

Two Dubia Submitted To Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei

In article 19 of the commission's instruction of April 30, 2011, *Universae Ecclesiae* (UE), it is laid down that those Catholics who desire celebrations of the Eucharist in the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite (using the 1962 Missal) may not support, or be members of, any groups which "challenge the validity or legitimacy" (*validitatem vel legitimitatem impugnent*) of the ordinary form.

While very few still question the validity of Mass celebrated with the reformed Roman Missal, certain prominent "traditionalist" groups, individuals, and publications have been openly and defiantly challenging its legitimacy. However, there often appears to be confusion and conflicting assumptions in these circles as to how, precisely, the latter word is to be understood. As a result, it is not always clear to those priests wishing to serve Catholics attached to the traditional liturgy whether or not some of these folks are in fact in compliance with this requirement of the Apostolic See enunciated in UE, n. 19.

In order, therefore, to clarify this matter and facilitate a consistent pastoral application of article 19, could the Commission graciously consider and respond to the following two dubia?

1. Whether *legimitas* in UE, article 19, is to be understood as meaning:

(a) duly promulgated by appropriate procedures of ecclesiastical law (*ius ecclesiasticum*); or

(b) in accord with both ecclesiastical law and divine law (*ius divinum*), that is, neither doctrinally unorthodox nor otherwise displeasing to God.

2. If (b) above represents the mind of the Commission in regard to the meaning of *legimitas*, whether UE, n. 19 is then to be understood as allowing access to Mass in the extraordinary form:

(a) only to those Catholics who do not challenge the legitimacy of any specific text or practice whatsoever that has been duly approved by either universal or local ecclesiastical law for use in celebrating the ordinary form; or

(b) to those faithful mentioned in (a) and also to those who acknowledge in principle the legitimacy of Masses celebrated according to the reformed Roman Missal and its General Instruction, but not the legitimacy of certain specific practices which, while not mandated therein, are permitted as options by universal or local liturgical law.

The second dubium has in mind those many traditionally inclined Catholics who accept the legitimacy (in sense 1 [b] above) of ordinary-form Masses in which more traditional options are used, but who regard as wrong and displeasing to God certain practices which were for many centuries universally disapproved and forbidden by the Church but which are now permitted by the local liturgical law of many or most dioceses or episcopal conferences (e.g., Communion given in the hand, female altar service, and the use of extraordinary lay ministers of Communion).

Rome's Response

Pontificia Commissio Ecclesia Dei

Prot. 156/2009

Vatican City, 23 May 2012

Your Excellency,

This Pontifical Commission has received, via your Excellency's good offices, a copy of a correspondence from [name blacked out] placing before the Commission two dubia as to the interpretation of article 19 of this Commission's Instruction *Universae Ecclesiae*.

The first asked whether *legitimas* in UE, article 19, is to be understood as meaning:

(a) Duly promulgated by appropriate procedures of ecclesiastical law (*ius ecclesiasticum*); or

(b) In accord with both ecclesiastical law and divine law (*ius divinum*), that is, neither doctrinally unorthodox nor otherwise displeasing to God.

This Pontifical Commission would limit itself to saying that *legitimas* is to be understood in the sense of 1(a). The second is responded to by this answer.

With the hope that Your Excellency will communicate the contents of this letter to the individual concerned, this Pontifical Commission takes this opportunity to renew its sentiments of esteem.

Sincerely yours in Christ

Mons. Guido Pozzo

Secretary