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Vatican Official: Pope Has Plans for Latin Mass

Says Benedict XVI Wants to Offer This "Treasure" to All

APARECIDA, Brazil, MAY 21, 2007 (Zenit.org).- The president of the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei" has confirmed that Benedict XVI hopes to increase the availability of the Latin Mass.

Cardinal Darío Castrillón Hoyos said this Wednesday when he addressed the 5th General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean, meeting in Brazil through the end of May.

The Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei" was formed by Pope John Paul II in 1988 following the schismatic gesture of the illegal episcopal ordinations carried out by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.

The cardinal first explained that the commission was established when "a notable group of priests, religious and faithful who had shown their discontent with the conciliar liturgical reform and had congregated around the leadership of the French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, separated themselves from him because they were not in agreement with the schismatic act of the ordination of bishops without due pontifical mandate."

"Today," Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos continued, "the commission is not limited to the service of those faithful who wished to stay in full communion on that occasion, nor to the efforts aiming to end the painful schismatic situation and achieve the return to full communion of these brothers from the Society of St. Pius X."

He said: "It is the Holy Father's wish that this dicastery additionally offers its services to satisfy the just aspirations of those who, due to a particular sensitivity -- without being linked to either of the two groups I've mentioned -- desire to keep alive the former Latin liturgy in the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments."

Ending schism

However, the cardinal confirmed that "without a doubt, the most important task, which concerns the entire Church, is looking to put an end to the schismatic act and reconstruct, without ambiguousness, full communion."

Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos recalled that before being elected Pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger served on the commission.

"[The Holy Father] wishes that the commission become an organization of the Holy See with the particular and distinct aim of conserving and maintaining the value of the traditional Latin liturgy," Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos said. "But it should be clearly affirmed that this does not mean a going back, a return to the times before the reform of 1970.

"Instead, it means a generous offer of the Vicar of Christ, who, as an expression of his pastoral will, wants to put the treasures of the Latin liturgy that nourished the spiritual life of so many generation of faithful Catholics for so many centuries at the disposal of the entire Church.

"The recovery of this richness is united to the not-less-precious current liturgy of the Church."

Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos explained that the Pope intends to extend to the entire Church the possibility of celebrating Mass and the sacraments according to the liturgical books promulgated by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

He thus seemed to confirm rumors from earlier in the year that Benedict XVI intended to make the Latin Mass more available.

Coexistence

The 77-year-old cardinal mentioned the "good experiences had by communities of religious and apostolic life" that celebrate "this liturgy in peace and serenity." And he recalled that in Brazil, the Diocese of Campos, formerly followers of Lefebvre "and now, after five years, showing good fruits" after their return to full communion.

"The project of the Holy Father has already been partially tested in de Campos where the peaceful cohabitation of the two forms of the only Roman rite in the Church is a beautiful reality," he said. "We have the hopes that this model will produce good fruits, also in other places in the Church where faithful Catholics with distinct liturgical sensitivities live together."

Cardinal Hoyos said that "Ecclesia Dei" oversees some 300 priests and 200 seminarians as well as hundreds of thousands of faithful. He said the Society of St. Pius X has four bishops, ordained by Archbishop Lefebvre, 500 priests and about 600,000 faithful.

He asked "that we pray to the Lord so that the Holy Father's project can soon become a reality for the unity of the Church."