

Pope revives Latin mass

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Pope Benedict XVI has issued a decree allowing greater use of mass in Latin, signalling a bid to heal a decades-old split in the Roman Catholic Church.

Priests are to meet requests by the faithful to hold mass in the traditional Church language, which had widely been dropped after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

"In parishes where there is a stable group of faithful who adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition, the pastor should willingly accept their request to celebrate the mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962 ..," said the decree.

The decree was released "motu proprio", Latin for "of one's own accord", meaning the pope did not take counsel from others.

"The pastor, having attentively examined all aspects, may also grant permission to use the earlier ritual for the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick, if the good of souls would seem to require it," it added.

The virtual abandonment of the Tridentine mass after the Second Vatican Council in 1965 was one of the causes of a breakaway led by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1970.

The move was to allow the greater use of mass in local languages, one of a series of reforms made by the council in a bid to modernise the Church.

Traditionalists say the Tridentine mass, named after the town of Trento, now in northern Italy, is more spiritual and historically authentic than the modern version. But under the current rules a bishop had to give approval for its use.

Traditionalists want to celebrate the Tridentine mass according to a 16th century ritual with the priest facing away from the congregation.

-AFP

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Pope Benedict XVI has issued a decree allowing the use of Latin in the Catholic mass. (File photo) (AFP: Filippo Monteforte)