



# DIOCESE OF KNOXVILLE

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Prot. N. 2025-040LTR

November 25, 2025

To the Faithful of Holy Ghost Church

I write to the communities of the Diocese of Knoxville affected by the recent decision concerning Masses celebrated according to the 1962 edition of the Roman Missal. I have received numerous communications and even petitions from so many of you, and I am truly grateful for your willingness to reach out to me as your shepherd and for your candor and your great respect in the way you have communicated. As I have listened to you, who have a deep love for and connection with this form of the Liturgy, I know that it has been a great source of spiritual nourishment in your lives. I have been moved by your personal testimonies describing the graces you have received in this form of the Liturgy. I also know you are experiencing deep sadness at this time. Please know of my deep love for you and for all of our faithful who are part of these communities and know that I am aware of the pain of loss that you are suffering.

In light of this knowledge, I wish to share a bit of background. Shortly after I was named Bishop-Elect of this beautiful Diocese, I received communication from the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. My predecessor had written to that Dicastery in March of 2023 asking for permission for the Mass in the Extraordinary Form to continue in four of the parishes in our diocese. The reply of the Dicastery was to request that I personally revisit the direction set by Pope Francis in *Traditionis Custodes* in 2021 and to take the necessary time to evaluate and respond.

In my first year as Bishop, I felt it most important to visit as many of our parishes as possible and to get to know the priests and people of our Diocese. I am so grateful that I have been able to travel to the vast majority of our parishes, and I continue toward the goal of visiting all of them.

During the summer, I returned to my reflections on the communication I had received from the Dicastery. I have taken seriously my role to safeguard communion (1 Cor 11:17-34), with Peter and under Peter. In his letter accompanying the Motu Proprio, Pope Francis reminded us that the diocesan Bishop, as the moderator, promoter and guardian of all liturgical life, must work to ensure that the Diocese returns to a unitary form of celebration (cf. Pope Francis, Letter to the Bishops). In conversation only days ago with our nuncio, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, he affirmed that the Motu Proprio remains the normative guide.

As I have pondered the direction set for the Universal Church by Pope Francis in 2021 in *Traditionis Custodes* and subsequent communications, it became clear to me that the desire of the Holy Father was that we move in the direction of re-establishing one form for the celebration of the Roman Rite, following the reform of the Liturgy that was directed by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council with and under Peter and as subsequently implemented under the authority of St. Paul VI and confirmed and revised by St. John Paul II, and which remains the ordinary form of the Roman Rite (cf. *Traditionis Custodes* Art. 1; *Desiderio Desideravi*, 61).



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For the sake of the communion of the whole church, the Extraordinary Form is now more limited. In particular, I note the clear direction of *Traditionis Custodes* that the Missal of 1962 is not to be used in parochial churches or chapels (*Traditionis Custodes* Art. 3 §2). While permission is given for the Missal of 1962 in non-parochial churches or chapels, all other sacraments are to be celebrated in the current form (*Responsa ad dubia*, December 4, 2021). I see the great value of having a common liturgical calendar in our parish churches in addition to the fullness of the revised lectionary. Current indications are that Pope Leo does not intend to abrogate *Traditionis Custodes* which still serves as the current definitive guidance of the Church Universal.

Upon prayerful consideration of these directives, my first thought was to inquire about suitable nonparochial chapels or churches where the 1962 Missal could continue to be used. Unable to find such, I sought the advice of the pastors of the parishes where the 1962 Roman Missal is used. After having consulted them, it seemed that the better alternative was to move in the direction of celebrating Mass according to the current liturgical books, while retaining as many traditional elements as possible in these parish churches in hope that such an approach will maintain and support the communities in those parish settings. Since making this decision, I have been able to listen to you in person both at the Basilica and at Holy Ghost, and to ponder your many heartfelt and poignant letters. I also desire to visit the faithful at St. Mary in Johnson City. I know the deep desire you have for use of the Missal of 1962 to be continued in our Diocese.

Fortuitously, I also became aware that the chapel of our retreat center, Christ Prince of Peace in Benton, was given to the Diocese with the express purpose that the Traditional Latin Mass be celebrated there when possible. Because of your great love for the Traditional Latin Mass and the many graces you have received in that form, I have decided to provide for the continuation of Mass celebrated according to the Roman Missal of 1962 on a monthly basis at the Chapel of our retreat center, Christ Prince of Peace in Benton, Tennessee, and to place the care of this community under Fr. David Carter as my delegate (*Traditionis Custodes*, Art. 3 §2, §3 and §4).

I realize that your preference would be the continuation of this celebration in your parish church, and I am deeply aware of the suffering and loss you are feeling. I do believe the reform of the Liturgy as directed by the Second Vatican Council and as implemented by St. Paul VI and St. John Paul II is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the Church. In my judgment, the wisdom of Pope Francis in *Traditionis Custodes* is also guided by the Holy Spirit and for that reason I have chosen not to ask for a dispensation from the prohibition of celebrating the 1962 Missal in parish churches and chapels. I ask you to trust in the Lord's guidance of his church and his promise to remain with her until the end of time. Know also of my heartfelt affection for you and my prayer for you in this time of transition. I carry you in my heart daily!

Peace and blessings in the Lord,



Most Rev. Mark Beckman  
Bishop of Knoxville