

PAIX LITURGIQUE

Letter 1353 published 7 April 2026

HOW SHOULD WE INTERPRET CARDINAL PAROLIN'S LETTER TO THE BISHOPS OF FRANCE?

“MONSIGNORS, FREE THE VETUS ORDO FROM ITS PRECARIOUS SITUATION”

On the occasion of the spring plenary assembly of the French Bishops' Conference, which was recently held in Lourdes, its president, Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, requested a message from His Holiness Pope Leo XIV. It was his Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who fulfilled this task by sending a letter on behalf of the Holy Father to all the bishops of France.

A year ago, in our letter No. 1168, we examined Cardinal Parolin's convictions. A false moderate and true progressive, Cardinal Parolin played a key role in the drafting of *Traditionis Custodes*. Vatican corridors attribute this remark to him: “*We must put an end to this Mass once and for all!*”—as the Cardinal Secretary of State referred to the fate of the Mass of St. Pius V, playing on its designation as the “*Mass of All Time*” in traditional circles.

While Cardinal Parolin still holds the same position today, a new Pope has nevertheless been elected, and, as far as form is concerned, Leo XIV is not Francis. What about the substance? We can at least affirm that under the previous pontificate, Cardinal Parolin would never have written the following words, which constitute the fourth paragraph of his letter—drafted by him but written in the Pope's name—and which address “*the delicate theme of the Liturgy, to which the Holy Father is particularly attentive, in the context of the growth of communities linked to the Vetus Ordo.*” ”

Let us pause, then, on these lines.

“*It is a cause for concern that a painful wound continues to open within the Church regarding the celebration of the Mass, the very sacrament of unity.*” In a single sentence, the cardinal finds himself compelled to admit the failure of the pedagogy of *Traditionis Custodes*. The liturgical strategy for which he worked and which he hoped to clarify in order to bring peace has only further polarized “*the delicate question of the liturgy.*” One consequence has undoubtedly been greatly underestimated until now: it has made Pope Francis unpopular, who, as we now know, did not appreciate the approach that had been suggested to him. *Traditionis Custodes* stood in complete contradiction to what his pontificate claimed to be: a cover-up instead of transparency, vexatious measures instead of inclusion, an arbitrary decision instead of synodality.

“*To heal it, a new way of looking at one another—with greater understanding of each other's sensibilities—is certainly necessary; a way of looking that allows brothers, rich in their diversity, to welcome one another in charity and the unity of the faith.*” A new perspective? Welcoming one another? Cardinal Parolin is no stranger to a joke! He knows better than anyone—having been the chief architect of it over the past five years—the wall that has been erected in Rome against the clergy and faithful attached to the Tridentine liturgy. All efforts at dialogue and outstretched hands from the traditionalist camp have, in fact, fallen on deaf ears. Thus, we know that attempts by the superior of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X to make contact were flatly rejected. This silence from Rome could only contribute to the embarrassing scenario unfolding before our eyes. It is also known that, shortly after the publication of *Traditionis Custodes*—whose devastating impact on the traditional clergy was undeniable—the superiors of the former *Ecclesia Dei* communities sent a letter to the Roman authorities requesting a frank and benevolent dialogue. There, too, silence was the response. It should also be noted that the mothers of priests who, in 2022, undertook a long march on foot

from Paris to Rome under the banner of La Voie Romaine, hoped to be heard by the Pope or one of his representatives, with the aim of presenting him with the thousands of letters that had been written by the faithful imploring liturgical peace. At the end of their pilgrimage, upon arriving in the Eternal City, these courageous mothers of priests were granted a reception that was at best minimalist, if not downright frosty. Finally, the dissolution of the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission following the *Motu Proprio Traditionis Custodes* has effectively eliminated any possibility for traditional faithful to express their diversity and the serious difficulties they might face, as they are confronted with the stubborn incomprehension of certain bishops. Their sincere attachment to the traditional liturgical form is met with indifference, if not outright contempt. “*A greater understanding of their sensibilities is certainly necessary,*” Cardinal Parolin tells us.

May God have mercy on such flowery language, especially when the author of these words bears responsibility for the fate of thousands of priests celebrating the traditional Mass—whether diocesan or belonging to traditional communities—who have been subjected to arbitrary treatment or clerical relegation following the publication of *Traditionis Custodes*.

“*May the Holy Spirit suggest concrete solutions to you that will allow for the generous inclusion of those sincerely attached to the *Vetus Ordo*, in accordance with the guidelines established by the Second Vatican Council regarding the Liturgy.*” After sowing discord, Cardinal Parolin hastens, under the guise of Leo XIV’s peacemaking intent, to pass the hot potato to the bishops of France after having himself maliciously fanned the flames and contributed to the chaos of the current situation...

We will, of course, rejoice at this new situation, at this proposed paradigm shift, and at this invitation to “*generously include those sincerely attached to the *Vetus Ordo*.*” Allow us, however, to remain particularly vigilant, not to say suspicious! The “*broad and generous welcome*” of traditional faithful to which John Paul II’s *Motu Proprio Ecclesia Dei* called upon bishops worldwide in 1988 has proven to be narrow and suspicious. Benedict XVI’s famous statement in his letter accompanying the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* in 2007—which recalled that “*what was sacred to previous generations remains great and sacred to us, and cannot suddenly be found to be totally forbidden, or even considered harmful*”—has been dismantled piece by piece by *Traditionis Custodes*. Not long ago, during the last consistory in January, Cardinal Roche took pains to celebrate the liturgical restrictions he had implemented with Cardinal Parolin, arguing, in a shameless manner, that the traditional liturgy had benefited only from a system of concessions and that this was quite satisfactory!

This helps us better understand the reasons for the great vigilance of the traditionalist movement when sweet words are whispered to it and it is given the eye. While this attitude has its charm, especially in a period when blows with a stick are more on the agenda, it is above all actions that are expected. Trust cannot be decreed; it must be earned, and without trust, there is no recognized authority. It is not love that traditional faithful need, but proofs of love.

This primary proof will consist of a clear and precise course of action: to rescue the traditional sacraments from the precarious situation in which they find themselves. A precariousness on two levels. Precarious from the standpoint of stability: reaffirming the full legitimacy of the use of the traditional missal and ritual in order to resolutely extinguish any threat of its being called into question. But precariousness also refers to the situation of a group of people who lack the resources to access basic necessities. Yet this precariousness imposed on many of the faithful is in itself scandalous: “*those sincerely attached to the *Vetus Ordo**” must indeed be able to peacefully access the basic necessities offered to them by this Tridentine liturgical life.

To lift the poor of the Church out of precariousness: this is the wish that will be expressed by the faithful who will walk through the Beauce region during the coming Pentecost. In this regard, registration is now open!