out Mass times and locations.

“It will be up to each individual priest to determine when he is comfortable celebrating the Mass,” Bishop Jugis said.

Since his ordination four years ago, the bishop said he has received letters from all areas of the Diocese of Charlotte requesting the extraordinary form of the Mass.

“These are individuals who are grateful that Pope Benedict XVI has encouraged the wider use of the 1962 missal,” he said.

“Going forward, Pope Benedict said we're not going to leave anyone behind,” the bishop said. “We're all going forward together.”

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