



Students are pictured in a file photo attending a "traditional Latin Mass" at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio. The university is ending its celebration of the Mass in Latin according to the 1962 Roman Missal, commonly known as the traditional Latin Mass. (OSV News photo/Walter Matt, Juventutem Franciscan's Facebook page)

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A Catholic university in Ohio is making alternate arrangements for students to attend what is commonly called the "traditional Latin Mass," after the local bishop implemented recently issued restrictions from the Vatican.

In a March 6 message, Third Order Franciscan Fr. David Pivonka, president of Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio, told students, faculty and staff that he had been informed by Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton that the school's celebrations of Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal would be suspended.

Prior to the announcement, the university had hosted the liturgy once a month, from September through April, on Sundays at 2 p.m. in the Christ the King Chapel, with Third Order Franciscan Fr. Gregory Plow, the school's head athletic chaplain, presiding.

Now, "all celebrations of the Traditional Latin Mass in Steubenville (will) take place only at St. Peter Church on Fourth Street," wrote Pivonka, adding that the university is working on a transportation plan for affected students.

The church is located approximately 1.5 miles from the university campus.

Pivonka added he "would prefer to continue offering the option of a Traditional Latin Mass on campus," but was "grateful our students still have relatively convenient access with St. Peter's Church so close by."

The shift follows a Feb. 21 clarification from the Vatican approved by Pope Francis and signed by Cardinal Arthur Roche, prefect of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The clarification, or rescript, reaffirmed Francis' July 2021 apostolic letter "Traditionis Custodes," which reversed Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 apostolic letter "Summorum Pontificum" that had allowed wide permissions for diocesan priests to celebrate Masses with the 1962 Roman Missal. Benedict framed

the decision as one that would foster the church's unity by pastorally providing for Catholics attached to the older usage (or "usus antiquior") and help enrich the celebration of the 2002 Roman Missal as the "ordinary usage" of the Mass.

Francis, however, rolled those permissions back over concerns the older celebration of Mass was being abused to harm the church's "ecclesial communion," including undermining the authority of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar reform of the Roman rite. He declared the liturgical books promulgated by St. Paul VI and St. John Paul II following Vatican II are "the unique expression of the 'lex orandi' ('law of worship') of the Roman rite."

The rescript states that priests ordained after the publication of "Traditiones Custodes" must receive direct permission from the Vatican to celebrate Mass with the 1962 missal. Bishops also may not establish personal parishes for Catholics attached to the older form of the Roman rite, or allow its celebrations in parish churches.

A spokesman for the Diocese of Steubenville told OSV News he was unable to provide additional clarification as to why St. Peter Church, a diocesan parish, was permitted to continue celebrations of the Mass with the 1962 Roman Missal. He did note that St. Peter had long hosted such Masses on a weekly basis, and that its church could accommodate a large crowd of worshippers.

In an emailed statement, the Diocese of Steubenville told OSV News that it was "seeking to meet the pastoral needs of the faithful in accord with the norms, including the recent rescript, issued by the Holy See."

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"Mass with the 1962 Missal is offered in Steubenville, and Bishop Monforton has already requested a dispensation from the Holy See for that Mass to continue," it added.

The diocese's spokesman added, "If people want to go to the Latin Mass, (Bishop Monforton) does not have an objection. He's just trying to follow orders from the Vatican."

In his message to the university community, Pivonka said he had spoken with Monforton "multiple times, hoping we could work out a way to continue offering the Traditional Latin Mass at Franciscan University for the many students, faculty and staff with a special love for this ancient form of the sacred liturgy."

Pivonka also said after being notified of the bishop's decision, his "first thought was for the students who would be saddened by the news."

Pivonka said that he, along with Plow and Third Order Franciscan Fr. Shawn Roberson, the university's chaplain, on March 2 had been "asked to meet with members of our Traditional Latin Mass student club, Juventutem Franciscan."

The group is part of the Foederatio Internationalis Juventutem, a global Catholic youth network that promotes devotion to the Mass according to the 1962 Missal. An email message from OSV News to Juventutem Franciscan asking for comment has not as yet been answered.

"I wanted to let our students know of the care and concern for them felt by all the friars," said Pivonka in his message. "I was extremely edified by this gathering and the time we shared together. Everyone there committed to continue to pray for peace as well as for Bishop Monforton and everyone involved."

Robert Palladino, the university's director of chapel ministries, told OSV News he was advised after that meeting that the students were experiencing "(not) so much anger (but) deep sadness." One of the priests told him, "it really moved his heart to see so many young people, so obedient (to the church), not having their spiritual needs met anymore."

At the same time, Palladino said students -- whose shuttle costs to St. Peter Catholic Church will be fully covered by the university -- are looking forward to celebrating the older form of the liturgy at the parish.

"We have an amazing schola and a number of really well-trained altar servers," said Palladino.

He added his team is planning to keep the liturgical items it has purchased over the years for Mass with the 1962 Roman Missal, "so that if anything changes, we can unbox everything and go right back to business."