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Pope restricts use of Latin Mass by Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate

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Pope Francis' order restricting the use of the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass in communities of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate addresses problems within the religious order and does not contradict retired Pope Benedict XVI's permission for wider use of the old Mass throughout the church, the Vatican spokesman said.

Pope Francis' orders "do not intend to contradict the general instructions" of Pope Benedict, but respond "to specific problems and tensions created in that congregation regarding the rite for the celebration of Mass," said Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, in a statement Friday.

After an apostolic visitation of the order, begun under Pope Benedict, Pope Francis appointed Capuchin Fr. Fidenzio Volpi to serve as apostolic commissioner of the order.

Announcing the appointment in a letter dated July 11, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life also issued a decree saying that Pope Francis requires all the friars "to celebrate the liturgy according to the ordinary rite," the post-Vatican II Mass, and that the use of the so-called extraordinary form or pre-Vatican II Latin Mass "must be explicitly authorized by the competent authorities for every religious or community that makes a request."

Some bloggers and Catholic websites had presented the Vatican move as an attempt to restrict use of the old Mass, but Lombardi said Friday the provisions concern "the life and governance of the congregation as a whole and not just liturgical questions."

A statement published on the friars' website said that Fr. Stefano Manelli, founder and superior, "together with the whole Institute of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, submits in obedience to the Holy Father and trusts that this obedience will bring forth greater graces."

An "official note" from the friars Saturday said while many of the members and communities chose to give priority to the old Mass, the priests always were free to celebrate Mass using both forms, and Manelli often celebrated Mass using the new rite. It acknowledged, however, there were internal differences over how the choice of liturgy was being made.

The sisters, in a statement Tuesday, said members of the women's branch of the order also were allowed to choose which form of the Mass they wanted to attend unless they belonged to the contemplative branch of the order that used the extraordinary form exclusively.

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