

# Russia and the Leonine Prayers

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## The Prayers after Low Mass and recent events in Russia

AFTER MY ORDINATION to the priesthood in 1977, I followed the lead of other traditional priests in the U.S., and began announcing that the Leonine Prayers — the three Hail Marys, the *Salve Regina* and the St. Michael prayer recited after Low Mass — were recited “for the conversion of Russia.”

Having heard this intention announced for the umpteenth time, a faithful traditional Catholic in a church I serve recently inquired: “Why do we always have to pray for the conversion of Russia? Why can’t we pray for America instead?”

It seemed like a fair question. I therefore set out to document what was surely the correct answer: that the Church, responding to Our Lady’s 13 July 1917 request at Fatima, had decreed that the object of these prayers was to obtain Russia’s conversion to the Catholic Faith. End of story — or so I thought.

I consulted about 20 standard commentaries on the Mass and encountered something surprising: not *one* of them stated that the Leonine Prayers were connected with the Fatima Message. And not one of them said that the object of the prayers was to bring about Russia’s conversion to Catholicism.

Having drawn a blank, I turned to a multi-volume work containing the texts of all the laws the Holy See has promulgated since 1917.<sup>1</sup> The work contained a number of official decrees on the Leonine Prayers — but none of the decrees tied the prayers to the Fatima Message. And again, none of them stated that the object of the prayers was to obtain Russia’s conversion to the Catholic faith.

Traditional Catholic priests, it thus appears, have unwittingly promoted a notion about these prayers which is false. Obviously this should be corrected, since we do, after all, profess adherence to the Church’s traditions and laws.

The history of the Leonine Prayers is also more than a little intriguing, tied as it is to various crises the Church has faced over the past century and a half. Recent developments in Russia, moreover, raise certain legal and practical questions regarding the use of the prayers.

Here we will consider the following issues:

- (1) The origins of the Leonine Prayers.
- (2) The object (or intention) Pope Pius XI decreed for them.
- (3) Two dubious stories which have been circulated about the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel.
- (4) Past legislation on the Leonine Prayers, and whether, in light of recent events in Russia, the law prescribing their recitation has accordingly ceased.

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1. Xaverius Ochoa ed., *Leges Ecclesiae post Codicem Juris Canonici*, (Rome: Polyglot 1969).

(5) Whether it would thus now be permissible to recite in place of the Leonine Prayers other prayers for other intentions.

## I. Origins of the Prayers

From the onset of the Napoleonic wars in the late 18th century, the position of the popes as temporal rulers of the Papal States (the civil territories they governed in central Italy) became increasingly more precarious.

Though the Congress of Vienna (1815) had restored the pope's sovereignty over his temporal domains, Masonry and other secret societies, such as the Carbonari, conspired to stir up revolts against him. In 1830 and 1832 rebellions broke out in the Papal States, and in 1848 the revolutionaries succeeded in driving Pope Pius IX from Rome.

In 1850 Napoleon III sent his army into Italy, restored Pius to his temporal throne and garrisoned Rome with imperial troops — an act prompted not so much by the French Emperor's devotion to the Holy See as by his desire to undermine Austrian influence in Italy. Meanwhile, the adepts of the secret societies, supported by aid from abroad, took over the governments of the city-states which bordered the papal domains.<sup>2</sup>

Surrounded by hostile states, undermined by secret societies, and supported by a half-hearted ally, Pius IX feared that the triumph of the revolutionaries was imminent.

Early in 1859, the Pontiff ordered that special public prayers — three Hail Marys, the *Salve Regina*, a versicle and a Collect — be recited after Mass in all churches within the Papal States. The prayers were not obligatory in other countries. But Pius urged Catholics everywhere to pray for the defeat of the enemies of his temporal sovereignty,<sup>3</sup> and granted indulgences to all who would recite the prayers for his intentions.<sup>4</sup>

In 1870 Rome fell to the revolutionaries and the army of the royal House of Savoy. Pius IX shut himself up in the Vatican, excommunicated those who had seized the papal territories and refused to recognize the legitimacy of the government the usurpers had set up. Thus began the "Roman Question" — the issue of what accommodation, if any, could be reached between the legitimate temporal claims of the Supreme Pontiff and the government of the new Italian state which exercised *de facto* control over the pope's states. The question would weigh heavily on the hearts of popes for nearly sixty years.

In the 1880s, anti-clerical mobs, egged on by the Masonic lodges, repeatedly demonstrated against Pope Leo XIII, and even attempted to throw the remains of Pius IX into the Tiber. The government enacted a series of laws against the Catholic clergy, and by the end of the decade would confiscate the goods of Catholic charitable associations.

On 6 January 1884, therefore, Leo XIII decreed that the prayers Pius IX had prescribed for churches in the Papal States be recited after Low Mass in churches throughout the world, "so that the Christian people would implore God with common

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2. For a concise and excellent account of the history of the Papal States, see E. Jarry, "Les États Pontificaux," *Tu es Petrus: Encyclopédie Populaire sur la Papauté*, ed. by G. Jacquemet, (Paris: Bloud 1934), 551–617. See also Gustav Schnürer, "States of the Church," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. by Charles G. Habermann et al., (New York: Encyclopedia Press 1912), 14:257–268.

3. Encyclical *Qui Nuper*, 18 June 1859.

4. Encyclical *Cum Sancta Mater Ecclesia*, 27 April 1859.

prayer for that very thing which benefits the whole Christian commonwealth.”<sup>5</sup>

The Collect which Pope Leo first prescribed is different from the version we are accustomed to. Here is the 1884 version, with the variants noted in *italics*:

O God, our refuge and our strength,  
*hearken to the devout prayers of Thy Church, and*  
through the intercession of the glorious and immaculate Virgin  
Mary, Mother of God,  
of blessed Joseph, of Thy blessed apostles Peter and Paul,  
and of all the saints,  
*grant that what we humbly seek in our present needs,*  
*we may readily obtain.*<sup>6</sup>

Parts of the prayer will sound familiar. The text is an expanded version of the oration for the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost.

In 1886 the text of the Collect was changed to the following:

O God, our refuge and our strength,  
look down with mercy on Thy people who cry to Thee,  
and through the intercession of the glorious and immaculate  
Virgin Mary, Mother of God,  
of blessed Joseph, of Thy blessed apostles Peter and Paul,  
and of all the saints,  
in mercy and goodness hear the prayers we pour forth to Thee  
for the conversion of sinners  
and for the freedom and exaltation of Holy Mother Church.

While two other small changes were later made in the Latin text, this version of the Collect is the one we all know so well.

At the same time, the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel was added. The opening words of the invocation are similar to the Alleluia verse for St. Michael’s feasts on May 8 and September 29.

The 1886 changes, by the way, present a curious legal anomaly. Before a liturgical practice can be made legally binding for the whole Church, the decree prescribing it must be promulgated in an official publication. There is no decree, however, in either the 1886 acts of the Holy See,<sup>7</sup> or in the six-volume collection of the authentic decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites which authorizes the 1886 changes. (Indeed, I can find no decree for these changes anywhere.) The explanation, I suspect, is simply that a curial official forgot to have it registered.

In 1904, in any case, St. Pius X allowed priests to add the threefold invocation “Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us” after the prayer to St. Michael. He did not make the practice obligatory, but it was generally adopted by priests throughout the world.

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5. S.R.C. Decree *Iam Inde ab Anno*, 6 January 1884, in *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 16 (1884), 249–250. “*Iamvero gravibus adhuc insidentibus malis nec satis remota suspicione graviorum, cum Ecclesia catholica singulari Dei praesideo tantopere indigeat, Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Leo Papa XIII opportunum iudicavit, eas ipsas preces nonnullis partibus immutatas toto orbe persolvi, ut quod christianae reipublicae in commune expedit, id communi prece populus christianus a Deo condendat, auctoque supplicantium numero divinae beneficia misericordiae facilius assequatur.*”

6. *Ibid.*, 250. “*...adesto piis Ecclesiae tuae precibus, et praesta; ut ... quod in praesentibus necessitatibus humiliter petimus, efficaciter consequamur.*”

7. *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 18 (1886).

8. *Decreta Authentica Congregationis Sacrorum Rituum*, (Rome: Polyglot Press 1898).

## II. A New Intention

During the pontificates of Leo XIII, St. Pius X and Benedict XV, little progress was made toward resolving the Roman Question, due to the complex and volatile political situation in Italy. The negotiating process finally began to gain momentum after the election of Pius XI in 1922.

On 12 February 1929 the Vatican announced that the Holy See and Italy had signed a treaty which settled the Roman Question, regulated relations between the Church and the Italian state, and stipulated how the Holy See would be remunerated for the territory it had lost. The accord was ratified at the Lateran Palace on 9 June 1929,<sup>9</sup> and was followed by a cordial exchange of telegrams between the Pope and the King of Italy.

In Article 26 of the Lateran Treaty, the Holy See declared “the Roman question definitely and irrevocably settled and therefore eliminated.”<sup>10</sup> The purpose for which the Leonine Prayers had been instituted was therefore achieved.

The Supreme Pontiff, however, had another important intention that he wished to recommend to the prayers of the faithful. The Communist government in Russia had begun a systematic persecution of Catholics. Pius XI asked Catholics in Russia and throughout the world to observe a day of prayer to implore St. Joseph for his aid. On the day appointed, even the eastern schismatics honored the Pope’s request.

In a 1930 address to the College of Cardinals, Pius XI discussed both the Lateran Treaty and Russia. He spoke of the day of prayer for the Church in Russia, expressing his hope that the prayers which had been offered for those suffering would be more fruitful in the future.

The Pontiff then noted sadly that “not so long ago the enemies of God and religion throughout the aforementioned regions kindled a very fierce persecution of the Church.” He immediately added:

Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, is therefore to be implored to permit tranquillity and freedom to profess the faith to be restored to the afflicted people of Russia. And, that all may be able to make this prayer with very little trouble and difficulty, We desire that those same prayers which Our Predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII, ordered priests to recite with the people after Mass, shall be said for this intention, that is, for Russia. Bishops and the clergy, both secular and religious, should be most zealous in giving notice of this to their people or to all who assist at Mass, and should frequently remind them of it.<sup>11</sup>

The new intention which the Pontiff decreed for the Prayers after Low Mass, therefore, was that Christ “permit tranquillity

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9. For the text of the treaty, see Appendix A to Wilfred Parsons SJ, *The Pope and Italy*, (New York: America Press 1929).

10. In Parsons, 93.

11. Pius XI, Allocution *Indictam ante*, 30 June 1930, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 22 (1930), 301. “... fecundioram eam posthac evasuram sperare licet, etsi, non ita pridem, divini nominis cultusque, per eas quas diximus regiones, inimici ad Ecclesiae insectationem exarsere acrius. Christo igitur humani generis Redemptori instandum, ut afflictis Russiae filiis tranquillitatem fideique profitendae libertatem restitui sinat; atque ut instare omnes, modico sane negotio atque incommodo, queant volumus, quas fel. rec. decessor Noster Leo XIII sacerdotes cum populo post sacrum expletum preces recitare iussit, eadem ad hanc ipsam mentem, scilicet pro Russia, dicantur; id ipsum Episcopi atque uterque clerus populares suos, vel sacro adstantes quoslibet, studiosissime moneant, in eorumdemque memoriam saepenumero revocent.”

and freedom to profess the faith to be restored to the afflicted people of Russia.”

An action taken by the Pontifical Commission for Russia re-confirms that this is indeed the actual intention the Pontiff laid down. While the Pope’s decree applied only to priests of the Latin Rite, the Commission promptly prepared another decree for Catholic Uniates who employed the Byzantine Rite. The Commission ordered the insertion into the Byzantine Rite Mass of prayers for peace for the clergy, “the brethren,” and “all our people.”<sup>12</sup>

The “freedom of the Church in Russia” (as the liturgist Wuest succinctly put it),<sup>13</sup> therefore — and not the conversion of Russia to the Catholic faith in fulfillment of the Fatima promises — was the intention for which these prayers continued to be prescribed.

### III. Two Dubious Stories

The two foregoing sections outlined the origins of the Leonine Prayers as a unit. One of these prayers, the Invocation to St. Michael the Archangel, merits special attention, since some intriguing but rather dubious stories have come to be associated with it.

#### A. An Alleged Vision

A pamphlet dealing with a diabolical possession, written in the early 1930s and still popular in traditional Catholic circles, relates the following about the St. Michael prayer:

A rather peculiar circumstance induced Pope Leo XIII to compose this powerful prayer. After celebrating Mass one day he was in conference with the Cardinals. Suddenly he sank to the floor. A doctor was summoned and several came at once. There was no sign of any pulse-beating[;] the very life seemed to have ebbed away from the already weakened and aged body. Suddenly he recovered and said: “What a horrible picture I was permitted to see!” He saw what was going to happen in the future, the misleading powers and the ravings of the devils against the Church in all countries. But St. Michael had appeared in the nick of time and cast Satan and his cohorts back into the abyss of hell. Such was the occasion that caused Pope Leo XIII to have this prayer recited over the entire world at the end of Mass.<sup>14</sup>

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12. Pontificia Commissio pro Russia, Decree *Cum Summus*, 11 July 1930, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 22 (1930), 366. “Cum Summus Pontifex Pius div. Prov. Papa XI in Consistorio secreto diei 30 Junii c. a. praeceperit ut latini sacerdotes toto orbe terrarum preces, post sacrum expletum iussu Leonis Papae XIII recitandas, nunc pro Russia applicent, haec Pontificia Commissio sacerdotes non latinos sibi subditos hortatur, ut dum Sacram Liturgiam celebrant, eandem intentionem Deo commendent. Ideo: (1) in sic dicta Ectenia Magna, inter preces seu invocationes (...) post verba [*in Cyrillic*: For this city and every city] haec addantur: [*in Cyrillic*: and for all our brethren, let us pray to the Lord]. (2) In fine Liturgiae, in oratione sic dicta post ambonem (...), post verba [*in Cyrillic*: Give peace to all Thy people and Thy Church], haec addantur: [*in Cyrillic*: and to His Holiness, the first among bishops, Pius XI, Pope of Rome, and to all priests and to all of our brethren and to all of our people].”

13. Joseph Wuest CSsR, *Matters Liturgical: The Collectio Rerum Liturgicarum*, trans. by Thomas W. Mullaney CSsR and re-arranged and enlarged by William T. Barry CSsR, (New York: Pustet 1956), 440.

14. Carl Vogl, *Begone Satan: A Soul-Stirring Account of Diabolical Possession in Iowa*, trans. by Celestine Kapsner OSB, (St. Cloud MN: 1935), reprinted Rockford IL: TAN Books 1973, 24. The exorcism took place in Earling, Iowa in 1928, and was

The foregoing passage appears as a digression in an account of an exorcism. The author gives no date for the alleged vision.

An article written in 1933 repeats the same account, virtually word for word, adding: "And so, shortly after 1880, Leo decreed the general prayer to St. Michael."<sup>15</sup> Note the date given for the supposed vision: 1880 — four years before Leo XIII prescribed the Prayers after Low Mass *without* the St. Michael prayer, and six years before the prayer itself was actually prescribed.

A more recent variant of the story adds another detail: It quotes a dialogue between Our Lord and Satan that Pope Leo supposedly heard during the vision. One writer says the dialogue occurred at the foot of the altar, where Leo stopped after Mass. He gives no date.<sup>16</sup> Another writer tells the same story, but he gives a date: 13 October 1884.<sup>17</sup>

Still another writer tells essentially the same variant of the story as these two writers, but he has the event taking place when "the aged Pontiff was in a conference with the Cardinals."<sup>18</sup>

And the most recently circulated version of the story gives yet *another* date for the supposed vision: 25 September 1888.<sup>19</sup> Here again, remember that the St. Michael prayer in fact appeared two years *earlier* (in 1886) than this account would have it.<sup>20</sup>

Now while all six accounts cited connect the St. Michael prayer with a supposed vision, they differ as to when, where, and how the alleged vision took place. *None* of them, moreover, gives a source, even the two accounts from the 1930s. All six authors merely assert that the incident took place.

Taken together, these factors should be a cause for suspicion.

In 1934 a German writer, Father Bers, investigated the origins of the story of Leo's vision. "Wherever one looks," he observed, "one may find this claim — but nowhere a trace of proof."

Sources contemporaneous with the institution of the prayer were silent on the matter. Father Bers quoted a priest who visited with Leo XIII when the prayer was instituted in 1886:

"When the prayers which the priest says after Mass were being instituted, I happened to have a short audience with the Holy Father. During the conversation Leo XIII mentioned what he was going to prescribe and recited all the prayers from memory. This he did with such deep-seated conviction of the

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the basis for William Peter Blatty's novel *The Exorcist*, which was itself later made into a film.

15. Hg. Schnell, *Konnorsreuther Sonntagsblattes* (1933), no. 39, "Nachdem Leo XIII. eines Morgens die heilige Messe zelebriert hatte, begab er sich zu einer Besprechung mit den Kardinälen. Aber plötzlich sank er in Ohnmacht zusammen. Die herbeigeeilten Ärzte fanden keinen Grund zu dieser Ohnmacht, obwohl der Pulsschlag fast aufhörte. Plötzlich erwachte er wieder und war frisch wie zuvor. Er erzählte dann, er hätte ein furchtbares Bild gesehen. Er durfte die Verführungskünste und das Wüten der Teufel der kommenden Zeiten in allen Ländern sehen. In dieser Not erschien St. Michael, der Erzengel, und warf den Satan mit allen seinen Teufeln in den höllischen Abgrund zurück. Daraufhin ordnete Leo XIII. kurz nach 1880 das allgemeine Gebet zum heiligen Michael an." Quoted in Bers "Die Gebete nach der hl. Messe," *Theol-Prakt. Quartalschrift* 87 (1934), 161.

16. See "An Interesting Story," *The Maryfaithful* (Sept–Oct 1978), 19.

17. Arthur H. Durand, "Satan's Hundred Year War," *The Remnant* (15 January 1984), 9–10.

18. *Saint Michael and the Angels*, compiled from Approved Sources, (Rockford IL: TAN 1988), 84–85.

19. Gary Giuffré, "Exile of the Pope-Elect, Part VII: Warnings from Heaven Suppressed," *Sangre de Cristo Newsnotes* 69–70 (1991), 4.

20. See *Irish Ecclesiastical Review* 7 (1886), 1050.

power of the cosmic rulers of this darkness and of the be-  
guilement which they cause, that I was quite struck by it.”<sup>21</sup>

Commenting on this passage, Father Bers concluded:

Therefore it can be safely assumed that the Holy Father would have spoken of the vision if he had had it — or that at least the reporter would have mentioned it — since it would have been most relevant to the general purport of the statement. Consequently, the argument “from silence” seems to indicate clearly that the “vision” had been invented in later times for some reason, and was now feeding upon itself “like a perpetual sickness.”<sup>22</sup>

The problems with the story connecting the institution of the St. Michael prayer and a supposed vision of Leo XIII may be summarized as follows:

- Writings which promote the story give no references to sources.
- The various accounts contradict each other as to where the vision supposedly took place — after Mass at the foot of the altar, or in a conference with cardinals.
- The various accounts are inconsistent about the date of the vision.
- The dates the accounts give for the alleged vision (1880, 1884 and 1888) do not correspond with the date when the St. Michael prayer was actually instituted (1886).
- There appears to be no corroboration for the story in a contemporary account which one would expect to have mentioned the event, had it indeed taken place.

These considerations all tend to support the conclusion Father Bers arrived at in the 1930s: “that the ‘vision’ had been invented in later times for some reason,” and that the story was simply feeding upon itself.

## **B. Conspiracies and “Falsified” Texts**

Another story which has recently gained currency in traditionalist circles alleges that the St. Michael prayer is a “falsified” version of a longer prayer Leo XIII wrote. The longer prayer, we are told, warned that Judaeo-Masonic infiltrators would achieve their long-time goal of usurping the papal chair, so conspirators “censored” it twice after Leo’s death.<sup>23</sup>

This is the sort of juicy tale that certain types on the traditional Catholic scene really love to promote. It incorporates some familiar elements: private revelations, infiltrators, altered documents, a deceived pontiff, and prophecies of an evil intruder sitting on the Chair of Peter. For those who understand how the enemies of the Church operate, parts of the account may sound plausible at first. It also (as contemporary book reviewers like to say) makes for “a rollicking good read.”

Unfortunately, it’s the type of conspiracy story which exposes traditional Catholics to ridicule — because when you look closely at the facts adduced as “proof” for a conspiracy, you discover that the story’s originators managed to get just about everything wrong.

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21. *Kölner Pastoralblatt* (1891) 179, cited in Bers 162–163.

22. Bers, 162–163.

23. Thus Giuffré, 4–7.

To understand how, we turn first to the background of the prayer which — the story goes — is the “original” version of prayer to St. Michael recited after Low Mass.

On 25 September 1888 Pope Leo XIII approved a prayer to St. Michael the Archangel and granted an indulgence of 300 days for its recitation.<sup>24</sup> By this time, of course, the text of the prayer to St. Michael we know from the Prayers after Low Mass had already been in use for two years.<sup>25</sup> The text Leo approved in 1888 was, in fact, a completely *new* prayer.

Like the 1886 text, the 1888 prayer also invokes St. Michael’s aid in our warfare against the devil. But it is a very lengthy text, filled with line after line of vivid and striking imagery about the devil and his minions.

The prayer describes the devil as one who pours out on “men of depraved mind and corrupt heart, the spirit of lying, of impiety, of blasphemy, and the pestilent breath of impurity, and of every vice and iniquity.” Of these servants of Satan, the prayer adds:

These most crafty enemies have filled and inebriated with gall and bitterness the Church, the spouse of the Immaculate Lamb, and have laid impious hands on her most sacred possessions.

The prayer then expands upon this description with the following:

In the Holy Place itself, where has been set up the See of the most holy Peter and the Chair of Truth for the light of the world, they have raised the throne of the abominable impiety, with the iniquitous design that when the Pastor has been struck, the sheep may be scattered.<sup>26</sup>

These two passages, needless to say, are the ones which the censored text theorists claim “predict” the effects of Vatican II.

After its approval, the 1888 text was at some point included in *The Raccolta* (the Church’s official collection of indulgenced prayers).

In an audience two years later, moreover, Leo XIII approved a new and lengthy “Exorcism against Satan and Apostate Angels,” intended to be used by bishops and by priests who received special permission from their ordinaries.<sup>27</sup> This rite employed the 1888 prayer to St. Michael, including the two passages quoted above, as sort of a preface to a series of prayers of

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24. For the Italian text, see *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum: Preces et Pia Opera Omnium Christifidelium*, (Vatican: Polyglot Press 1950), 446. A search of the *Acta Sanctae Sedis* for 1888 failed to turn up the text of the *Motu proprio* mentioned in the *Enchiridion*. The 300 Days indulgence, therefore, was most likely granted *viva voce* by Pope Leo during the course of an audience and simply noted in a curial diary. The indulgence was increased to 500 days in 1934. It may be that Leo XIII had some sort of vision or locution in connection with the institution of *this* prayer to St. Michael, rather than the prayer to St. Michael recited after Low Mass.

25. For the Latin version, see *Irish Ecclesiastical Review* 7 (1886), 1050. “Sancte Michael Archangele, defende nos in praelio; contra nequitiam et insidias diaboli esto praesidium. — Imperet illi Deus, supplices deprecamur; tuque, Princeps militiae coelestis, Satanam aliosque spiritus malignos, qui ad perditionem animarum pervagantur in mundo, divina virtute in infernum detrude. Amen.”

26. These two texts are from a translation in Ambrose St. John, *The Raccolta or Collection of Indulgenced Prayers and Good Works*, 11th ed., (London: Burns Oates 1930), 407.

27. S.C. de Propaganda Fide, ex audientia Sanctissimi 18 May 1890, *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 23 (1890–91), 747. “...omnibus Reverendissimis Episcopis, nec non Sacerdotibus ab Ordinariis suis legitime ad id auctoritatem habentibus...”



exorcism.<sup>28</sup> The rite was then incorporated into the Appendix of *The Roman Ritual* (the book containing the official texts for sacramental rites and various blessings) among the more recent blessings (*Benedictiones Novissimae*).<sup>29</sup>

Later editions of *The Raccolta* omitted the conclusion of the 1888 prayer, beginning with the passage which spoke of the “throne of abominable impiety” raised where the See of Peter stood. Later editions of *The Roman Ritual* went even further: they omitted not only that passage, but also the one referring those who have laid impious hands on the Church’s most sacred possessions. Other passages were deleted as well, leaving only about one-third of the 1888 text. (See the Appendix below.)

Now, having misidentified an 1888 prayer as the antecedent to an 1886 prayer, the proponents of the censored text theory contend that unnamed infiltrators in the Vatican, fearing exposure of their plot to seize control of the See of Peter, stealthily deleted these passages from the *Raccolta* and the *Ritual* after Leo’s death.

All of it is nonsense.

First, the passages were not removed *after* Leo XIII’s death. They were already suppressed in 1902 — a year and a half *before* the pontiff died.

Second, this suppression was not, as we are told, an “ambiguous forgery” perpetrated “mysteriously” by some “unnamed Vatican official.” The Sacred Congregation of Rites, in consultation with the Congregation for Indulgences, revised the 1888 prayer and issued a new edition. This was printed in 1902, bearing the seal of the Congregation’s Prefect, Cardinal Ferrata, and the signature of the Congregation’s Secretary, Archbishop D. Panici.<sup>30</sup>

Third, the passages in question, please note, were not written in the *future* tense, as one would expect for a prophecy. They were written in the *past* tense, and thus referred to events which had already *taken place* in 1888.

To whom, then, do the passages refer? One has but to look to the situation the Pope faced in Italy in the late 1880s.

The “crafty enemies” of the Church who “laid impious hands on her most sacred possessions” were none other than the revolutionaries who (as we have seen above) invaded the Papal States and despoiled the Church’s properties.

And the “throne of abominable impiety” raised up in “the Holy Place itself, where there has been set up the See of the most holy Peter and the Chair of truth for the light of the world”? This was the throne of the King of Italy, set up in the Quirinale Palace.

Prior to its seizure 1870 by the excommunicated King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel, the Quirinale was the principal papal pal-

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28. S.C. de Propaganda Fide. “Exorcismus in satanam et angelos apostaticos iussu Leonis XIII P.M. editus,” *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 23 (1890–91), 743–4. “Ecclesiam, Agni immaculati sponsam, vaferrimi hostes repleverunt amaritudinibus, inebriarunt absinthio; ad omnia desiderabilia ejus impias miserunt manus. Ubi sedes beatissimi Petri et Cathedra veritatis ad lucem gentium constituta est, ibi thronum posuerunt abominationis impietatis suae; ut percusso Pastore, et gregem disperdere valeant.”

29. See *Rituale Romanum*, 6th ed. *post typicam*, (Ratisbon: Pustet 1898), 163\*ff.

30. See supplementary material bound into back of Pustet *Rituale Romanum*, 6th ed., (1898). “Concordat cum suo Originali, asservato penes Secretariam S. Congregationis Indulgentiis sacrisque Reliquiis praepositae. In fidem etc. Ex Secretaria Sacror. Rituum Congregationis, die 7. Januarii 1902. [l.s.] + D. Panici Archiep. Laodicen. S.R.C. Secretarius.”

ace in Rome. It was the customary location for papal conclaves. It was also one of the places where the pope had held court, sitting, of course, on a throne — the “Chair of truth for the light of the world.” When the 1888 prayer was composed, the throne of a usurping and excommunicated monarch then stood in this palace which had been stolen from the the pope.

Why, finally, were the texts altered toward the end of the Leo’s reign? Again, we look to historical situation.

By 1902 Leo XIII had been carrying on secret negotiations for years with the new King, Umberto. The King at one point appeared willing to return a substantial part of the city of Rome to the Pope’s control — a proposal that could have infuriated Parliament enough to call for the King’s deposition.<sup>31</sup> Had Umberto made such a risky concession, he would have expected (and received) official recognition of his status from the Pope. Further references to the King in the Church’s *Ritual* as occupying “a throne of abominable impiety,” needless to say, would have been at odds with papal acknowledgement of the King’s legitimacy.<sup>32</sup> The prayer also linked the establishment of the King’s throne with the devil, who pours out on “men of depraved mind and corrupt heart, the spirit of lying, of impiety, of blasphemy, and the pestilent breath of impurity, and of every vice and iniquity.” Since the King gave signs of wanting to make amends, it probably seemed appropriate to alter the prayer.

To sum up, then: The lengthy 1888 prayer to St. Michael was composed *after* the St. Michael prayer in the Leonine Prayers appeared. The passages in the 1888 text which are supposedly “prophetic” refer in fact to the Italian government’s seizure of Church property. Once the King of Italy appeared willing to arrive at a settlement of the Roman Question, the Vatican dropped from the prayer passages which he and the Italian government would have found offensive.

#### IV. Law and the Leonine Prayers

Apologists for the New Mass sometimes make the false claim that various popes introduced substantial “changes” into the Mass of St. Pius V.

When Leo XIII ordered the recitation of the Leonine Prayers, however, he did not legislate a “change” in the Mass. The prayers, unlike, say, the *Ite Missa Est* or the Last Gospel, are *not* part of the Ordinary of the Mass. They are always referred to as prayers recited *after* Mass. The rubrics in the front of the priest’s altar Missal remained unchanged, and do not mention the Leonine Prayers at all.

In this section we will consider subsequent legislation on the Leonine Prayers, and, in light of the recent achievement of the object for these prayers, discuss the consequent cessation of the law regarding them.

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31. See Jarry, 610.

32. This issue was finally settled with the Lateran Treaty. In Article 26 the Holy See recognized the Kingdom of Italy and its royal dynasty, the House of Savoy. Article 12 of the accompanying Concordat prescribed that on Sundays and Church holidays, the celebrant of High Mass in major churches would sing a prayer “for the prosperity of the King of Italy and the Italian State.” For texts, see Parsons, 93, 99.

## A. Subsequent Legislation

The original legislation prescribing the Leonine Prayers says they are to be recited after every *Low* Mass (i.e., Mass without singing),<sup>33</sup> while subsequent decrees speak rather of reciting the prayers after *Private* Mass. Over the years, a number of questions arose over the issue of when it would be lawful to omit the prayers. The Sacred Congregation of Rites issued a number of decrees on the subject. The meaning of some of the decrees is not absolutely clear, and rubricists (experts in liturgical law) were not able to reach complete agreement in interpreting them.<sup>34</sup>

The Leonine Prayers may be omitted after a Low Mass which:

- Takes the place of a Solemn Mass (e.g., an ordination or a funeral Mass).
- Has the privileges of a Solemn Votive Mass *pro re gravi* (e.g., the Sacred Heart Votive Mass on First Friday).
- Is celebrated with a certain solemnity (e.g., a Nuptial Mass, the Mass following the Blessing of Ashes on Ash Wednesday).
- Takes the place of the main (“parochial”) Mass on Sunday and is “celebrated with a certain solemnity” (e.g., Asperges beforehand, prayer for the government afterwards, etc.).
- Is followed by a sacred function or pious exercise, without the celebrant departing from the sanctuary (e.g., Benediction, Novena, etc. after Mass).

The foregoing list is not exhaustive, and is taken from a classic work written in 1941 by the great English rubricist O’Connell.<sup>35</sup> Subsequently, the Congregation of Rites granted an Indult to the clergy of the Archdiocese of Bologna, allowing them to omit the prayers at Masses where a homily was given.<sup>36</sup> A 1960 decree clarified some previous decisions on the matter, and gave permission to priests everywhere to omit the Leonine Prayers at a “Dialogue” Mass, or at a Mass where a homily was given.<sup>37</sup>

Vatican II (1962–1965), of course, had refused to condemn Communism, while Paul VI after his election in 1963 began to take the first tentative steps toward building what would come to be known as the “Vatican-Moscow Axis.” Since the Leonine Prayers were a reminder that Moscow was conducting a persecution, they were among the first things to go.

In 1964, even before the Council closed, the Vatican issued a liturgical instruction which contained the memorably brutal phrase: “The Last Gospel is omitted; the Leonine Prayers are suppressed.”<sup>38</sup> Under the circumstances, a more appropriate verb would have been “liquidated” or “purged.”<sup>39</sup>

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33. See S.R.C. Decree, 6 January 1884, in *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 16 (1884), 250. “...in fine cuiusque Missae sine cantu celebratae.”

34. Richard E. Brennan, “The Leonine Prayers,” *American Ecclesiastical Review* 125 (1951), 92.

35. See J. O’Connell, *The Celebration of Mass: A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal*, (Milwaukee: Bruce 1941) 1:210–11. This three-volume work is the clearest and most systematic treatment of the rubrics of the Mass available. Every priest who celebrates the traditional Mass should have a copy of it.

36. S.C. Rituum, Indult *Excellentissimus*, 22 July 1955, Ochoa 2513.

37. S.C. Rituum, Decree *A Nonnullis Locorum*, 9 March 1960, Ochoa 2895. “Preces sic dictas Leoninas omitti posse: ... 3. cum infra Missae celebrationem habeatur homilia. 4. cum fit Missa dialogata, diebus Dominicis et Festis tantum.”

38. S.C. Rituum (Consilium), Instruction *Inter Oecumenici* on the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Liturgy, 26 September 1964, ¶48, in *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts*, trans., compiled and arr.

Only a handful of priests resisted the post-Vatican II liturgical changes at first, but not everyone retained the Leonine Prayers. I suspect this was the case in France, since at the St. Pius X Seminary in Ecône in the 1970s we never said the prayers publicly.<sup>39</sup> (I recited them publicly after my first Mass in 1977, an act considered rather daring at the time.)

Most priests in America who first resisted the changes were well-known as dedicated patriots and vocal anti-Communists. These few stalwart men kept the Leonine Prayers alive when no one else in America did. It is to their eternal credit that they handed down the practice to a future generation which would see the prayers at long last bear fruit.

## B. Recent Developments in Russia

The intention Pope Pius XI decreed in 1930 for the Leonine Prayers, as we noted above, was the freedom of the Church in Russia — that “tranquility and freedom to profess the faith,” as he said, “be restored to the afflicted people of Russia.”

The people of Russia are indeed afflicted by many things these days — corrupt politicians, scarce goods, Western immorality, socialism, international bankers, and the “New World Order.” But it seems certain that they do enjoy at least one thing: “the tranquility and freedom to profess the faith.”

On 1 October 1990 the Soviet Union enacted a law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations. It was a lengthy and detailed statute, running in translation to nearly 500 lines of miniscule print.

The law’s stated purpose was to guarantee the rights of citizens “to determine and express their attitude toward religion, to hold corresponding convictions and to profess a religion and perform religious rites without hindrance.”<sup>40</sup>

Article 3 of the law is of particular interest to us here:

In accordance with the right to freedom of conscience, every citizen independently determines his attitude toward religion and has the right, individually or in conjunction with others, to profess any religion or not to profess any, and to express and disseminate convictions associated with his attitude toward religion.

We note, for the sake of emphasis, the phrase “the right... to profess any religion.”

In Article 4, the law creates legal liability for restricting this right:

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by International Committee on English in the Liturgy, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1982), 340.

39. I have a vague childhood memory of the priest telling us as the changes began that we would henceforth pray for Russia in the Prayer of the Faithful. *That* didn’t last long. A few years later in the diocesan seminary, we were praying not for persecuted Catholics but for leftist guerrillas in South America.

40. At Ecône during the 1975–1976 academic year, we followed many of initial changes Paul VI introduced into the Order of the Mass in 1964.

41. Law of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: *On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations*, 1 October 1990, *Pravda*, 9 October 1990, 4, trans. in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 42.40 (1990), 6–8, 31. “The Aims of the Law. This law guarantees the rights of citizens to determine and express their attitude toward religion, to hold corresponding convictions and to profess a religion and perform religious rites without hindrance, as well as social justice, equality and the protection of citizens’ rights and interests regardless of their attitude toward religion, and it regulates relations connected with the activity of religious organizations.” (Art. 1)

Any direct or indirect restriction of rights or the establishment of any advantages for citizens depending on their attitude toward religion, as well as the incitement of hostility and hatred in this connection or any insulting of citizens' feelings, entails liability as established by law.

This would forbid persecuting someone for his religious beliefs.

The statute deals exhaustively with the manner in which these rights are exercised in practice. It guarantees the right to form religious organizations (Art. 7), religious congregations (Art. 8), religious associations (Art. 9), religious orders (Art. 10), and religious educational institutions (Art. 11). It allows a religious group to formulate its own statutes (Art. 12), to acquire civil/legal existence, (Arts. 13, 14), to terminate voluntarily its own existence (Art. 16), to use state properties (Art. 17),<sup>42</sup> to own property (Art. 18), to dispose of property (Art. 20), to establish and maintain places of worship (Art. 21), to conduct worship services without hindrance (Art. 21), to acquire and produce religious literature and objects (Art. 22), to create charitable organizations (Art. 23) and to maintain ties with international religious organizations (Art. 24).

Given the Communists' track record, we looked at all this from afar and took it with a grain (if not a pillar) of salt.

Others more familiar with current affairs in Russia, however, say that the status of believers underwent a real change. In an exhaustive commentary on the new law, one Western legal scholar noted that a comparison of past Soviet legislation with the 1990 law reveals that "there is no doubt about the intent of the legislator to endow freedom of conscience with a content quite different from that of the past."<sup>43</sup> Professor Jerry G. Parkhurst, a Russian-speaking American who actually spent some time in the Soviet Union after the law was passed, assured me that Catholics were indeed then quite free to profess their religion and that they suffered no persecution.

In 1991 events took an even more dramatic turn. Gorbachev fell, the Communist Party was dissolved and the Soviet Union broke up. The new Russian Republic adopted a law on religious freedom similar to the 1990 Soviet law. Professor Parkhurst believes that the new law "while totally compatible, is even more tolerant in the freedoms it grants."

But is it put into practice? For well over a year now, the conservative Catholic press has been carrying extensive reports on the changed situation for Catholics in Russia. A seminary has been founded. Members of the intelligentsia have converted. Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, appointed Apostolic Administrator of the European part of the Russian Republic by John Paul II, now resides in Moscow and ministers to a growing flock. Bishop Joseph Werth, a Jesuit, now travels around Siberia seeking out scattered groups of Catholics. Some church properties have been returned, and new religious publications have sprung up.

Nor are the adepts of the *Novus Ordo* the only ones to benefit from the new climate: Two Russians are now studying for the priesthood at the Society of St. Pius X's seminary in Ecône, Swit-

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42. Any governmental body in the U.S. which allowed this would be hauled into court by the A.C.L.U.

43. Giovanni Codevilla, "Commentary on the New Soviet Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations," *Religion in Communist Lands* 19 (Summer 1991), 131.

zerland. And one of the Ecône seminary professors, Father Rulleau, now travels to Moscow several times a year to offer the traditional Mass for a group of Catholics.

Another Russian-speaking academic — a graduate student in Russian history — told me how she had recently spent time with Catholics in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Their numbers, she noted, are small. But like everyone else, she said, Catholics are entirely free to profess their religion and now suffer no persecution.

All this leads one to conclude that Catholics in Russia are now free to profess the faith. The object for which the Leonine Prayers were prescribed for all these years, therefore, has been obtained.

### C. Cessation of the Law

Immediately, however, we are confronted by a practical question: What then of the Leonine Prayers? If their object has been obtained, should they continue to be recited after Low Mass?

Strictly speaking — according to the principles of Church law — no.

First, we should recall the classic definition theologians and canonists give for the word “law”: An ordinance of reason for the common good promulgated by the person who has care of the community.<sup>44</sup>

The canonist (and later cardinal) Giovanni Cicognani points out that, while laws are normally stable, the *reasons* or *purposes* for which a law was promulgated can later change. A law then becomes useless, harmful or — the very antithesis of what a law is supposed to be — *unreasonable*.

Obviously, the superior should revoke a law that has become unreasonable. But what if a superior has not done so? Cicognani adds:

[I]f [such a law] has not actually been revoked, it is to be reasonably presumed to be revoked. For its purpose is the soul of law, and a law without a soul lapses, ceases to exist, dies.<sup>45</sup>

The technical term for the “death” of a law which loses its purpose is *intrinsic cessation of the law* (*cessatio legis ab intrinseco*).<sup>46</sup> *Intrinsic* here simply means, as Cicognani put it, that “the law ceases of itself.”<sup>47</sup>

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44. Dominic M. Prümmer OP, *Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, 10th ed., (Barcelona: Herder 1946), 1:142. “Quaedam rationis ordinatio ad bonum commune ab eo, qui communitatis curam habet, promulgata.”

45. Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, *Canon Law*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. by Joseph M. O’Hara (Westminster MD: Newman 1934), 625. “In treating the elements of law we saw that it is proper and fitting that a law should be stable and firm. However, every law has its element of uncertainty, for the reasons and the purpose for which the law was made can change, and consequently, since law is an ordinance in accordance with reason, it ought to be revoked if it becomes useless, harmful or unreasonable; and if it has not actually been revoked, it is to be reasonably presumed to be revoked. For its purpose is the soul of law, and a law without a soul lapses, ceases to exist, dies.”

46. This is distinguished from *extrinsic cessation of the law*, i.e., when it is revoked by the superior. A lay woman once told me that, whenever a priest used the words *intrinsic* or *extrinsic* in an article directed to traditional Catholics, she immediately judged the article “too deep,” and promptly chucked it into the garbage. If she reads this article, I hope she makes it past the sentence above.

47. Cicognani, 627

The Bouscaren-Ellis commentary on the Code of Canon Law notes that this is common doctrine.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Prümmer,<sup>49</sup> Beste,<sup>50</sup> Coronata,<sup>51</sup> Cappello,<sup>52</sup> Lanza,<sup>53</sup> McHugh-Callan,<sup>54</sup> Regatillo,<sup>55</sup> and Wernz-Vidal<sup>56</sup> speak of a law whose “purpose,” “end,” or “total cause” ceases, “loses its force” or “falls.” By that very fact, it is then no longer a “rational norm,” having lost the purpose for which it was promulgated. Such a law, as the Wernz-Vidal commentary on the Code of Canon Law says, then “has fallen without a special act of a legislator.” Or as Regatillo put it, the law “ceases *ipso facto* without a legislator’s declaration.”

McHugh-Callan<sup>57</sup> and Cicognani<sup>58</sup> give as examples laws which prescribe abstinence from certain foods, or decree a fast to obtain relief from various dangers.

Of particular interest to us here are laws which prescribe that certain prayers be recited to obtain some specific end. Once

48. T. Lincoln Bouscaren SJ & Adam C. Ellis SJ, *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, (Milwaukee: Bruce 1946), 35. “A law may cease to bind in two ways: either by repeal, which is called extrinsic cessation, or by becoming inoperative without repeal, which is called intrinsic cessation. It is common doctrine that a law ceases to bind without repeal in two cases: first, if the circumstances are such that the law has become positively harmful or unreasonable; second, if the purpose of the law has entirely ceased for the entire community.”

49. *Man. Theol. Moralis*, 1:269–71. “Lex ipsa tripliciter cessare potest: ... 2. per cessationem finis totalis. ... Cessatio finis totalis, seu causae motivae *adaequatae*, ob quam lex lata est, producit cessationem ipsius legis. Ratio est, quia cessante causa totali, etiam effectus cesset oportet.” (His emphasis.)

50. Udalricus Beste OSB, *Introductio in Codicem*, (Collegeville: St. John’s 1946), 89. “...ab intrinseco per cessationem finis seu causae motivae, quae legislatorem induxit ad legem ferendam.”

51. Matthaëus Conte a Coronata OFM Cap, *Institutiones Juris Canonici*, (Rome: Marietti: 1950), 1:28. “Ipsa lex non sola eius obligatio dupliciter cessare potest: *ab intrinseco* et *ab extrinseco*.” (His emphasis.)

52. Felix M. Cappello SJ, *Summa Juris Canonici*, 4th ed., (Rome: Gregorian 1945), 1:101. “Lex cessare potest *ab intrinseco* et *ab extrinseco*, prout corrui ex se ipsa, vel tollitur per actum positivum externum competentis Superioris. ... 1. Cessatio *ab intrinseco*. — 1. Si lex non est amplius *norma rationabilis* ammittit eo ipso vim suam. Id autem pendet ex *fine*, qui habet rationem boni, cuius intuitu praecise lex fertur.” (His emphasis.)

53. Antonius Lanza, *Theologia Moralis*, (Rome: Marietti 1949), 1:252. “Lex *ab intrinseco* cessat, aut transacto tempore ad quod lata est, aut cessante eius *fine*.”

54. John A. McHugh OP and Charles J. Callan OP, *Moral Theology: A Complete Course*, (New York: Wagner 1929), 1:500. “A law ceases *from within* (i.e., of itself), when through a change of conditions the purpose for which it was made no longer exists, or is no longer served by the law.... A law no longer serves its purpose, if, from having been useful, it *has become useless*, inasmuch as it is no longer necessary for the end intended by the lawgiver. In this case the law ceases, for regulations should not be imposed needlessly.” (His emphasis.)

55. Eduardus F. Regatillo SJ, *Institutiones Juris Canonici*, 5th ed., (Santander: Sal Terrae 1956), 1:98. “Cessatio *ab intrinseco*. — A. Cessante *fine* pro communitate... in casis praecedentibus lex *ipso facto* cessat absque legislatoris declaratione.”

56. F.X. Wernz SJ and P. Vidal SJ, *Jus Canonicum*, (Rome: Gregorian 1938), 1:187. “...cessatio *ab intrinseco* cum lex corrui sine *speciali* actu legislatoris.” (His emphasis.)

57. *Moral Theology*, 1:501. “Example: The Council of Jerusalem made a law that the faithful should abstain from using as food animals that had been strangled (Acts, XV.20). The purpose of the law was to avoid offense to the Jewish converts, who at that time formed a large part of the Christian community and who had a religious abhorrence for such food. But shortly afterwards, the Gentile element having become stronger in the Church, no attention was paid to ceremonial rules of Judaism.”

58. *Canon Law*, 627. “The end (either its purpose or cause) of the law ceases *adequately* when all its purposes cease; *inadequately*, when only some particular purpose of the law ceases (e.g., fasting is enjoined in order to end an epidemic and to obtain rain; and the rain comes but the epidemic continues its ravages).” (His emphasis.) If both rain were to come and the epidemic were to cease, obviously, both purposes of the law would cease, and the law along with it.

the end either *can no longer* be obtained or *has been* obtained, the law prescribing the prayer goes out of existence.

Moralists and canonists give the following examples:

- “If a bishop has prescribed a prayer for the recovery of the king’s health, once the king is dead, by that very fact the prayer must be omitted.”<sup>59</sup>

- “... when the health of the pontiff is to be obtained, for example, if his health would be obtained, or if the pontiff would die.”<sup>60</sup>

- “If a bishop should prescribe prayers to obtain peace and good weather, the obligation would cease once both purposes together are obtained.”<sup>61</sup>

A historical commentary on the Mass, written in 1949, speaks even more directly to our case. The author, Father Bede Lebbe, observed that Leo XIII prescribed the October Rosary Devotions<sup>62</sup> for the resolution of the Roman Question, and that the Devotions ceased to be obligatory once the Lateran Treaty was signed in 1929.<sup>63</sup>

The Leonine Prayers, Father Lebbe said, were offered for the same intention, and likewise became optional when the Lateran Treaty was signed — until, of course, Pius XI decreed that they be applied to the intentions of the persecuted Church in Russia. Father Lebbe then added:

As the situation in that country continues to be far from favourable, it is clear that the obligation still exists of reciting after Mass the three *Aves*, the *Salve Regina* and the two prayers.<sup>64</sup>

According to his line of reasoning, obviously, a change in the situation would mean that the obligation to recite the Leonine Prayers would no longer exist.

It remains, then, to apply the principles to the case of the Leonine Prayers:

- (1) Catholic moralists and canonists teach that a law ceases (or dies) when the end for which it was instituted is obtained.

- (2) The end Pope Pius XI prescribed for the Leonine Prayers was that “tranquility and freedom to profess the faith be restored to the afflicted people of Russia.”

- (3) This end has recently been obtained.

- (4) The law prescribing the recitation of the Leonine Prayers has therefore ceased.

Finally, what if Russia would again begin persecuting Catholics? Would one again be obliged to recite the Leonine Prayers?

No. For once a law ceases this way, Regatillo<sup>65</sup> and Cardinal Palazzini<sup>66</sup> explain, a new act from the legislator would be required to reintroduce it.

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59. Prümmer, 1:271. “Sic e.g. si episcopus praescripsit orationem pro recuperanda regis sanitate, mortuo rege, eo ipso haec oratio omittenda est.”

60. Benedictus H. Merkelbach OF, *Summa Theologiae Moralis*, (Paris: Desclée 1946), 1:398. “Cessat quando iam est obtentus vel amplius obtineri nequit, v.g. sanitas pontificis obtinenda si obtenta fuerit vel si pontifex moriatur.”

61. Beste, 89. “Quare si episcopus preces praescripserit ad obtinendam pacem et aeris serenitatem, obligatio desinit obtento utroque fine simul, non autem alterutro dumtaxat.”

62. These consisted of the recitation of the Rosary, Litany of Loreto and Prayer to St. Joseph, either during Mass or before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, each day from October 1 through November 2.

63. Bede Lebbe OSB, *The Mass: A Historical Commentary*, (Westminster MD: Newman 1949), 167.

64. Lebbe, 167–68.



## V. The Use of Other Prayers

If the law on the Leonine Prayers has ceased, could the priest then publicly “pray for America” (as our friend suggested), or for some other intention?

The mind of the Church, it appears, is that *some* types of prayers, at least, may indeed be recited after Low Mass on certain occasions.

Some countries had their own special customs in this regard. In England, for instance, the Prayer for the King was said, in Latin or English, depending on diocesan law.<sup>65</sup> In Ireland, Psalm 129 (the *De Profundis*) and a Collect for the Faithful Departed were recited before the Leonine Prayers.<sup>66</sup>

General legislation made allowances for adding other prayers. In response to an inquiry, the Sacred Congregation of Rites decided that the priest could recite some prayers at the altar after Mass, as long they were said with the permission of the Ordinary (diocesan bishop).<sup>67</sup> In his book of replies on various liturgical questions, Father Mahoney says that the Ordinary’s permission may sometimes be presumed “when there exists some good reason for adding prayers.”<sup>68</sup> One sacristy manual notes that the Divine Praises or indulgenced prayers for the dead may be added.<sup>69</sup>

While it is not advisable to add extra prayers after Low Mass each time it is celebrated,<sup>70</sup> the addition from time to time of some

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65. *Institutiones*, 1:98. “... nec reviviscit redeunte causa finali, materia aut subjecto, sed debet denuo promulgari.”

66. Petrus Palazzini, *Dictionarium Morale et Canonicum*, (Rome: Catholic Book Agency 1962), 1:657. “... non reviviscit redeunte causa finali, ut iterum obliget, requiritur novus actus legislatoris ecclesiastici, eam iterum introduceret.”

67. E.J. Mahoney, *Priests’ Problems*, ed. by L.L. McReavy, (New York: Benziger 1958), 118.

68. Of the origin of this practice, Lebbe, 168, says: “Some liturgists see in it a compensation for the numerous endowments and foundation Masses for the Dead, all records of which were wantonly destroyed by Protestantism; or else a prayer of the Church for all those who were killed during the years and the persecutions of the seventeenth century, and in the Penal Times and buried without the comforting presence of a priest, or the blessing and prayers of the Liturgy.” The Irish clergy apparently introduced this practice in Australia — to avoid, some said, having to recite the Prayer for the King of England.

69. S.R.C. Decree Mechlin., 31 August 1867, 3157. “VII. Quaeritur: An possint praecipui, aut saltem permitti aliquae preces recitandae ad Altare post Missam, non depositis sacris vestibus. Obstare videtur Decretum in Conversanen. die 31 Augusti 1669. Ad VII. Affirmative; dummodo preces dicantur assentiente Ordinario.”

70. *Priests’ Problems*, 119–20. “If he desires to add to those ordered, the above reply leaves it with the local Ordinary to determine its legality, and the writers concede a certain latitude on the supposition that the Ordinary’s permission may sometimes be presumed; in fact, the replies of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in nn. 3537, 1, and 3805, can be harmonised with the n. 3157 above only by supposing that a presumed permission suffices. It may be presumed when there exists some good reason for adding prayers.”

71. Joseph Wuest CSsR, *Matters Liturgical: The Collectio Rerum Liturgicarum*, trans. and rev. by Thomas W. Mullaney CSsR, (New York: Pustet 1925), 188.

72. A priest who regularly tacks onto the end of the Mass lengthy vernacular prayers of his own choosing imparts a false idea to his people: That while liturgical functions (the Mass, etc.) are good as far as they go, to have “real prayer,” you must add something afterwards in the vernacular. Some priests in the traditional movement, unfortunately, already add not only a lengthy series of vernacular prayers *after* Mass, but also an equally lengthy series *before* as well. Repeatedly sandwiching the Mass between elements that are not part of the Church’s official worship diminish its importance as the prayer *par excellence*. Their attitude reflects the sort of wrong-headed view of the Sacred Liturgy illustrated by a well-known story: A group of Canons were chanting Vespers in a great cathedral when a terrifying thunderstorm erupted. The Dean signalled the clergy to cease

prayer or short devotion after Low Mass — the opportunity to venerate a relic, for example — is certainly in keeping with the legislation and the commentaries cited above. With a little thought and foresight, moreover, one can harmonize the prayer with the feastday or particular liturgical season (always the ideal, of course).

Not just any prayer will do. The priest should not use the invariable, devotional, novena-type prayers because of their essentially private character. For the same reason, the priest should not recite aloud with the people prayers intended for thanksgiving after Holy Communion. Nor should this be an occasion to recite prayers for what are purely private intentions — for some individual's health, prosperity, etc.

The texts of the prayers, rather, should have a "public" or "universal" character. (They should also, if possible, be indulged.) This is implicit in Rome's requirement that one have the permission of the Ordinary, who possesses the authority locally to regulate public worship.

If a priest "presumes" this permission (as Father Mahoney would allow), he should turn to the prayers the hierarchy of the Church has *already* approved for public recitation at the altar. These he will find collected in altar manuals approved before Vatican II.<sup>73</sup> Among the prayers authorized were the approved Litanies, Psalm 129 for the Dead, a prayer for the civil government<sup>74</sup> or sovereign, the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart, the Pentecost Novena, the Prayer for Peace, the Devotion for Church Unity, and a handful of other prayers. All of them are profound, well-phrased, traditional, dignified, universal in character, and easily harmonized with the Sacred Liturgy.

None of the approved altar manuals I have come across breaks up the texts with asterisks or otherwise indicates that the priest and the congregation are to recite the texts aloud together. The congregation's role is limited to short responses (for the litanies, versicles, Divine Praises) and to the occasional Amen.

The priest should follow this pattern, and limit the congregation's role to a few responses of this sort. Catholics have difficulties reciting lengthy texts together. Each layman also thinks the version of the prayer *he* remembers is the "correct" version anyway, and will recite it no matter what.<sup>75</sup> Handing out the texts, moreover, and insisting that the congregation recite them with the priest, undercuts the priest's role, and smacks of the *Novus Ordo* idea that the people must recite each and every word of a prayer for it to "work."

The priest should remove his manipule for these prayers, and for longer devotions, perhaps even his chasuble. The prayers, remember, are not part of the Mass.

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their chanting, and announced: "Because of the danger from the storm, Fathers, we will stop the Office so we can say some prayers together."

73. For the U.S., *Enchiridion Precum: Altar Prayers*, (New York: Benziger 1941); *Altar Manual Compiled from New and Approved Sources*, (New York: Kennedy 1953). Similar collections, no doubt, likewise exist for other nations.

74. In most countries, this consisted of a versicle and Collect. In the U.S., however, it was customary to use parts of a longer prayer for the Church and government composed by Archbishop Carroll. The passages usually employed are the ones which refer specifically to the government.

75. Witness the confusion which inevitably occurred in places where the congregation recited the St. Michael Prayer together. Everyone followed his own version. The babble of tongues which resulted often sounded like something out of a prayer meeting for *Novus Ordo* charismatics.

For the same reason, the priest should employ only brief texts — no longer than the Leonine Prayers, say. Moral theologians, after all, say that a layman’s obligation to assist at Mass on a Sunday or Holy Day is fulfilled once the priest has finished the Last Gospel. Pope Benedict XIV and St. Alphonsus, moreover, teach that a public Low Mass — not counting the sermon and distributing Holy Communion — should normally not take much more than half an hour. This limit should be observed, as Regatillo noted, “lest those hearing Mass be wearied.”<sup>76</sup> In the matter of these prayers, let us therefore exercise the same prudent restraint and concern for “weaker brethren” that is found in the writings of the Church’s most eminent theologians.

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TRADITIONAL CATHOLICS tend to be pessimists. This is natural enough, given the terrible events which have unfolded in both the Church and modern society since the 1960s. The various factions in the traditional movement may never agree about the Pope, the validity of the modern sacraments, or interpretations of canon law, to be sure. But the one thing we’d agree on in an instant would be our common motto: Expect and believe the worst, and you’ll never be disappointed.

This pessimism carries over into our prayers. Time and again, traditional priests or writers will recommend this prayer or that in order to end one evil or another in the Conciliar Church or in modern society. But the evil whose end we pray for seems to continue anyway. We see no concrete result for the recommended prayer. And we trudge grimly on to pray that yet *another* evil end, secretly suspecting, perhaps, that God will never allow us to see any visible fruit from *that* prayer either.

The recent developments in Russia should be cause for a little less gloom and a little more optimism about our prayers. We traditional Catholics, after all, are the ones who kept right on saying the Leonine Prayers for our persecuted brethren in Russia. *We* may not have understood exactly what the Church’s intention was for these prayers, but God certainly did. And in His providence He granted His Church’s petition and our own.

Here, then, is something we traditional Catholics can point to as some welcome good news — and as a concrete confirmation of the power of the Church’s prayer.

(*Sacerdotium* 5, Autumn 1992).

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## Appendix

### Prayer to St. Michael from the Exorcism against Satan and the Apostate Angels (Approved 18 May 1890.)

*NOTE: In 1902 the Congregation of Rites issued a decree approving a new version of the prayer. The passages indicated in bold face below were removed.*

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76. Eduardus F. Regatillo SJ and M. Zalba SJ, *Theologiae Moralis Summa*, (Madrid: BAC 1954), 3:194. “Si publice celebratur, curandum ne Missa semihoram multum excedat, ne audientes taedio afficiantur.”

O GLORIOUS ARCHANGEL St Michael, Prince of the heavenly host, defend us in battle, and in the struggle which is ours against the Principalities and Powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against spirits of evil in high places. (Eph 6.) Come to the aid of men, whom God created immortal, made in his own image and likeness, and redeemed at a great price from the tyranny of the devil, (Wis 2, 1 Cor 6.)

**Fight this day the battle of the Lord, together with the holy angels, as already thou hast fought the leader of the proud angels, Lucifer, and his apostate host, who were powerless to resist thee, nor was there place for them any longer in Heaven, But that cruel, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil or Satan, who seduces the whole world, was cast into the abyss with all his angels, (Apoc 12.)**

**Behold, this primeval enemy and slayer of man has taken courage. Transformed into an angel of light, he wanders about with all the multitude of wicked spirits, invading the earth in order to blot out the name of God and of his Christ, to seize upon, slay and cast into eternal perdition souls destined for the crown of eternal glory. This wicked dragon pours out, as a most impure flood, the venom of his malice on men of depraved mind and corrupt heart, the spirit of lying, of impiety, of blasphemy, and the pestilent breath of impurity, and of every vice and iniquity.**

**These most crafty enemies have filled and inebriated with gall and bitterness the Church, the spouse of the Immaculate Lamb, and have laid impious hands on her most sacred possessions.**

**In the Holy Place itself, where has been set up the See of the most holy Peter and the Chair of Truth for the light of the world, they have raised the throne of their abominable impiety, with the iniquitous design that when the Pastor has been struck, the sheep may be scattered.**

**Arise then, O invincible prince, bring help against the attacks of the lost spirits to the people of God, and bring them the victory.**

The Church venerates thee as protector and patron; **in thee holy Church glories as her defense against the malicious powers of this world and of hell;** to thee has God entrusted the souls of men to be established in heavenly beatitude.

Oh, pray to the God of peace that He may put Satan under our feet, so far conquered that he may no longer be able to hold men in captivity and harm the Church. Offer our prayers in the sight of the Most High, so that they may quickly conciliate the mercies of the Lord; and beating down the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, do thou again make him captive in the abyss, that he may no longer seduce the nations.

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