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Note for the Presentation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Decree *Cum sanctissima* on the liturgical celebration in honour of Saints in the forma extraordinaria of the Roman Rite

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

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With the Decree *Cum sanctissima* of 22 February 2020, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which since January 2019 deals with those matters formerly assigned to the Pontifical Commission “Ecclesia Dei”[1], completed the work initiated several years earlier by that Commission in order to fulfil the mandate given by Pope Benedict XVI to facilitate the celebration of more recently canonised Saints according to the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite[2]. Indeed, since the Sanctoral of the *forma extraordinaria* is determined by the liturgical books in force in 1962, Saints canonised thereafter were not included therein.

The studies carried out in order to develop a practical solution for the liturgical celebration of more recent Saints in the *Usus Antiquior* provided an opportunity to address the many issues that this matter raises, such as the density of the existing calendar (particularly as regards III class feasts), the consideration of all the repercussions of any potential changes, the always preferable consistency between Mass and the Divine Office, and the matter of the liturgical texts to be used.

In this context, it appeared that rather than dealing with this or that more recent Saint, it would be more appropriate to lay down a general principle that would enable, within the general rubrical context of the *forma extraordinaria*, and when the liturgical day permits, the celebration of any Saint canonised after the 1960s, on the date of their proper feast.

Specifically, the Decree broadens the scope of *missæ festivæ latiore sensu* referred to in no. 302-c of the

Rubricæ Generales Missalis Romani (which hitherto only applied to IV class days), to a number of III class feasts and to III class vigils^[3] (cf. Decree, n. 1). It is therefore clear that the new provisions will not in any way affect other celebrations, and in particular those of the I or II classes. In addition, the Decree specifies that *missæ festivæ latiore sensu* may be celebrated in honour of Saints canonised after 26 July 1960 (which is the date of the last amendment to the Martyrology of the *forma extraordinaria*), on their respective liturgical feast day (no. 2).

With this principle in mind, the other provisions of the Decree give the necessary indications that derive therefrom, such as the applicability to the Divine Office, which in such a case is to be celebrated in full in honour of the Saint (n. 3), the requirement to make a commemoration of potentially occurring III class feasts, as the case may be (n. 4), and the rules relating to the selection of the liturgical texts to be used (n. 5). Regarding this particular point, one should note the three successive sources from which texts are to be drawn, namely in the first place the *Proprium Sanctorum pro aliquibus locis* which already exists in the Missal of the *forma extraordinaria*, secondly a special Supplement to be published by the Holy See in the future, and finally, should the two former sources be lacking, the existing *Commune Sanctorum*.

It is noteworthy that the celebration of more recent Saints pursuant to the new provisions is a mere possibility, and therefore it remains optional. Accordingly, those who wish to continue to celebrate the Saints according to the existing calendar of the *forma extraordinaria* as it appears in the liturgical books, remain free to do so. In relation to this, one should be reminded that the existence of optional feasts in honour of the Saints is not a complete novelty in the Roman Rite, given that throughout the post-tridentine period, and up till the rubrical reform carried out by Pope St. Pius X, the calendar included no less than twenty-five such so-called *ad libitum* feasts.

The new Decree also opens a further possibility for cases in which whilst following the existing calendar, one wishes at the same time to honour eventual other occurring Saints. Specifically, according to n. 6 of the Decree, an *ad libitum* commemoration of an occurring Saint may be made, if said Saint appears in the *Proprium pro aliquibus locis* or in the future special Supplement.

In choosing whether or not to make use of the provisions of the Decree in liturgical celebrations in honour of the Saints, the celebrant is expected to make use of good pastoral common sense. As regards the particular case of celebrations in Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life, no. 7 of the Decree provides some useful clarification.

The Decree concludes (n. 8) with reference to a list of seventy III class feasts that may never be impeded by its provisions. This list, which is provided as an annex, reflects the particular importance of the feasts in question, on the basis of precise criteria, e.g. the importance of these respective Saints in the Plan of Salvation or in the history of the Church, their importance in terms of either the devotion they have generated or their writings, or the antiquity of their worship in Rome.

[1] Cf. Francis, *Apostolic Letter in the form of Motu Proprio on the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei"*, 17 January 2019.

[2] "New Saints (...) can and should be inserted in the old Missal. The "Ecclesia Dei" Commission, in contact with various bodies devoted to the *Usus Antiquior*, will study the practical possibilities in this regard": Benedict XVI, *Letter to the Bishops on the occasion of the publication of the Apostolic Letter "Motu Proprio Data" Summorum Pontificum on the use of the Roman Liturgy prior to the reform of 1970*, AAS 99 (2007) 798. This mandate was further confirmed and completed in 2011 by the Instruction *Universæ Ecclesiæ* of the same Pontifical Commission: cf. Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei", *Instruction on the Application of the Apostolic Letter Summorum Pontificum of His Holiness Benedict XVI given Motu Proprio*, no. 25, AAS 103 (2011) 418.

[3] In fact there is only one such III class vigil in the calendar of the *forma extraordinaria*, namely that of St.

Lawrence on 9 August. On this subject one may be reminded that from 1568 until the *Codex Rubricarum* of 1960, non-privileged vigils such as that of St. Lawrence were of the simplex rite, and accordingly, when they fell in occurrence with a *semiduplex* or *duplex* feast of a Saint, that feast would prevail over the vigil. With the reform enacted under St. Pius X in 1911-1914, in non-conventual Masses the celebrant could, in certain cases, choose between the Mass of the occurring Saint or the Mass of the vigil (cr. *Additiones et variationes in rubricis Missalis*, no. 1).
