

DIOCESE
of NEW ULM

Office of Bishop

March 24, 2005

Dear Friends,

Much has been made by traditionalists over the fact that I denied the family request of Allen Cain to be buried from his home parish in the Tridentine Rite, due to the proximity of his grave plot in the parish cemetery.

First of all, allow me to assert my own personal love for the Tridentine liturgy. It is the liturgical rite in which I grew up as a boy and young man and to this day I attribute my priestly vocation to the transcendent quality of prayer that I found in it either as a Mass server, a high school Master of Ceremonies, or a participant in the pew.

However, on April 3, 1969, our Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, in direct line of authority in the Chair of St. Peter, issued his Apostolic Constitution, *Qua Missale Romanum ex Decreto Concili Oecumenici Vaticani II Instauratum Promulgatur*. The Missal of Pope Pius V (i.e. the Tridentine Mass) was replaced and the *Novus Ordo Missae*, or the commonly called Missal of Paul VI, became the standard liturgical rite of the Universal Church.

On July 11, 1988, our present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *Ecclesia Dei*, extended an indult to bishops of the Church for use of the Revised Roman Missal of 1962.

It is of note that this Apostolic Letter begins with an expression of regret on the Pope's part for the disobedient act of Archbishop Lefebvre the month before in ordaining two invalid bishops. Thus, the context of the letter is cast in light of this schismatic act.

To circumvent the multiplication of such acts of dissent, the Pope appeals to the unity of Christ's Church and of his desire to find a "middle ground" for reaching out to "those who are attached to the Latin liturgical tradition."

Subsequently, Pope John Paul II created a Pontifical Commission, "*Ecclesia Dei*," to oversee the implementation of his Apostolic Letter.

This Pontifical Commission has specified:

- 1) Faculties for implementation of the Pope's decree are granted to the appropriate Ordinary;
- 2) Such bishops are not to be coerced into providing the Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal;
- 3) The provision of the indult depends on "the number of people who desire the traditional rite, their motives, and the availability of priests who can celebrate it."
- 4) Those who request the indult should demonstrate "their own adherence to the legislation of the univer-



sal Church and their acknowledgement of the doctrinal and juridical value of the liturgy as revised after the Second Vatican Council."

It should be pointed out here that the question at issue is not the use of Latin in the Mass. Any priest has the right and authority to celebrate a Mass in Latin, Spanish or English, but, in accord with the Missal of Pope Paul VI. This option was offered to the family of Allen Cain and was rebuffed.

With regard to the request of Allen Cain to be buried from Sacred Heart Church in Murdock in the Tridentine liturgy, the following factors come into play:

- 1) That parish community has not experienced the Tridentine liturgy in 40 years;
- 2) The pastor of the parish has never celebrated the Tridentine Mass and is unable to do so;
- 3) Mr. Cain had been attending a parish other than Sacred Heart for his weekly spiritual sustenance for more than a decade;
- 4) The family demonstrated their disdain for the Novus Ordo Missae by not allowing the pastor to celebrate the Holy Eucharist according to the Missal of Pope Paul VI either in English or Latin.

It must be asserted that every Catholic has a right to receive the sacraments (cf. Code of Canon Law, canon 843), but he does not have a right to them according to the rite of his choice.

The Diocese of New Ulm is a Home Mission Diocese. We have 42 priests for 82 parishes. In consultation with the Diocesan Consultors over the past two years on the question of offering a Tridentine Mass, the priests indicated that with four to five weekend liturgies they have all they can do to meet the spiritual needs of their English and Spanish speaking congregations.

In the final analysis, the Pontifical Commission, Ecclesia Dei, judges that the use of the indult to provide a Tridentine Mass constitutes an exception to the Church's law and may be granted when the local Bishop judges it to be a valid pastoral service and when he has the priests available to celebrate it.

I hope this clarification is helpful to you.

With every good wish, I am

Cordially yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt
Bishop of New Ulm