

APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION

of

PAUL VI

Supreme Pontiff

The Sacred Congregation

of Rites

divided into two Congregation,

one for Divine Worship, the other for the

Causes of Saints

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Servant of the servants

of God

In perpetual memory

Since its establishment by Our Predecessor of happy memory, Sixtus V in the year 1588,¹ the Sacred Congregation of Rites has had a twofold function. First: it controlled and regulated the sacred rites of the Latin Church. Second: it was vested with responsibility for all matters concerning the canonization of Saints throughout the whole Church. It is believed that this second function was assigned to the Sacred Congregation Rites precisely because the purpose of canonization is that the Servants of God, enrolled in the calendar of the Saints, should be honoured with public cult by the universal Church.

¹ Cfr. Const. Apost. in the form of a Bull, *Immensa aeterni Dei*: in the *Bullarium Romanum*, VIII, Turin, ed. p. 989.

So prudently has the Sacred Congregation of Rites discharged this twofold office during the course of four centuries that it has won for itself outstanding acclaim. As regards the sacred liturgy, let it suffice to mention that—after St. Pius had published the reformed Roman Breviary and Missal²—the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in obedience to the decrees of the sacred Council of Trent,³ revised and published the other liturgical books. The Congregation likewise condensed and restored to their original purity the liturgical formulas and rites which had been corrupted in part during the so-called middle ages; and it cut down their excessive variety and brought about a certain liturgical uniformity which was firmly preserved intact thereafter.⁴

In our own time the same Congregation, acting under the instructions of Our Predecessor, St. Pius X, opened the way to a general reform of the Liturgy with the revision of the Breviary,⁵ which was named after that same Holy Pontiff. Later this was followed, at the behest of Our Predecessor of venerable memory, Pius XII, by the reformed Easter Vigil in 1951,⁶ and by the new Order of Holy Week in 1955.⁷ From these and many other initiatives there has been derived, to a certain extent, the Constitution approved by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.⁸

Of no less importance is the work of the said Congregation in preparing and expediting the Causes of Saints. This is clearly evident from the list of Saints who, from the year 1588 to the present day, have been enrolled in the calendar of the Saints after a detailed examination of their martyrdom or of the heroic degree of their virtues.

² Cfr. Const. Apost. *Quo primum*. 13th July, 1570.

³ Cfr. *Canones et Decreta Sacrosancti Oecumenici et Generalis Concilii Tridentini*. Sessiones XXII., XXIV, XXV.

⁴ The five volumes of *Authentic Decrees*, published by the Sacred Council of the Liturgy are an eloquent testimony to the work which it has accomplished.

⁵ Cfr. Const. Apost. *Divine afflatu*, 1st Nov. 1911; A.A.S., 3, 1911, pp. 633-638.

⁶ Cfr. S. Congr. Rituum, Decr. *Dominicae Resurrectionis*: A.A.S., 43, 1951, pp. 128 ss.

⁷ Cfr. S. Congr. Rituum, Decr. *Maxima Redemptionis nostrae mysteria*: A.A.S., 47, 1955, pp. 838 ss.

⁸ Cfr. Const. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: A.A.S., 56, 1964, pp. 97-138.

Nowadays, however, both the general reform of the liturgy decreed by the Second Vatican Council, and the revision of the laws governing the Causes of Saints, in line with the mentality of the present age, appear to demand new studies, attention and care in the treatment of these matters.

Furthermore, careful consideration of the matter clearly reveals that the liturgy is quite distinct from the Causes of Saints. Each requires different study and training, together with a different method of approach. On this account We Ourselves, in the section of the Apostolic Constitution, *Regimini Apostolicae*⁹ dealing with the Sacred Congregation of Rites, ordered that it be divided into two parts or Sections, one to deal with Divine Worship, the other with the Causes of Saints.

Now, however, after further careful reflection, and having obtained the advice of experts, We have decided to separate the two Sections in such wise as to render each of them completely independent.

Wherefore, by Our present Apostolic Constitution, the existing Sacred Congregation of Rites, is replaced by two new Congregations, the first to be known as the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, and the other, the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

The Congregation for Divine Worship, besides its own proper . . . duties shortly to be defined, will take over the functions of the Council for the implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The latter will thus cease to be an independent body, but it will continue as a special commission in the said Congregation until it has completed the reform of the liturgical books.

We, therefore, abrogate the provisions of the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae*,¹⁰ and decree the following.

Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship

1. This Sacred Congregation, presided over by a Cardinal Prefect, assisted by a Secretary and Undersecretary, has competence in all matters directly and proximately concerning the Roman Rite and the other

⁹ Cfr. nn. 58-64: A.A.S., 59, 1967, pp. 904-908.

¹⁰ Cfr. *ibid.*

Latin Rites, without prejudice to the rights of other Departments in matters respecting the doctrine of the faith or ecclesiastical discipline, or in cases requiring judicial process.

2. This Sacred Congregation is divided into three offices:

§ 1. The *first office* has for its scope the liturgical worship of God, both ritual and pastoral; the revision and compilation of liturgical texts; the approval of particular calendars, and the proper of Masses and Offices, for dioceses and Religious Orders; the granting of dispensations in the aforesaid matters when deemed opportune; the correct and lawful interpretation of norms and rubrics in liturgical books; the cult of sacred relics, the approval of heavenly patrons, and the granting of the title of minor basilica.

§ 2. The *second office* maintains relations with the Episcopal Conferences, whose liturgical Acts, as provided for in art. 36 § 3 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,¹¹ it examines, approves or confirms; it weighs carefully adaptations proposed by Episcopal Conferences in accordance with art. 40 of the said Constitution,¹² while bearing in mind the general liturgical laws, and the needs, traditions and genius of individual peoples. Finally, it treats of extraliturgical worship, that is to say, the devotional practices of the Christian people, without prejudice, however, to the competence of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

§ 3. The *third office* concerns itself with the so-called liturgical Commissions, the Institutes of liturgical apostolate, music, chant and sacred art. It collects information and publications about liturgical life of the Church to be used for the compilation of statistics. It considers how the means of social communication may be used for the promotion of divine worship. Finally, it lends its support to pastoral initiatives, international Associations and congresses of the liturgical apostolate.

3. This Sacred Congregation is assisted both by a group of Consultants comprising liturgical experts chosen by the Supreme Pontiff

¹¹ Cfr. Concil. Vat. II, Const. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: A.A.S., 56, 1964, p. 109 s.

¹² Cfr. *ibid.* n. 40: l. c., 111.

from the whole world, as well as by Commissions established to study questions of greater difficulty.¹³

4. To complete the work of liturgical reform this Sacred Congregation can, for the time being, avail itself of the services of the members and experts of the Council for the implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in the manner set out as follows:

§ 1) Cardinals who were Members of the Council, become *ipso facto* Members of the Congregation for Divine Worship. To these, other Cardinals may be added, if deemed opportune.

§ 2) Diocesan Bishops who should be assigned to this Congregation in accordance with the terms of the Apostolic Letter, *Pro comperto sane*,¹⁴ shall, on this occasion, be elected by those who are already Members of the Council, and from among their own members.

§ 3) Meetings, at which final decisions are to be taken on the publication of liturgical books, will be attended both by the members of the special Commission which replaces the former Council now dissolved, and also by the Members of this Sacred Congregation.

The Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints

5. The Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, presided over by a Cardinal, with the assistance of a Secretary and an Undersecretary, is competent in all matters which in any way pertain to the Beatification of Servants of God, or to the canonization of the Blessed, or to the preservation of Relics.¹⁵

6. The Sacred Congregation deals with Causes by judicial process, and comprises three Offices, as follows: first, the judicial Office headed by the Secretary, assisted by the Undersecretary, and a suitable number of officials; the second Office presided over by the Promoter General of the Faith, assisted by the Sub-promoter General of the Faith and

¹³ Cfr. Const. Apost. *Regimini Ecclesiae*, n. 61 § 3: A.A.S., 59, 1967, p. 905.

¹⁴ Cfr. A.A.S., 59, 1967, pp. 881-884.

¹⁵ Cfr. can. 253 § 3; and Const. Apost. *Regimini Ecclesiae*, n. 59: A.A.S., 59, 1967, p. 904.

a sufficient number of Officials; the third is the Historico-Hagiographical Office directed by the Relator General.

7. The *first office* has as its functions:

§ 1) It examines requests submitted for the introduction of Causes or for enquiry into alleged miracles; it reviews the documentation presented in support of such requests; it decides whether the Cause should be introduced, or whether a specific miracle should be investigated. Besides, it lays down norms for the procedure to be followed; it judges the validity of these procedures, either directly or through the local Bishop, as the case may require, it completes or supplies the acts necessary for the investigation and it rules on objections raised.¹⁶

In these matters it proceeds as follows:

10) A doubt as to whether there exists an obstacle to the introduction of a cause is proposed in a particular Congress. After an examination of the relative statement of the position—made up of the documents sent by the Bishop, the opinions submitted by the Promoter General of the Faith—the issue is resolved by the votes of the Secretary, the Undersecretary, the Promoter General of the Faith, The Relator General, the Sub-promoter General of the Faith, and three Consultors other than those who had submitted their opinions in writing on the given case. A final report of this examination is then compiled and signed by all.¹⁷

20) Sentence is given by a particular Congregation, comprising the Cardinal Prefect, the Cardinal *Ponens*, and at least three other Cardinals. To these are submitted, together with the previous statement of the position, the votes expressed in the particular Congress and the final report. This particular Congregation is attended by the Secretary.¹⁸

30) Judgment on the validity of the procedures is given in the

¹⁶ Cfr. Const. Apost. *Regimini Ecclesiae*, no. 62, § 2, 10: l.c., p. 906; cfr. Litt. Apost. *Sanctitas clarior*, given motu proprio, 19th March, 1969, n. 7: A.A.S., 61, 1969, p. 152.

¹⁷ Cfr. Const. Apost. *Regimini Ecclesiae*, n. 62 § 2, 10: l.c., p. 906.

¹⁸ Cfr. *ibid.*

ordinary Congress of the Congregation, after having heard the opinion of the Promoter General of the Faith.

4o) The same ordinary Congress is competent to rule on objections which may arise.¹⁹

§ 2) It treats of the writings of Servants of God, of martyrdom, of heroic virtues, of the confirmation of ancient cult and of the attribution to Saints of the title of Doctor. In these matters it proceeds as follows:

1o) The writings are examined in the ordinary Congress, after the vote given by two theologian censors. Should special difficulties arise, the question is referred to the plenary Congregation.

2o) The discussion of martyrdom or of heroic virtues — based on a statement of the position comprising the Summary, the information supplied by the Advocate, the opinions of three Consultors, the animadversions of the Promoter General of the Faith, and the Advocate's reply — is held in a particular Congress which is attended by the same persons mentioned above in no. 7 § 1, 1o. They give their votes as though acting as judges, thereby deciding the issue²⁰ A final report of the discussion is drawn up, and signed by all the voters.²¹

3o) Sentence is pronounced in the plenary Congregation of the Cardinals. They are supplied, not only with the previous statement of the the position, but also with the votes expressed in the particular Congress, and the final report. The Congregation is attended by the Secretary.²²

4o) For the discussion of the question of the confirmation of ancient cult or the attribution to a Saint of the title of Doctor, a statement of the position is drawn up. This is made up of the Summary, the information supplied by the Advocate, the opinions of three Consultors and the exposition or declaration of the Promoter General of the Faith. The matter is first discussed in the particular Congress, and

¹⁹ Cfr. *ibid.*

²⁰ Cfr. *ibid.* n. 62, § 2, 2o; l.c.

²¹ Cfr. *ibid.*

²² Cfr. *ibid.*

then in the plenary Congregation of the Cardinals, as already indicated in this present paragraph, at nn. 2^o and 3^o.

§ 3) It examines in the following manner alleged miracles attributed to the intercession of a Servant of God:²³

1^o) Alleged miracles, on which two experts have expressed their medico-legal judgment, are examined by the consultative body of doctors, and their conclusions are accurately recorded in a report.

2^o) Thereafter, a statement of the position is drafted, made up of the Summary, the medico-legal judgments of the experts, the report of the consultative body of doctors, the information supplied by the Advocate, the opinions of three Consultors, the animadversins of the Promoter General of the Faith, and the reply of the Advocate. This statement of the position is first discussed in the particular Congress, and then in the plenary Congregation of the Cardinals, as set out in n. 7 § 2, and 30.²⁴

8. § 1) The sentences of the Cardinals dealt with in n. 7 § 1, 2^o; § 2, 3^o and 4^o; § 3, 2^o, are referred to the Supreme Pontiff in accordance with canons 2013 §§ 1, 2; 2107; 2133.²⁵

§ 2) If the Supreme Pontiff decides that the case may proceed further, the cause will continue its course.

§ 3) If, however, the Supreme Pontiff decides that the question is to be again submitted to the Congregation of Cardinals, a statement of the case is to be prepared, in which there are set out the difficulties not yet solved, the reply of the Advocate, and any new documents, if there be such.

§ 4) Finally, if the Supreme Pontiff decides that the Cause is to be consigned to the archives, it is not permitted to re-open it, except in the case where new and weighty documents come to light, and permission is granted by the Supreme Pontiff.

9. The second office is that of the Promoter General of the Faith.

²³ Cfr. *ibid.*, n. 62, § 2, 3^o; l.c., p. 907.

²⁴ Cfr. *ibid.*

²⁵ Cfr. *ibid.*, n. 62, § 3; l.c.

Its function is to uphold the law, to supply detailed expositions, to express votes, as laid down in each individual case.²⁶

10. The *Historico-Hagiographical Office*, dealing with historical or ancient Causes, is governed by special legislation issued by Our Predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, in his Apostolic Letter, *Gia da qualche tempo*, given motu proprio on February 6th, 1930.²⁷

11. This Sacred Congregation has its own Chancellery which is governed by its own statute.

12. Likewise the Congregation has at hand a list of Advocates and Procurators, endowed with the qualities and titles required by law,²⁸ and a college of medical specialists chosen on the grounds of knowledge and integrity.²⁹

13. The rites and solemnities traditionally followed in the Roman Curia are to be observed for the Beautification of Servants of God and the Canonization of the Blessed, after this has been decreed in Consistory.³¹

14. What We have decreed in Our present Constitution comes into force on the date of issue.

We will that what We have here ordered and decreed shall be firm and binding both now and the future, notwithstanding — as far as necessary — the Apostolic Constitutions and Ordinations issued by Our Predecessors, and other decrees requiring special mention and derogation.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, the 8th day of May 1969, the Sixth year of Our Pontificate.

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²⁶ Cfr. cann. 2079; 2080; 2106, 3, 4; 2109, l. 2; 2010, § 1, and Const. Apost. *Regimini Ecclesiae*, n. 62 § 5: l.c., p. 907.

²⁷ Cfr. A.A.S., 22, 1930, pp. 87-88; and Const. Apost. *Regimini Ecclesiae*, n. 63: A.A.S., 59, 1967, p. 8.

²⁸ Cfr. *ibid.*, n. 62, § 6: l.c., p. 907.

²⁹ Cfr. can. 2018.

³⁰ Cfr. Const. Apost. *Regimini Ecclesiae*, n. 62, § 7: l.c., p. 907.

³¹ Cfr. Can. 2111; and Const. Apost. *Regimini Ecclesiae*, n. 62, § 4: l.c. p. 907.