

RORATE CÆLI Interview: Rifan Speaks

In January 2002, Pope John Paul II established the Personal Apostolic Administration of Saint John Marie

Vianney, a Particular Church for the clergy and the faithful attached to the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite with the same area as that of the Diocese of Campos, in Brazil. For the past five years, as Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos declared in his address to the Bishops of Latin America in Aparecida, Brazil, the Campos experiment has allowed the Holy See to display to the world the possibility of a full peaceful cohabitation of the Catholic faithful attached to the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite (the Diocese of Campos) and those attached to the “Forma Extraordinaria” of the Rite, the names used by the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum*, published today.

The Apostolic Administrator of the Campos Apostolic Administration, Bishop Fernando Areas Rifan, granted RORATE CÆLI an exclusive interview which will be published in two installments. Today, a day of celebration, we present the first part, which deals with his general impressions regarding *Summorum Pontificum* and lessons from Campos, as well as with the SSPX.

RORATE CÆLI: Bishop Fernando Rifan, thank you for accepting our invitation. *Summorum Pontificum* has finally been published. How long have you waited for it?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: We have been waiting for this document since the creation of our Personal Apostolic Administration Saint John Mary Vianney. That is, we hoped that the immense benefit which had been granted to us could spread throughout the world and that all could profit from this great treasure which is the ancient form of the Roman Rite.

Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos said in Aparecida that the Campos experience was an example of peaceful coexistence for the Catholic world. Could you tell us what the relationship between both communities is like, in some detail?

Cardinal Castrillon said in his pronouncement before the CELAM that “The Holy Father’s project has been partly proved in Campos, where the peaceful coexistence of the two forms of the only Roman Rite in the Church is a beautiful reality. We hope that this example will also bear fruit in other places of the Church where Catholic faithful with diverse liturgical sensibilities live together.” There is a good communal and cordial relationship between both bishops, the one of the Apostolic Administration and the diocesan Bishop, Dom Roberto Gomes Guimarães. Mutual consultations, frequent visits. For important ceremonies in the Cathedral, Dom Roberto invites me, and I attend. Last year, I gave the inaugural philosophy class at the diocesan seminary. One of the priests of the Administration is a Latin professor in the diocesan seminary. At the last priestly ordination in the diocesan Cathedral, it was the choir of the seminarians of the Apostolic Administration which sang the musical parts of the mass in Gregorian chant, at the request of the diocesan seminarians. There is an exchange of apostolates between the priests of the Administration and the Diocese: our priests are invited to aid in hearing confessions in diocesan parishes at certain events. And there is, in general, a good friendly relationship between both clergies, though safeguarding our liturgical identity and our independence.

RORATE CÆLI: It has been rumored that you were consulted in the preparatory phases of the creation of what would become the Institut du Bon Pasteur. Is this true? Were you ever consulted in during the preparatory phases of Summorum Pontificum?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: In the creation of the Institute of the Good Shepherd, I attempted to give all my support. The priests who had left the Fraternity of Saint Pius X wished to regularize their situation. They asked for our support. I went to France, presented them to Cardinal Ricard, of Bordeaux, who received them very well knowing that relations were shaken before. I introduced them to the Nuncio in Paris, to the Bishop of Chartres, in whose diocese they have their seminary, and I visited the Archbishop of

Paris to speak of the matter. I believe that I thus attempted to open the doors for the establishment of the Institute of the Good Shepherd. As for our contribution to the motu proprio, our very existence and our good relations spoke in favor of it.

RORATE CÆLI: Are you concerned that the kind of liturgical abuse so prevalent in the celebrations according to the Missal of Paul VI may affect the Traditional Mass? How is it possible to avoid this from happening?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: No. Precisely, one of the reasons for which we prefer and adopt the Traditional Mass is because its structure and form of celebration exempts it from such abuses. The best way to avoid them is the preservation of the Traditional Mass in all its purity, sobriety, respect, sacredness, and solemnity. The rubrics of the Traditional Mass are very rigorous and do not allow for creativity and inventiveness.

RORATE CÆLI: From your past experience, and considering your knowledge of your fellow Bishops in the Brazilian Episcopal Conference, what do you believe will be the reception of the papal document in Brazil? Will Bishops establish obstacles to those priests and groups of faithful who wish to see the new papal directive implemented? Do you believe there will be an increase in the interest and demand for the Traditional Mass in Brazil? On a practical side, is the Apostolic Administration planning any formal effort to train priests to say the Traditional Mass?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: As Cardinal Castrillon said in his talk to the CELAM, due to the influence of our Apostolic Administration, “some Brazilian dioceses have contacted the Campos Apostolic Administration, which has allowed some of their priests to give pastoral care to the traditionalist faithful in their local churches.” We have 13 dioceses offering the Traditional Mass in Brazil already. There will be hardships. But it will be much easier [with the motu proprio]. I am aware of Bishops who are waiting only for the Motu Proprio to liberate the Mass in their dioceses. And I

believe that many groups will achieve it. We receive visits from many priests wishing to learn how to celebrate the Traditional Mass. We have even made a didactic DVD to teach priests how to celebrate Mass the Traditional way.

RORATE CÆLI: How is the construction of your new seminary coming along? Do you have seminarians from other Brazilian dioceses and from foreign countries?

Bishop Fernando Rifan:

The building of our new Seminary is coming along. We expect to move there next year, even though it will be only half done. We need help. We have some seminarians from other dioceses, but the majority are from here [Campos]. At this time we have 30 seminarians. The new seminary will have room for 80 students.

RORATE CÆLI: You have visited and traveled across the United States: do you believe that there is a potential for growth of the Mass in the U.S. or do you believe that there is a low interest for the Mass in America?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: The United States is maybe, next to France, the country with the greatest interest in the Traditional Mass. In the United States and Canada there are about 600 places where the Traditional Mass is celebrated. There is a great interest [in the Traditional Mass].

RORATE CÆLI: Do you still have friends inside the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X (FSSPX/SSPX)? If so, what do they tell you about a future reconciliation with the Holy See? Do you believe there is at least a chance for a intermediary stage, something less than a full agreement, particularly after the liberalization of the Traditional Mass?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: Yes, some. Some are of the opinion that the reconciliation should be done in groups, each in its own diocese. But, we fear that the hard line will fall away into schism. Maybe the freedom of the

Traditional Mass will bring us closer. What is bad is the spirit of criticism, that sees only the negative side of things, and makes everything more difficult. They are not yet conscious of the irregularity of their situation and of the theological necessity of a canonical regularization and the recovery of a perfect communion with the Church.

RORATE CÆLI: On a personal note, since you were Bishop Antonio de Castro Mayer's secretary for a long time, and particularly looking back at the dramatic events of 1988, what would a motu proprio like Summorum Pontificum have meant to Bishop de Castro Mayer?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: I sincerely believe that he would very happy. Dom Castro Mayer was always a man of the Church, very faithful to its Magisterium. One must only see the body of his written work to arrive at that conclusion. And, on the day of my Episcopal Ordination, I said, in the presence of Cardinal Castrillon and of all the bishops who were there, that our regularization signified, also, the reestablishment of Dom Castro de Mayer, upon which I was applauded, including by them [the bishops].

RORATE CÆLI: Bishop Fernando Rifan, we now know the contents of Summorum Pontificum and of the papal explanatory letter. Many Traditional Catholics throughout the world, though filled with gratitude to the Pope, believe that, despite the changes, they will remain hostages of a hostile situation, as happened with the motu proprio Ecclesia Dei, whenever their diocesan ordinary does not wish to comply with the papal will. What does the new motu proprio generally change, in relation to the indult system established by John Paul II with Quattuor Abhinc Annos and the motu proprio Ecclesia Dei?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: There will always be hardships. The cross is, indeed, one of the signs of God's blessings. Yet this Motu Proprio is quite different from the previous one on the Mass of Saint Pius V. The other counseled; this one mandates, gives precise rules. And it places an instance

in the Roman Curia for appeals in case of litigation or of the non-fulfillment of what is ordered in it.

RORATE CÆLI: As far as you understand them, could you give us an overview of how the general procedure would work out for the groups of faithful, the steps the stable groups would have to take to have access to the Mass?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: First, the faithful who wish to attend the Holy Mass in the extraordinary form will have to follow the the procedures indicated in the Motu proprio. As a first step, they should look for a priest willing to celebrate it privately, and even try to convince him, which will be easier since he has all liberty to do so. And they may attend his Mass.

With the growth of the group, they may ask the parish priest for a public Mass in the parish church, particularly on Sundays. And, finally, they may attain from the Bishop a personal parish, which would be the maximum ideal, with Masses, catechism, spiritual direction, parish movements, etc., with the Mass of Saint Pius V.

RORATE CÆLI: Are there any procedural safeguards for the faithful and Priests who want access to the Mass?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: According to the Motu Proprio, the Bishop cannot prevent a priest from saying such Mass privately, nor a group of faithful from attending it (art. 2 and 4). Neither can he do anything against the Motu proprio. If he does, appeal to Rome is applicable.

RORATE CÆLI: Your Excellency, we are particularly interested in Art. 7 of Summorum Pontificum, which states: [“Art. 7 If a group of lay faithful, as mentioned in art. 5 § 1, has not obtained satisfaction to their requests from the pastor, they should inform the diocesan bishop. The bishop is strongly requested to satisfy their wishes. If he cannot arrange for such celebration to

take place, the matter should be referred to the Pontifical Commission ‘Ecclesia Dei’.”] Can a layman also appeal to the Commission, does he have standing to appeal to Rome if the Ordinary refuses to refer the matter to Rome?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: Not only the priests, but also the lay faithful may appeal to the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei, which has papal authority to solve these matters.

RORATE CÆLI: Assuming that a layman can appeal to the Ecclesia Dei commission directly, in the case of Art. 7, does the Commission have the power to solve the problem?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: It is clearly expressed by the document that the Pope has just endowed the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei with wider powers than it had before, as it can be seen from art. 12: “the authority of the Holy See, supervising the observance and application of these dispositions.”

RORATE CÆLI: Bishop Rifan in the Explanatory Letter, Pope Benedict says that, “in order to experience full communion, the priests of the communities adhering to the former usage cannot, as a matter of principle, exclude celebrating according to the new books”. Even though this is not part of the legal text, does it mean that the priests in these communities dedicated to the Extraordinary Form may be forced to celebrate rites according to the Ordinary Form?

Bishop Fernando Rifan: No one will be forced to celebrate in the new rite. But the possibility cannot be excluded in principle. Even if the Mass in the rite of Saint Pius V is celebrated exclusively, as we do here in our Apostolic Administration by concession of the Holy See, the possibility of celebrating in the ordinary rite cannot be excluded as a matter of principle — it is a matter of coherence, that is the argument of the Pope.

To exclude the celebration in a Catholic rite approved by the Church as a matter of principle would not be a manifestation of the Catholic spirit, and more, if as a matter of questioning the catholicity of the new rite, then it would be a position with incorrect theological implications, because the catholicity of a rite universally proclaimed for the entire Church by its Supreme authority and preserved by the Teaching Church would be put in doubt.