

PAIX LITURGIQUE

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2007-2017: A FEW FIGURES ON THE RISE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM OF THE ROMAN RITE

*“Let us generously open our hearts and make room for everything that the faith itself allows.” Benedict XVI, Letter to the bishops, 7 July 2007, on the occasion of the publication of the Apostolic Letter “*Summorum Pontificum*”*

Deo gratias! Ten years ago, after a long year of rumors and resistance, Pope Benedict XVI published the motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum* restoring to the universal Church the use of the Roman Missal inherited from Saint Gregory the Great, Saint Pius V, and Saint John XXIII. To accompany this text the Pope addressed a letter to the bishops of the whole world explaining what motivated him to take such a step. In this anniversary year we cannot but invite you to reread it, since it so perfectly presents the “positive reason” that led Benedict XVI to promulgate *Summorum Pontificum*, namely: “coming to an interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church.” This goal, of course, is also that for which each and every issue of our Letters attempts to collaborate, convinced as we are that the survival and renewal of our parishes necessarily includes the permanent return of liturgical peace.

Despite the attacks that continue to target Benedict XVI’s text from those whom Archbishop Pozzo, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, has recently called “neomodernists” in an interview with the French newspaper *L’Homme Nouveau*, the motu proprio continues to take root in the life of the Church. As a kind of thanksgiving we have elected simply to give you a few of the numbers that illustrate the rise of the extraordinary form of the Roman rite since 2007. Most of these figures were reported by Abp. Pozzo, in his opening speech at the *Summorum Pontificum* conference in Rome on September 14, 2017.

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I - IN THE USA AND IN THE UK

a) In the United States

The only available data are those of the Coalition in support of *Ecclesia Dei* ([see here](#)). They indicate that in July 2017 there were a little over 480 diocesan churches in the USA (not counting the SSPX), compared to about 230 in 2007. Beyond this doubling of the offer, there is especially a veritable explosion of the faithful and a great deal of energy among traditional groups. Not to mention a handful of bishops who have fully embraced the motu proprio and have generously integrated it into their ordinary pastoral activity.

There is also the marvelous work in priest formation, both at the seminary of the Fraternity of Saint Peter in Denton, Nebraska, and through the activity of the Canons of Saint John Cantius, who have conducted over 70 workshops for more than 1,200 priests since 2007.

b) In Great Britain

An historic event occurred on Saturday 17 June 2017 in the archdiocese of Liverpool: for the first time since the liturgical reform ordinations were celebrated in the extraordinary form of the Roman rite in Great Britain. Two priests of the Fraternity of Saint Peter, Fathers Alex Stewart and Krzysztof Sanetra—an Englishman and a Pole—received the priesthood at the hands of Archbishop McMahon of Liverpool.

Of the reasons for this dynamism among the priests and bishops of Great Britain, the first to deserve mention is the work of the Latin Mass Society, which forms priests for the extraordinary form every year and accompanies and supports those who already celebrate it. According to the figures the Latin Mass Society has kindly provided, there are now 147 churches offering the extraordinary form in England and Wales, as opposed to only 26 in 2007. In 40 of them there is at least a weekly Sunday Mass, against 18 in 2006. In 2016, 71 Christmas Masses were celebrated according to the traditional missal, as opposed to only 10 in 2006:

“Progress since 2007 is very evident. Another kind of progress is indicated by the numbers attending, for which we do not have statistics, but it is very noticeable that congregations have grown over the years, in many locations, most notably in where it is part of parish life, as with the Oratories of St Philip Neri and the Traditional Institutes..”

II - ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD

a) In France

On 7 July 2017, based on the Baptistère observatory ([see here](#)), there were 221 weekly Sunday Masses celebrated according to the extraordinary form of the Roman rite in France, against 104 in September 2007. If one adds the SSPX Masses, which have slightly increased over the same period and amount to a little over 200, this adds up to about 430 places where one may sanctify his Sunday with the missal of Saint John XXIII. 430 out of France's over 42,000 churches and chapels (figure provided by the French Conference of Bishops in September 2016) is only about 1%: there still is a wide margin for progress . . .

b) In Germany

According to Pro Missa Tridentina ([see here](#)) there are now 153 diocesan churches in Germany, against about 35 ten years ago. 54 of them offer Mass every Sunday and holy day. In a country where the Church's hierarchy (ecclesiastical as well as lay) has, in its majority, militated against Cardinal Ratzinger's and then Pope Benedict XVI's work, this is a thunderous result!

c) In Poland

In 2007 Poland had only 5 weekly Sunday Masses in the extraordinary form of the Roman rite. According to the figures provided to us by the UnaCum.pl portal, there are now 40 out of a total figure of 118 churches (against only 9 in 2007). In July 2017, 26 dioceses in 41 offered at least one weekly Sunday Mass according to the liturgical books in force in 1962.

This spread of the *motu proprio*, which is unexpected for a country that avoided the worst of the postconciliar abuses, incited us to resume our 2009-2011 campaign of international surveys there. The results of that exclusive survey were published last July.

d) In Italy

The monthly *Il Timone* announced a figure of 103 stable groups of faithful in the peninsula in its June dossier devoted to the tenth anniversary of *Summorum Pontificum*. After consulting the data compiled by the *Coordinamento Nazionale del Summorum Pontificum* ([see here](#)) we found 107 churches open to the extraordinary form of the Roman rite, of which 56 offer a weekly Sunday Mass. (1) Considering that Italy numbers 200 dioceses, it is still little, but compared to 2007 it is a great leap since at the time there were probably not much more than 30 churches, of which only a dozen had the Mass every Sunday.

III - BUT . . .

But . . . figures do not tell the whole story.

On the one hand there are those thousands of priests and seminarians the world over who have discovered this Mass and are learning to celebrate it. Also, on the other hand, what is clear in this first decade of the existence of the extraordinary form of the Roman rite—in this sense, Benedict XVI did propose a “new Mass” to our parishes—is that it grows ever stronger in the Church, from Scotland to Mexico, from Gabon to Indonesia.

“Never abrogated” but forbidden in practice, the ever-young Latin and Gregorian liturgy has come back to life and is once again flourishing wherever the weight of the Church's machinery allows the Spirit to move. And since in many countries the ecclesiastical apparatus is destined to a considerable downsizing, principally because of a lack of vocations and resources, we'll wager that the extraordinary form has yet many sacristies, many sanctuaries, and many hearts—including bishops' hearts—to win over . . .

(1) In ten other locations the groups of faithful must remain satisfied with the anticipated Saturday evening Mass, which, according to the arbitration of the Ecclesia Dei Commission, satisfies the Sunday obligation.