



Fœderatio Internationalis *Una Voce*

Positio N. 21

THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM
AND THE EASTERN CHURCHES

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From the General Introduction

These papers, commissioned by the International Federation *Una Voce*, are offered to stimulate and inform debate about the 1962 Missal among Catholics ‘attached to the ancient Latin liturgical tradition’, and others interested in the liturgical renewal of the Church. They are not to be taken to imply personal or moral criticism of those today or in the past who have adopted practices or advocated reforms which are subjected to criticism. In composing these papers we adopt the working assumption that our fellow Catholics act in good will, but that nevertheless a vigorous and well-informed debate is absolutely necessary if those who act in good will are to do so in light of a proper understanding of the issues.

The authors of the papers are not named, as the papers are not the product of any one person, and also because we prefer them to be judged on the basis of their content, not their authorship.

The International Federation *Una Voce* humbly submits the opinions contained in these papers to the judgement of the Church.

The Extraordinary Form and the Eastern Churches: Abstract

Since Pope Leo XIII’s important encyclical *Orientalium dignitas* in 1894 the policy of the Holy See has been consistent and emphatic, that the liturgical rites of the ancient Oriental Churches are worthy of the utmost veneration, and among those churches in communion with the Holy See they should be protected from undue Latin influence and restored in accordance with their own traditions. This was emphasised by the Second Vatican Council and Pope St John Paul II. This policy is, however, undermined by those exaggerated critiques of the liturgical traditions of the Latin Church which dismiss elements which the Latin and Oriental liturgical traditions have in common, such as worship *ad orientem* and the use of silent prayer, a contemplative manner of liturgical participation, and respect for liturgical tradition. The establishment of the Extraordinary Form as part of the normal liturgical life of the Latin Church is a necessary step towards a practical attitude of reverence towards the traditions of the Oriental Churches.

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POSITION 21: THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM AND THE EASTERN CHURCHES

1. The preservation and promotion, in the West, of the West's ancient liturgical tradition has considerable importance for Christians of other ancient liturgical traditions, both those in full communion with the Holy See and those who are not. Respect for and continued usage of the Extraordinary Form is a necessary practical corollary of the long-standing official policy of the Holy See, of respect for the traditions of the Eastern Churches.

The Promotion of Unity and Reverence for Eastern Traditions

2. Pope Leo XIII clarified and underlined the proper attitude of respect for Eastern Rites, notably in his 1894 Encyclical *Orientalium dignitas*: speaking of the Holy See in relation to Eastern Catholics, he declares

Nor was it the last expression of her watchfulness that she guard and preserve in them whole and entire forever the customs and distinct forms for administering the sacraments that she had declared legitimate in her wise jurisdiction.¹

Again:

In point of fact there is more importance than can be believed in preserving the Eastern rites. Their antiquity is august, it is what gives nobility to the different rites, it is a brilliant jewel for the whole Church, it confirms the God-given unity of the Catholic Faith.

3. The practical provisions of the Encyclical are aimed at reversing the process of 'Latinisation' of Eastern Catholics, both the replacement (in whole or in part) of Eastern Rites with the Latin Rite, and the absorption of individuals and groups of Catholics of Eastern Rite into the Latin Rite, processes which on occasion had earlier been approved by the Holy See.²
4. Pope Leo's language is closely paralleled in the Second Vatican Council's Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, which goes on to speak of the purification of the Eastern Rites of Latin elements which may unhappily have invaded them:

All members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement. All these, then, must be observed by the members of the Eastern rites themselves. Besides, they should attain to an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them, and, if in their regard they have fallen short owing to contingencies of times and persons, they should take steps to return to their ancestral traditions.³

¹ Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical *Orientalium dignitas* (1894). The Encyclical has no paragraph numbering; nor is the Latin text easily available.

² See the 1996 Instruction of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Il Padre, incomprendibile* 24: 'These interventions felt the effects of the mentality and convictions of the times, according to which a certain subordination of the non-Latin liturgies was perceived toward the Latin-rite liturgy which was considered "*ritus praestantior*.'" This attitude may have led to interventions in the Eastern liturgical texts which today, in light of theological studies and progress, have need of revision, in the sense of a return to ancestral traditions.'

³ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (6): 'Sciant ac pro certo habeant omnes Orientales, se suos legitimos ritus liturgicos suamque disciplinam semper servare posse et debere, ac

The Council, further, recognised that the distinct traditions of the East preserved particular theological insights of value for the whole Church.⁴

5. The same sentiments and policy were reiterated by Pope St John Paul II, in his impassioned Apostolic Letter *Orientalium Lumen*, issued on the centenary of *Orientalium dignitas*. He demanded
total respect for the other's dignity without claiming that the whole array of uses and customs in the Latin Church is more complete or better suited to showing the fullness of correct doctrine.⁵
6. The importance of this policy for relations with the Orthodox churches was underlined by the Second Vatican Council. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* demanded that Eastern Catholics promote unity with other Eastern Christians by, among other things, 'religious fidelity to the ancient Eastern traditions'.⁶ This was reiterated by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches' 1996 Instruction *Il Padre, incomprendibile* (21):

nonnisi ratione proprii et organici progressus mutationes inducendas esse. Haec omnia, igitur, maxima fidelitate ab ipsis Orientalibus observanda sunt; qui quidem harum rerum cognitionem in dies maiorem usumque perfectiorem acquirere debent, et, si ab iis ob temporum vel personarum adiuncta indebite defecerint, ad avitas traditiones redire satagant.' A parallel statement of liturgical principle in relation to the reform of the Latin Rite liturgy can be found in Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 50: 'elements which have suffered injury through accidents of history are now to be restored to the vigour which they had in the days of the holy Fathers, as may seem useful or necessary.' A more literal translation would be: 'things which have fallen away because of the damage done by the passing of time are to be restored to the old rule of the Holy Fathers, as may seem suitable or necessary.' ('restituantur vero ad pristinam sanctorum Patrum normam nonnulla quae temporum iniuria deciderunt, prout opportuna vel necessaria videantur.')

⁴ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 17: 'In the study of revelation East and West have followed different methods, and have developed differently their understanding and confession of God's truth. It is hardly surprising, then, if from time to time one tradition has come nearer to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than the other, or has expressed it to better advantage. In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting.' ('Etenim in veritatis revelatae exploratione methodi gressusque diversi ad divina cognoscenda et confitenda in Oriente et in Occidente adhibiti sunt. Unde mirum non est quosdam aspectus mysterii revelati quandoque magis congrue percipi et in meliorem lucem poni ab uno quam ab altero, ita ut tunc variae illae theologicae formulae non raro potius inter se compleri dicendae sint quam opponi.') Cf. *Orientalium Lumen* 5: 'The Christian tradition of the East implies a way of accepting, understanding and living faith in the Lord Jesus. In this sense it is extremely close to the Christian tradition of the West, which is born of and nourished by the same faith. Yet it is legitimately and admirably distinguished from the latter, since Eastern Christians have their own way of perceiving and understanding, and thus an original way of living their relationship with the Saviour.' ('Certum enim modum secum importat orientalis traditio suscipiendi intellegendi vivendi Domini Iesu fidem. Ita profecto proxime illa ad christianam accedit Occidentis traditionem quae eadem nascitur aliturque fide. Tamen legitime atque insignite ab illa differt, cum proprium habeat sentiendi percipiendique morem christifidelis orientalis, ac propterea nativam aliquam rationem suae colendae necessitudinis cum Salvatore.') Cf. also *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 5: '[this Council] solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, as much as those of the West, have a full right and are in duty bound to rule themselves, each in accordance with its own established disciplines, since all these are praiseworthy by reason of their venerable antiquity, more harmonious with the character of their faithful and more suited to the promotion of the good of souls.' ('Quamobrem sollemniter declarat, Ecclesias Orientis sicut et Occidentis iure pollere et officio teneri se secundum proprias disciplinas peculiare regendi, utpote quae veneranda antiquitate commendentur, moribus suorum fidelium magis sint congruae atque ad bonum animarum consulendum aptiores videantur.')

⁵ Pope St John Paul II Apostolic Letter *Orientalium Lumen* (1994) 20: 'Certe, hodiernae menti videtur vera coniunctio fieri posse aliorum plene observata dignitate, dempta simul illa opinione universos mores et consuetudines Ecclesiae Latinae pleniores esse et aptiores ad rectam doctrinam demonstrandam;'

⁶ *Orientalium Lumen* 24: 'religiosa erga antiquas traditiones orientales fidelitate'.

In every effort of liturgical renewal, therefore, the practice of the Orthodox brethren should be taken into account, knowing it, respecting it and distancing from it as little as possible so as not to increase the existing separation.⁷

This passage recalls a well-known phrase of Pope St Pius X: the liturgy of Catholics of non-Latin rite should be ‘nec plus, nec minus, nec aliter’ (‘neither more, nor less, nor different’) as a result of coming into full communion with the See of Peter.⁸

The Latin Liturgical Reform

7. The liturgical reform which took place after the Second Vatican Council created a new situation in relation to the Eastern Rites. Continuing Latinising tendencies would henceforward be based on the reformed rites, which in a number of ways are further removed from authentic Eastern liturgical principles than the older Latin liturgical tradition. Furthermore, popular theological explanations of the reform, and the impetus behind many Western liturgical abuses, were often expressed in such a way as clearly implied that traditional Eastern practices are seriously defective.
8. For example, the Latin reform saw the almost universal abandonment of the Latin tradition of liturgical orientation: the celebration of Mass by a priest facing liturgical east, which meant (outside a small number of exceptional churches), facing the same way as the Faithful.⁹ The promotion of this change, which was not discussed by the Second Vatican Council and has never been made obligatory in the Latin Church, has been accompanied by a polemic against the traditional practice, which is disparagingly described as ‘the priest turning his back on the people’. This polemic is not endorsed in the Church’s official documents and has often been criticised, notably by Pope Benedict XVI.¹⁰ It is, nevertheless, very widespread, and is clearly applicable to the tradition of worship *ad orientem* in the Eastern Rites. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches has felt it necessary to address the issue in *Il Padre*, (107):

It is not a question, as is often claimed, of presiding the celebration with the back turned to the people, but rather of guiding the people in pilgrimage toward the Kingdom, invoked in prayer until the return of the Lord.

Such practice, threatened in numerous Eastern Catholic Churches by a new and recent Latin influence, is thus of profound value and should be safeguarded as truly coherent with the Eastern liturgical spirituality.
9. In a similar way, the same Instruction finds it necessary to defend the Eastern tradition of the distribution of Holy Communion only by clerics; a longer Eucharistic Fast than in force today in the Latin Church; a ‘penitential orientation’ to the liturgy; and the use of traditional sacred art and architectural forms for churches. All of these are features of the Latin liturgical tradition which have been subject to criticism, disparagement, and even ridicule, in the course of the debate over the liturgical reform.

⁷Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Instruction *Il Padre, incomprendibile* (1996) 21

⁸ Pope St Pius X used the phrase in early 1911 in a private audience with Natalia Ushakova, in relation to the proposals for Latinisation then being discussed within the Russia Catholic community.

⁹ In St Peter’s Basilica, for example, for the celebrant at the High Altar to face East meant to face into the nave of the church, towards the main doors. On the historical significance of such exceptional churches, see FIUV Positio 4: *Liturgical Orientation*, 6-7.

¹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph, Cardinal Ratzinger) *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000) pp80-81.

10. An earlier document from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, the 1984 Instruction *Observations on: 'The Order of the Holy Mass of the Syro-Malabar Church 1981'*, furnishes still more examples of the same phenomenon. Reference is made to a popular theological critique of silent prayers in the liturgy.

It is sometimes said that all liturgical prayers should be said aloud so that everyone can hear them. This is a false principle both historically and liturgically. Some prayers are specifically designed to be said during singing or processions or other activities of the people, or are apologies *pro clero*. Just as the clergy do not have to sing everything the people chant, so too the people do not have to hear all the prayers. Indeed, to recite all prayers aloud interrupts the proper flow of the liturgical structure.¹¹

11. The attack on silent prayers in the Mass is also strongly opposed by Pope Benedict.¹² It is by no means part of the official theology of the Reform, and indeed the Missal of 1970 contains a number of silent priestly prayers. It is nevertheless true that the Reform, and its implementation,¹³ has moved the practice of the Latin Church very much away from silent prayers, and this has given an opening to a theological polemic, to the effect that such prayers wrongfully exclude the Faithful from liturgical participation.¹⁴

12. The Instruction *Observations* also directs the Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church to resist Latinising tendencies which would import unscripted prayers into their Rite; the proclamation of the Scriptures from a lectern instead of from the Altar; over-elaborate offertory processions; and spontaneous bidding prayers. On the last issue, it notes, in relation to liturgical experiments in the Latin Church: 'There is no need to imitate the failures of others.'

13. A general parallel between the Eastern liturgical traditions and the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite is an approach to liturgical participation which does not depend on seeing all the actions of the celebrant, or hearing all his words. As Pope St John Paul II remarked:

The lengthy duration of the celebrations, the repeated invocations, everything expresses gradual identification with the mystery celebrated with one's whole person.¹⁵

¹¹ Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Instruction *Observations on: 'The Order of the Holy Mass of the Syro-Malabar Church 1981'*. This Instruction was a response to a reform of the Syro-Malabar liturgical books proposed by the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference. The Syro-Malabar Church is not autocephalous and comes directly under the authority of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

¹² Pope Benedict (Cardinal Ratzinger) *op. cit.* pp213-216

¹³ The option within the reformed Missal, for example, of saying the Offertory Prayers quietly while the choir sings, is rarely used, at least in the English-speaking world, and even the silent priestly prayers are frequently said aloud.

¹⁴ See FIUV Positio 9: *Silence and Inaudibility in the Extraordinary Form*.

¹⁵ Pope St John Paul II Apostolic Letter *Orientalis Lumen* (1995) 11: 'Extractum longius celebrationum tempus, iteratae invocationes, omnia denique comprobant aliquem paulatim in celebratum mysterium ingredi tota sua cum persona.' Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (2001) 28: 'The Sacred Liturgy engages not only man's intellect, but the whole person, who is the "subject" of full and conscious participation in the liturgical celebration.' ('Sacra Liturgia non solum hominis intellectum devincit, sed totam etiam personam, quae est "subiectum" plenae et consciae participationis in celebratione liturgica.')

The role of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite

14. Popular theological polemics against numerous aspects of the Church's shared liturgical tradition, and even the notion of a tradition,¹⁶ undermine the programme of preservation and restoration of Eastern Rites called for by the Second Vatican Council, and undermine professions of respect for the traditions of Eastern Christians not in communion with Rome.
15. An important way of setting these issues into their proper context, and of making concrete at the local level the Church's authentic teaching, is giving the West's own liturgical tradition the 'proper place' which Pope Benedict demanded for it.¹⁷ When the Extraordinary Form finds a place in the normal liturgical life of parishes and dioceses, with the visible endorsement of bishops and priests, it undermines the idea that those misguided theological principles, mentioned in this paper, are in any sense part of the official teaching of the Church. Furthermore, when Catholics experience this form of the Roman Rite they are much better able to understand the value of the Eastern Rites, the nature of the laity's participation in them, and the value of liturgical tradition itself.¹⁸
16. These considerations are given additional force by the establishment of communities of Catholics of non-Latin rite in countries of predominantly Latin Rite heritage. Pope St John Paul II recommended, in this context, that Latin Rite Catholics familiarise themselves with the liturgy of their Eastern brethren,¹⁹ the Extraordinary Form can in many ways form a bridge to aid the mutual understanding he desired.
17. In this context, it is not surprising that Pope Benedict's motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum* was well received by the then Patriarch of Moscow, Alexy II.²⁰ Latin Rite

¹⁶ As *Il Padre* expresses it: 'The first requirement of every Eastern liturgical renewal, as is also the case for liturgical reform in the West, is that of rediscovering full fidelity to their own liturgical traditions, benefiting from their riches and eliminating that which has altered their authenticity. Such heedfulness is not subordinate to but precedes so-called updating.' Cf. Pope St John Paul II Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen* (1995) 8 quoted in note 18 infra.

¹⁷ Pope Benedict XVI Letter to Bishops accompanying the motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum*: 'What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful. It behoves all of us to preserve the riches which have developed in the Church's faith and prayer, and to give them their proper place.'

¹⁸ Pope St John Paul II *Orientale Lumen* 8: 'Today we often feel ourselves prisoners of the present. It is as though man had lost his perception of belonging to a history which precedes and follows him. This effort to situate oneself between the past and the future, with a grateful heart for the benefits received and for those expected, is offered by the Eastern Churches in particular, with a clear-cut sense of continuity which takes the name of Tradition and of eschatological expectation.' ('Captivos hodie saepius nos temporis praesentis esse sentimus: quasi si notionem homo amiserit sese esse particulam alicuius historiae praecedentis et subsequentis. Huic magno labori, quo contendit quis ut se inter praeteritum colloquet futurumque tempus cum grato sane animo tam de acceptis quam de donis postmodum accipiendis, clarum praestant Orientales Ecclesiae sensum continuationis, quae sibi Traditionis atque eschatologicae expectationis nomina sumit.')

¹⁹ Pope St John Paul II Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen* (1995) 24 'I believe that one important way to grow in mutual understanding and unity consists precisely in improving our knowledge of one another. The children of the Catholic Church already know the ways indicated by the Holy See for achieving this: to know the liturgy of the Eastern Churches' ('Putamus sane magnum pondus ad crescendum in mutua comprehensione atque unitate tribuendum esse meliori mutuae intellegentiae. Catholicae Ecclesiae filii iam noverunt vias quas Sancta Sedes significavit ut ii eiusmodi propositum consequi valeant: liturgiam Ecclesiarum Orientalium noscere [corrected from 'nascere']') (The quoted passage ends with a footnote reference to the Instruction *In Ecclesiasticum futurorum* (1979) 48

²⁰ The news agency Zenit reported as follows (Rome, Aug. 29, 2007): 'Benedict XVI's move to allow for wider celebration of the Roman Missal of 1962 has received a positive reaction from the Orthodox Patriarch

Catholics cannot, indeed, expect to be taken seriously in affirming the value of the ancient traditions of the Eastern Rites, if they do not accord a degree of respect towards their own tradition.

Alexy II of Moscow. “The recovery and valuing of the ancient liturgical tradition is a fact that we greet positively,” Alexy II told the Italian daily *Il Giornale*. Benedict XVI's apostolic letter *Summorum Pontificum*, published in July, explains new norms allowing for the use of the 1962 missal as an extraordinary form of the liturgical celebration. “We hold very strongly to tradition,” he continued. “Without the faithful guardianship of liturgical tradition, the Russian Orthodox Church would not have been able to resist the period of persecution.””