

FAQ - Franciscans of the Immaculate & Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum

Questions regarding the petition in support of the Franciscans of the Immaculate and the world-wide implementation of the Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum have been asked all around. Here we have compiled the most important ones and present them along with their answer to the public.

What is the goal of the petition?

Those signing it promote respect for and the implementation of the Motu Proprio "Summorum Pontificum" and the instruction "Universae Ecclesiae" - both in general and in the specific case of the Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception, to whom, since the beginning of August 2013, the use of the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite has been forbidden.

This prohibition affects not only the *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate* directly, but as a consequence also all the faithful who are cared for by them. They too no longer have the opportunity to celebrate the Holy Mass and the other sacraments in the extraordinary form (unless the local bishops provide for a speedy replacement in all affected locations).

Why the ban?

The *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate (FFI)* are a young congregation (founded in 1970) that, following the Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum, opened itself towards the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite: Since 2008, the seminarians were learning both forms of the Mass and, as priests, celebrate in both the Novus as Vetus Ordo.

The Order consists worldwide of 350 brothers with vows and 120 seminarians. The female branch comprises of about 350 sisters.

After 5 FFI-members had complained to the Vatican alleging too much emphasis on to the extraordinary form of the Roman rite, initially an Apostolic Visitor was appointed, and following that, (early July 2013) an Apostolic Commissioner, the Capuchin Father Fidenzio Volpi, OFM Cap. In the decree of appointment for Father Volpi – citing the name of Pope Francis - a ban concerning use of the extraordinary form of the Roman rite decreed which affectes the whole.

Commissioner Volpi has the power to give dispensation on special requests (by religious communities or individuals); in fact he makes little use of it: for example, out of 33 communities in Italy, only 3 received permission, 3 others were closed following such a request. All three belong to the diocese of Albenga-Imperia in Liguria, whose bishop promotes the old rite. In his diocese, the FFI were entrusted with the care of souls in three communities.

As well, the order's own seminary in Sassoferato was closed, the seminarians were dispersed to other communities and all ordinations to higher orders were suspended for a year.

How do the relevant documents actually say?

Quote 1:

Art. 2. In Masses celebrated without a congregation, any Catholic priest of the Latin rite, whether secular or regular, may use either the Roman Missal published in 1962 by Blessed Pope John XXII or the Roman Missal promulgated in 1970 by Pope Paul VI, and may do so on any day, with the exception of the Easter Triduum. For such a celebration with either Missal, the priest needs no permission from the Apostolic See or from his own Ordinary.

Source: Summorum Pontificum motu proprio (7.7.2007)

Quote 2:

Article 9, § 3 "Consecrated clerics have the right to also use the Roman Breviary by Blessed John XXIII. as promulgated in 1962. "

Source: Summorum Pontificum motu proprio (7.7.2007)

Quote 3:

"In the history of the liturgy there is growth and progress, but not rupture. What earlier generations held sacred, remains sacred and great for us and it can not all of a sudden be entirely forbidden or even considered harmful. It behooves all of us to preserve the riches which have developed in the Church's faith and prayer, and to give them their proper place. "

Source: MPSP accompanying letter to the bishops (7.7.2007)

Quote 4:

23. The faculty to celebrate *sine populo* (or with the participation of only one minister) in the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite is given by the Motu Proprio to all priests, whether secular or religious (cf. Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, art. 2). For such celebrations therefore, priests, by provision of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, do not require any special permission from their Ordinaries or superiors.

Source: Instruction *Universae Ecclesiae* (30.4.2011)

Quote 5:

13. Diocesan Bishops, according to Canon Law, are to monitor liturgical matters in order to guarantee the common good and to ensure that everything is proceeding in peace and serenity in their Dioceses, always in agreement with the *mens* of the Holy Father clearly expressed by the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*.

Source: Instruction *Universae Ecclesiae* (30.4.2011)

Quote 6:

The Holy Father Francis on 3 July [2013] disposed that each member of the Congregation of the Franciscan of the Immaculate Conception is bound to celebrate the liturgy according to the ordinary rite, and that, the use of the extraordinary form (*Vetus Ordo*) must be approved explicitly by the responsible authorities for every religious community or members on request "

Source: Decree by Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life 11.7.2014, gez. Cardinal de Aviz (PROT. N. 52741/2012)

Comment:

An institution that gives itself laws, but then obviously disregards its own laws, makes itself untrustworthy - and can not demand of others to respect its laws. This applies not only to the Motu proprio "Summorum Pontificum", but also to attendance at mass every Sunday, to express one's sexuality only within a marriage consecrated by the church, to confess serious sins, etc., etc.

Why a petition?

Isn't that something we expect in politics and is used by groups such as the "Kirche von unten" - but not from conservative Catholics?

Canon law states:

Can. 212 §1. Conscious of their own responsibility, the Christian faithful are bound to follow with Christian obedience those things which the sacred pastors, inasmuch as they represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or establish as rulers of the Church.

§3. According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.

Source: CIC 1983

Comment:

According to Canon Law then, the Catholic laity not only have the right, but the duty to point out grievances and to communicate them upwards until they have reached a place that can resolve the problem. One way to achieve for a group of people is to write and sign a petition.

The goal of the petition is not to put pressure on the Holy Father - which is in any case impossible from within the Church due to its structure, even if one would want that - but to point out the violation of the *motu proprio* "Summorum Pontificum" with a (common) and strong enough voice by the practicing faithful such that he will take notice of it.

The second and very important point in this respect is the fact that this petition does not seek to change either church dogma or law, but to urge the leadership to observe and follow existing church law.

The petition and its accompanying speaks of "manipulation of data": What data is involved?

Please read: http://www.ecclesiaei.nl/docs/20130919_presentazione_dati_visita_apostolica+english-summary.html number 05 in list of documents at: http://www.ecclesiaei.nl/dossier_ffi.html

The presentation of the data on page 1 of this document, by displaying not absolute percentages, but rather relative percentages, creates the impression that 70% of respondents had voted for resolving the internal problems by an extraordinary General Chapter or by the appointment of a Commissioner - in reality there were only 6% of the professed Franciscan brothers who voted for it (see below).

Why not also present the absolute numbers? Were they too low?

Why is only a combination of response shown - and why were the responses to the very different approaches not shown separately - on the one hand an extraordinary General Chapter and on the other an external commissioner? Was the ratio too much in favour of an exceptional General Chapter?

The Apostolic Visitor did not visit the individual FFI branches but only sent out a questionnaire to all Franciscans with solemn vows. This included an unannounced deadline for the completion and return, i.e. only the opinion of an unknown proportion of the *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate* was evaluated.

Of this portion, less than 45% voted for the appointment of a commissioner. However even by combining the two answers, the significance of this questionnaire result remains low.

To illustrate let's propose the analogy from the medical education: a patient is sick (has trouble breathing, cough) and is examined by several doctors who write down their diagnoses, and one of them present them in a lecture. The following treatment options are available:

- a) observe and wait; b) prescribe an inhaler and vitamin; c) prescribe antibiotics
- d) operate (eg. remove part of the lung).

The professor has the 350 students vote in writing, but terminates the vote before all students have dropped their ballot into the box. After the count, he shares the result: The patient will undergo an operation as 74% of the votes called for the alternative "operation".

As an explanation of the votes, the professor announces:

- a) 39% advised to wait and see
- b) 26% of the remaining students voted for inhalation + vitamin supplements,
- c) + d) the other 74% of the remaining students voted for an antibiotic or surgery.- Accordingly the decision of the 350 students was very clear: 74% voted for the operation.

After lunch, the professor tells a colleague of this lecture and the vote. The colleague is not satisfied with the above percentages and wants to know how many students had voted directly for the Alternative "surgery". Answer: 21 - "21 of 350: But that is only 6% - and not 74%" he exclaims. - "It depends on how one evaluates the results" answers the professor with a smile.

For more on this topic, please read the documents at:

<http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-not-so-immaculate-curia-they-dont.html> and <http://ecclesiadei.nl/docs/chronology-of-events-around-the-visitation.pdf>

What are the *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate* actually accused of?

In addition to the written complaints of five dissidents (who claimed to speak for a total of 21 Franciscan brothers) because of an alleged overemphasis of the old rite within the FI-religious community there are two areas in which Commissioner Volpi raised allegations:

1) Financial irregularities: The family of FFI-founder Father Manelli, appropriated money and property. After a court case with the Manelli family, Commissioner Volpi, had to deny the accusation of financial enrichment and publish all relevant correspondence in early February on the FFI website:

<http://www.immacolata.com/index.php/it/35-apostolato/ffi-news/253-precisazione-del-commissario-apostolico>

2) The *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate* had drifted in a "crypto-lefebvrian traditionalist" direction. Commissioner Volpi never explains in concrete term what that means nor does he present evidence or examples.

Among other things, the petition asks the question why the *Franciscans of the Immaculate* are treated more harshly than any other community in the past 50 years. Is this question appropriate or is it an internal matter for the community?

An example:

When Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope in 2005, he personally instituted proceeding against Marcial Maciel Degollado, the founder of the Legionaries of Christ (LC) and ordered an Apo-

stolic Visitation of 2009. Benedict XVI. spoke about Maciel's "very serious and objectively immoral behavior that is supported by indisputable testimony" and which expressed itself "sometimes in the form of real crimes" and revealed "an unscrupulous life without true religious sentiment". But Benedict XVI. did not proceed against the Order, which had distinguished itself in many ways. Because of the trepidation of the Order around the Founder and the Superior General and , he placed the order in 2010 under provisional administration.

For this purpose he appointed in Velasio de Paolis a cardinal, who, in a fatherly way, led the Order to a new start. A path, which was successfully completed in early 2014.

As Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio was elected pope in 2013, he agreed to the resolute action by the the Congregation for Religious against the Franciscans of the Immaculate (FFI).

Neither the Order nor its founder, Father Stefano Manelli were guilty in any way. They had neither committed a shameful crime, as Marcial Maciel, nor were spreading heresies, caused confusion or infringed in any other way church doctrine and order. Not a Cardinal as a fatherly friend of the Order, but a simple Capuchin was used by the religious congregation as a Commissioner.

See: <http://www.katholisches.info/2013/12/07/eingriff-gegen-franziskaner-der-immakulata-weil-krypto-lefebvrrianisch-jedenfalls-traditionalistisch/>

Of course, details should not be released - but some clues as to WHY the *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate* are prohibited from using the extraordinary form of the Roman rite, why many pastors were separated from their sheep - which offenses are expected to be "cured" by these measures?

Are there any similar cases?

Is it useful and effective when the faithful write to Rome?

As already mentioned several times, it is not only the *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate*, but also the laity whom they serve who are affected by the measures of Commissioner Volpi.

The situation is similar to an incident in 1999 within the *Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP)*. 16 dissidents had addressed a complaint to Rome and accused the core of the FSSP of a "separatist spirit" and serious reservations "over the visible church, her current teaching and hierarchy".

In 1999 the FSSP consisted of about 80 priests, with a total (including deacons and seminarians) of about 240 members. 16 of 80 correspond to 20% of incardinated priests, but only about 7% of total FSSP members.

With their action these 16 FSSP priests wanted to force the members of the Fraternity of St. Peter to celebrate regularly using the books of 1970 and obtain permission which would allow FSSP members to reshape the liturgy in the ancient rite according to their personal, "pastoral" preferences.

Both requests were rejected - not only, but also because of the letters sent to the Commission "Ecclesia Dei" by the executives of some traditional national organizations, the Executive Board of the International Una Voce Federation as well as many individuals.

The case of the *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate* is analogous: Only 5 dissidents turned to Rome with a complaint. Once again the Vatican party sided with the small group, stripped the regular leadership of the order of all the powers and appointed Father Volpi as a Commissioner. He filled the order's internal management positions with new people, including the five dissidents.

Back then, lay people were also told that it was purely an FSSP internal problem; to write letters of protest was neither appropriate nor sensible ...

Then, as now, this position is false. Because if the priests are no longer allowed to celebrate in the old rite, the faithful no longer have the opportunity to celebrate mass in the old rite nor to receive the other sacraments in the old rite. Thus, such a prohibition affects both the priests AND the laity.

How can the faithful participate in this initiative?

The petition is available in 7 languages.

At: http://www.ecclesiadei.nl/dossier_ffi.html

links to the various language forms are available. Anyone can print them and send the complete forms to the addresses given.

In addition, all readers are encouraged to pray for the adequate implementation of the *Motu proprio Summorum Pontificum* as well as for the *Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate* and for Pope Francis.

When does the collection of signatures end?

Signed petition forms can be sent to the specified addresses until the end of March 2014.

Where and how can I get further information?

- Concerning the ban of the extraordinary form for the Franciscans of the Immaculate: http://www.ecclesiadei.nl/dossier_ffi.html (*Collection of documents*)
- Concerning the ban of the extraordinary form for the first Saturdays of each month in Santa Maria Maggiore (Rom):
<http://www.katholisches.info/2014/01/07/santa-maria-maggiore-messe-im-alten-ritus-abgeschafft-appell-der-glaebigen-an-den-papst/>
<http://www.katholisches.info/2014/01/14/gebetsvigil-in-papstbasilika-santa-maria-maggiore-fuer-alte-messe/>
- Concerning the ban of the extraordinary masses at *Fisher More College* in Texas:
<http://www.katholisches.info/2014/03/die-neuen-bischoefe-von-papst-franziskus-zynisches-verbot-der-alten-messe-aus-sorge-um-das-seelenheil/>
<http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2014/03/quest-op-ed-fisher-more-college-and.html>
<http://www.katholisches.info/2014/03/18/zur-kontroverse-rund-um-fisher-more-college/>

