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Wise Adaptation Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, August 21, 2017 8:15 AM
Jgs 2:11-19; Mt 19:16-22 **St. Pius X, pope** (Be open, but not identified with the modern world; use our tradition, but adapt it as much as necessary and possible to the mentality and intelligence of modern people.)

Today we celebrate the memorial of **St. Pius X**, who was a very devout and holy soul, but one who was also very impractical, who **desired to renew the Church, but didn't know how to do it and trusted only in the past as a guide.** This turned out not to be enlightened.

Now you know that up until the 1960s the Mass in the West was always in Latin, but it actually wasn't always in Latin throughout the whole world. For in the world of the Greeks it was in Greek. In the world of the Arabs it was in Arabic or Greek, depending on which rite. There were two very notable missionaries, Cyril and Methodius, who actually invented, not only an alphabet still in use in Russia today, but they invented a whole language similar to Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian. And they invented that for missionaries from Germany that were coming to spread the gospel. And the Germans said, "Are you kidding? We are not using that language. Latin is perfectly good." But in Croatia actually there was the Mass in the Latin Rite translated into Croatian, which most people don't know, but that actually did occur. Also in China they translated the Latin Mass into Chinese way back 1600 something.

Well by the late 1800s, early 1900s, this Slavonic seemed to be passé, so the bishops of the Eastern Rites of the Hungarians said to the pope, at that time Leo XIII, "Why don't we translate this into Hungarian and then the people will understand it?" But the pope never got around to answering and then he died. So then came Pius X. So Pius X found this request, and he said, "Oh, Hungarian, no, no. In fact even Slavonic is too modern. We should go back to Greek and have all the priests learn Greek." So he told all the Hungarian priests of the Eastern Rite they had to learn Greek. And he gave them three years. In the interim World War I broke out and they never learned

anything. So at the end of the war the Hungarian bishops got together and decided we will just translate everything into Hungarian and forget about the pope. By then it was a new Pope, Benedict XV. So **things changed but in a rather rocky way.** That was then the **model for Vatican II's decision to translate all of the liturgies into vernacular.** So it was the Eastern Rite bishops that spearheaded that whole idea. They said, "Well, **we have been doing this for years. Why don't you do it?"** So that's how things change in the Church. **Pius himself was a very dear man. He was sincere. He was humble. He was gentle, but he was not very courageous in the sense that he was afraid of everything modern.**

And what the Church learned from the time of Pius X to the time of the Vatican Council is **being afraid of what's modern will not help us.** We have to confront everything. We have to subject all values to the gospel, and **we have to draw out what is good whether it's modern or not.** So we don't want to be submerged into our modern society. We cannot be simply going along with every trend and every fashion; but, on the other hand, **we cannot oppose what are actual legitimate developments in human society and expect to thrive as a Church and expect to be effective as witnesses to the gospel.**

So if we go back to the beginning, we see that's exactly **what early Christians did. They took the gospel and they carried it to all the ends of the earth and they adapted their customs and their ways and their rites to the languages and customs of every land.** Later on it all got rigid, but originally it was adaptable. So that is what now **Vatican II said we need to do in our own modern world: be open, but not identified with the modern world; use our tradition, but adapt it as much as necessary and possible to the mentality and intelligence of modern people.**