

**INTERVIEW WITH MR. LEO DARROCH,
PRESIDENT OF THE FIUV
By Una Voce Sevilla (Spain)**



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Una Voce Sevilla: First of all, congratulations on your appointment as President of the FIUV. Could you tell us something about your biography?

Leo Darroch: May I say first of all that I have a great affinity with the Spanish people because my birthday is 15th October (1944), the feast day of your great saint, Teresa of Avila. St. Teresa's father was named Alphonsus and, by remarkable coincidence, this was also the name of my father who was born on the 2nd August. St. Teresa's spiritual teaching is truly inspiring and we could ask for no better example in our desire to overcome the many provocations and disappointments in our struggle to preserve the traditions of Holy Mother Church. I was also blessed with the wonderful example of my mother who instilled in me a love of the Mass and the Faith.

I was born in the County of Durham, in the north of England which is famous for its Norman cathedral. It was built over 900 years ago and houses the relics of our great English saint, Cuthbert. When I was about eight years of age in the early 1950s I began serving Mass with my four brothers and I loved the beautiful ceremonies, especially those for Holy Week, and was shocked when it was all swept away in those ruinous years in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In those days were told that the traditional Latin Mass had been abolished and it was disobedient to ask for it. I wrote many letters to my bishop and diocesan newspaper but I was accused of being disobedient and divisive.

In 1979, I discovered the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales and became a member. In 1986, I was elected to the national committee, on which I have served ever since except for a brief two-year period. In 1980 I began to correspond with Michael Davies, the inspirational Catholic writer and former President of the Una Voce Federation, and we became great friends. I attended my first General Assembly of the International Federation Una Voce in Rome in 1997 and was elected as a Councillor in 1999. I had been assisting Michael Davies for some years with his work

as President of the Una Voce Federation and in 2001 I was elected Secretary. I had to give up this post in 2004 for family reasons but returned to assist Jack Oostveen when he took over the presidency in 2006. I was then elected President in November 2007. To follow in the footsteps of such former presidents and great defenders of the Faith as Dr Eric de Saventem and Michael Davies is a wonderful honour and privilege.

What are the main challenges for the new President? Which are the most urgent issues to work on?

Despite what many of our bishops and priests have said in praise of the changes that have been introduced since the mid-1960s it is a fact that the Church, since then, has suffered a period of internal turmoil and rapid decline. In my opinion, this has been caused by the deliberate and enforced suppression of the truly Catholic Mass of Ages and its replacement with a fabricated ecumenical liturgy designed to appeal to anyone and everyone but which, in fact, has appealed to very few. The lapsation of millions clearly show that it has failed miserably. I think the situation changed dramatically for the better when, on 7th July 2007, Pope Benedict XVI published his *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum* and restored the traditional Mass and sacraments to their rightful place in the Church. It is what the Federation has been fighting for since its official erection in 1967. It is now up to all our members to grasp this opportunity and do all we can to ensure the spread of this Mass throughout the Church around the world. We must give a lead to anyone and everyone who looks to us for advice, guidance, and help.

Have you already made an agenda, or at least have you drawn up plans for the next two years of the FIUV?

I believe that the next two or three years could be the most important in the history of the International Federation. The restoration of the traditional Roman rite to the priests and the faithful is already bringing requests from around the world for help and advice, particularly from the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America. There is also the need to keep a watchful eye on how the Mass is being celebrated. The traditional Roman rite has specific rubrics that must be followed, whereas the new rite of Mass allows for a much more creative liturgy. Although they are two forms of the same rite there are distinct and important differences in the actual celebration. It would be disastrous if modern attitudes were to be introduced into the traditional Mass and we must be on our guard to prevent this.

The members of the International Federation, because we are essentially lay organisations, attend Masses all around the world that are celebrated by all the priestly societies and institutes, and by parish priests. The great prize we treasure above all is the resurgence of the traditional Mass and all that springs from it.

Pope Pius XII, in his wonderful Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis Christi*, states:

“Our union with Christ arises first of all from the fact that, the Christian commonwealth being by its Founder’s will a perfect social body, all its members must be united by a common aspiration to the same end. Now the nobler the end towards which this common aspiration is directed and the more divine the source from which it proceeds, the more sublime, evidently, is the unity which results.” [article 68].

I can think of a no more “nobler end towards which [our] common aspiration is directed” than the restoration of the traditional Mass to our altars and during my term of office I will be working tirelessly within our lay Federation to achieve this objective. On a practical level I have set up a number of committees: to respond to new enquiries, to improve our website and electronic communications, to monitor the implementation of Summorum Pontificum, to study various liturgical matters, to update our statutes, and to raise funds. The members of these committees will be working hard over the next months to improve all aspects of the work of our Federation.

What role, do you think, the FIUV will play in the development and recuperation of the traditional liturgy during the next few years? What is the importance of this Federation?

On a personal level, I could never understand the liturgical changes introduced in the Church after the Second Vatican Council because they were clearly not in conformity with the Constitution on the Liturgy as decreed by the Council Fathers. Once the solemn liturgy, especially the Mass, was dismantled then everything else in the Church – catechetics, discipline, obedience, parish life, schools, seminaries, - became undermined and collapsed. The members of the Una Voce Federation have been one of the very few groups in the Church who have been truly faithful to the wishes of the Council Fathers. We have retained the knowledge of the traditional liturgy over the past forty years and are now ready to share this knowledge and experience with anyone in the Church who asks for it. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the cornerstone of the Faith and everything springs from it. We are now ready to play our part in a new springtime for the Church. Some of our larger groups such as The Latin Mass Society of England and Wales, Una Voce America, and Pro Missa Tridentina in Germany, have already started training courses for priests and servers and these are being repeated as quickly as new

courses can be arranged and funded. Many priests, both young and old, are immensely grateful for this training and are saying that their lives and their priesthood are being transformed. So the importance of the Federation lies within its individual members doing great work in their own countries, but also in the fact that the President and Executive are welcomed in Rome as expressing and representing the legitimate voice of many lay people around the world.

How did the Federation receive the publication of the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum*?

As soon as the document was published the then President Jack Oostveen issued a statement. This can be seen on our website www.fiuv.org. The opening paragraphs state:

“With great joy and overwhelming feelings of thankfulness, the International Federation Una Voce welcomes the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI”.

For many months we have waited in prayerful patience and expectation. During this long period of waiting the President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the International Federation had numerous meetings in Rome with curial heads and officials and we were encouraged always to pray for our Holy Father; that the *motu proprio* would come, and it would be good for the whole Church. We were privileged to meet the Holy Father on 13th June 2007 and he assured us personally that the *motu proprio* would be published “soon, before summer”. Our patience has been rewarded and the Church has been given a great gift from the Successor of Peter.

In his Apostolic Letter SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM and the accompanying letter to his Brother Bishops, our Holy Father has not only released the use of the traditional Roman Rite, he is also teaching the Church some important lessons. With great courage he has declared what many in authority (including our hierarchies) have known for many years;

that the Missal of 1962 was never juridically abrogated and, consequently, has always been valid.

This statement, carrying as it does the full authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, effectively puts an end to the debate that has been ongoing since 1970. We can all now move forward in a much more constructive manner for the good of the entire Church. Also, with great clarity, he has defined the position of the Missal of John XXIII and that of Paul VI. By declaring these Missals as the ordinary and extraordinary forms of the same Roman Rite, he has arrived at a solution that can be embraced, with due charity, by everyone in the Church – bishops, priests, and laity – and hopes that these “two Forms of the usage of the Roman Rite can be mutually enriching”.

Do you think there will be any problems to apply this pontifical document? What dangers do you see for the future, if you see any?

I think there will be many problems in applying this document. Many bishops and priests have welcomed it, some accept it out of dutiful obedience, but many bishops in particular do not want it and will do all they can to block it. It is a matter of regret, and even scandal, that these bishops demand obedience from their priests and laity but refuse obedience to our Holy Father. We are already hearing sad stories of priests who wish to celebrate this Mass, or learn how to celebrate, being intimidated by their bishops into not doing so. The International Federation must do all it can to support those priests and seminarians in their desire to learn the ancient liturgy of the Church, even in secret if necessary. As lay men and women, we are in a stronger position than priests to challenge these outdated attitudes of bishops and we must do so on their behalf. I would not advocate deliberate disobedience to legitimate authority, but a policy of challenging legitimate authority when that authority is being abused.

There may well be another problem concerning the proper celebration of the Extraordinary Form of Mass. Because the Pope has granted freedom to every priest in the Latin rite to celebrate this form of Mass there is a danger that some priests who are used to the more relaxed ways of the new rite of Mass may carry these attitudes into their celebrations of the older form. To find the traditional form of Mass being celebrated with the introduction of Communion in the hand and girl altar servers, would be devastating to all those who have laboured for forty years against such novelties. We must be watchful and protest should these things occur.

Have you noticed any change in the attitude of bishops in respect to the FIUV after the publication of the Summorum Pontificum?

Some individual bishops have reacted wonderfully and cannot do enough to satisfy the needs of their priests and people. There have been notable advances in Australia and the USA to name but two countries with cardinals, archbishops and bishops offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the older form. Sadly, other countries are adopting a more negative response, with bishops placing restrictions and specific requirements on priests; the British Isles and Germany being prominent in this regard. It is a tragedy for souls that many bishops are so wedded to their outdated philosophy they seem unable to see that the spiritual needs of their flocks are not being satisfied with what is now being offered in their parish churches. We must keep challenging these bishops until they start to show some obedience to Rome and a more charitable attitude towards their priests and flocks.

How is the relationship between the Federation and the bishops and cardinals of the world? How are you received in Rome? Do you look forward to cooperating with the ecclesiastical hierarchy in order to achieve the correct application of the Summorum Pontificum?

The relationship depends on the individual cardinals and bishops but generally most are friendly enough and meet us. Some promise to help and do so, others promise to help but nothing ever happens. I have recently received an email from someone who has been dealing with his bishop. He said that the bishop and his predecessor have been 'willing' to help for the past 15 years but have failed to do anything and he doubts the value of the promises of 'princes'. The leadership of the Federation and the leaders of the individual member associations are always willing to meet anyone in authority and cooperating in the cause of tradition. This is what we do, we work in collaboration with our diocesan bishops and priests.

The leadership of the Federation is very well received in Rome. We have been granted two meetings with Pope Benedict after his General Audiences (January 2006 and June 2007) and we have had numerous meetings with Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, Archbishop Ranjith, and other prelates in the various curial offices and the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei.

Following our General Assembly in Rome in November 2007 I wrote to our Holy Father to thank him for the *motu proprio* and to assure His Holiness of our filial obedience. On 14th February I received a reply from the Secretariat of State which stated,

“..the Sovereign Pontiff exhorts you to carry on with your laudable goals toward preserving the venerable traditions of the Catholic Church; who, as a foretoken of these things and as an inducement and comfort as well, willingly imparts to you and all the members of your association the Apostolic Blessing.”