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## **The Struggle of Traditionalist Catholics in 1970s Northern England**

**Brandon Reece Taylorian**

A proportion of Catholics were disillusioned by the liturgical changes that followed the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s. A scattered community of those who opposed the changes — known as traditionalists — were ardent and believing in their cause to preserve the pre-Vatican II Catholic identity despite remaining small in number and on the receiving end of criticism from Church leaders. Intermittent rumblings of a revival in the traditional Latin Mass (TLM) among young Catholics<sup>1</sup> might prompt the question: how did this traditionalist fervour originate?

In 1970s England, there was one such community of traditionalists, made up of both rebel clergy and laypeople who continued celebrating the Tridentine Rite and retained their pre-conciliar Catholic customs. Two early members of this community were Mr Derrick Taylor and Mrs Irene Mary Taylor who lived on the outskirts of Leyland in Lancashire. Their life story served as a case study for this research to gain a greater understanding of traditionalist Catholicism during the 1970s. By studying their lives, it may become clearer why this couple and others decided to open their homes to the public for the celebration of Tridentine Masses. The case study will seek to demonstrate how the activities of lay traditionalists were essential to founding a movement within the Church that continues to the present day.

Reforms to the Tridentine liturgy were made mandatory by the Second Vatican Council which took place from 1962 to 1965. The reforms were put into practice over a course of years following the end of the Council but affected only the Latin Rite as the Eastern Rite of the Catholic Church was reformed under separate legislation.<sup>2</sup> The reforms were neither sudden nor universal yet still provoked resistance, although only among small pockets of the world's billion

Catholics but this was enough to cause a split along modernist and traditionalist lines.<sup>3</sup>

Mass media at the time might have worsened the relations between the post-conciliar Church and the growing traditionalist faction by oversimplifying the reforms as the Church's attempt to ban the Tridentine Rite. In England and Wales, the Heenan Indult of 1971 allowed for the Tridentine Mass to continue although only under the condition of episcopal approval.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, the bitterness of the traditionalists combined with a narrative of disobedience projected onto them by the modernists deepened the divide.<sup>5</sup> Although the limits placed on the Tridentine Rite were eased under Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, under the 2021 *Traditionis custodes*, Pope Francis made his position clear: the TLM must be restricted further still, hence reversing the work of his predecessors.<sup>6</sup>

Despite other controversies for the Church emerging over the past fifty years, the traditionalist and modernist divide seems never to have been settled, merely left to fester in the hope that it will 'die out in time'.<sup>7</sup> The traditionalist opposition to the liturgical reforms is significant as it is a dispute concerning the core ritual of the Church.<sup>8</sup> For most Catholics, the changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council were seen as much needed and long-awaited yet for others, the changes produced an opposite effect, leaving them disenchanted.<sup>9</sup>

It is this feeling among the traditionalists that this research has sought to comprehend. Also curious is how some young Catholics are apparently returning to Mass via the TLM which reiterates the importance of re-examining the history of the traditionalist cause.<sup>10</sup> On this basis, the research set out to understand how Catholic traditionalism in England began as a grassroots movement by drawing from a case study of a traditionalist couple whose spiritual dilemma over the reforms possibly produced at least two sessions of locution. The history of Catholic traditionalism had seldom been analysed from the perspective of lay people before.

An important disclaimer to make is that the researcher is the grandson of the couple from the case study. The project began in the context of family history research, but upon learning of Mr and Mrs

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Taylor's involvement with post-conciliar traditionalism, the research shifted into a piece of academic work. Although the proximity of the researcher to the subjects of the case study might raise concern, it will soon become apparent that having a grandson of traditionalists as the author is in fact appropriate considering the length of time he spent during his childhood with Mr and Mrs Taylor and experienced first-hand the type of traditionalist Catholicism of central interest to the research.

The data collection process consisted of four primary sources: personal letters, a 1995 interview with Mr Taylor, newspaper reports and commentaries, as well as testimony from priests and family friends. The data analysis began with an exegesis of the first letter retrieved in June 2020 that was written by Mrs Taylor in 1998 and which is hereafter referred to as the October Letter.<sup>11</sup> The October Letter includes some religious discourse that clarifies Mrs Taylor's worldview:

You will not know that over the past 30 years or so, there has taken place a 'lukewarm' attitude by Roman Catholics, towards our Saviour's teachings, but the fact remains, that this does not, in any way, dilute these Divine instructions, for our Salvation and Eternal Happiness. (Each human being's destiny).

Since the priorities of our Nation are no longer 'ONE', (as your parents would remember), but more confusing, then the outlook can appear, as a persecution towards the faithful. Thus, misunderstandings, assumptions, and wrong ideas arise so quickly. Recently, politics have deprived some, of true freedoms, and so, like the martyrs of yesteryear, a few, seeing much at stake, desire to 'stick their neck out' and rise up to be counted. These days the idea of going to Mass is merely going into a church building, saying a few prayers, and coming out again. – Not so – The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ crucified at Calvary 2,000 years ago, perpetuated through history.

The second source of information resurfaced in October 2021. It was an interview that Mr Taylor gave to the Catholic publication *Sceptre Bulletin* in 1995.<sup>12</sup> This interview was a useful primary source as it provided both practical details from the time of interest as well as Mr Taylor's personal reflection on his conversion to Catholicism. This interview is also crucial because it is the only surviving primary source in which Mr Taylor describes his two known sessions of locution in 1971 and 1978.

The third source of information were newspaper articles on the traditionalist movement in Lancashire as well as commentaries published by either Mr or Mrs Taylor in secular or religious newspapers during the 1970s.<sup>13</sup> The newspaper articles often concerned the Leyland Mass Centre (i.e. Mr and Mrs Taylor's home at 222 Longmeanygate) and the broader activities of the St Pius V Association in the north of England. Copies of articles referenced will be supplied by the researcher upon request or can be obtained from the Lancashire Archives at Preston where they are available on microfilm.

The St Pius V Association was founded by Father Peter Morgan<sup>14</sup> in 1973 before being amalgamated into the Society of St Pius X (SSPX) in 1978.<sup>15</sup> The SSPX was founded on 1st November 1970 by Swiss Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre who had been a leading traditionalist at the Second Vatican Council, having formed the International Group of Fathers.<sup>16</sup> The Society's canonical status was put into jeopardy, however, by Archbishop Lefebvre's excommunication after he consecrated bishops at Écône in 1988. While progress was made during the 2000s in bringing the Society back into full communion with Rome, its status remains formally unresolved.<sup>17</sup>

Collected testimonies was the fourth primary data source. This began in March 2022 and covered an eight-month period to October. The interviews totalled twenty-one and included both written and oral testimony. Interview excerpts are available upon request. Provided at the end of this article is a list of participants along with the dates they gave their interviews. The testimonies tended to focus on three primary topics, firstly the character and religious devotion

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of Mr and Mrs Taylor, the activities at the Leyland Mass Centre, or the broader history of Catholic traditionalism in England.

Finally, journal articles and books covering the movement of Archbishop Lefebvre provided the study with a view to ecclesiastical politics following Vatican II.<sup>18</sup> The primary method of data analysis was thematic which interpreted the subject matter according to three major themes, namely grassroots traditionalism and the preservation of pre-conciliar Catholic customs, Derrick Taylor's interior locutions, as well as the events at the Leyland Mass Centre and their aftermath.

The early traditionalist movement in England relied on laypeople opening their homes to priests to perform Tridentine Masses which, until 1975, apparently took place in relative secrecy with little attention from the Church or the media. These lay Catholics were ordinary people with no special theological education; some were labourers and colliers. Based on the research conducted, the endeavour to maintain traditionalism seemed to spark a renewal of faith from which emerged a crusade-like campaign to preserve what the traditionalists saw as the true Mass and the true Church.

Mr Derrick Taylor and Mrs Irene Mary Taylor of 222 Longmeanygate in Midge Hall near Leyland in Lancashire were a Catholic couple who put their disillusionment with the reforms into action. While other Catholics might have felt the same way, Mr and Mrs Taylor were among the few who publicly stated their opposition to the reforms.<sup>19</sup> However, this does not mean to say they did not falter in their position. For example, in the front page *Lancashire Evening Post* article of October 1975 that features the Mass centre in his kitchen, Mr Taylor reveals that he struggled reconciling his love for the Church and his loyalty to the Pope with the reforms to the Mass that he believed were 'a load of rubbish'.<sup>20</sup> Of the changes, Mr Taylor went on to say 'It is deceitful and there is nothing about it at all. My heart bleeds for the Catholics today. There is a treasure and they are just throwing it away'.

In the same article, Mrs Taylor spoke of her own disillusionment, but how setting up a Mass centre in her home had abated her worries:

There are a lot of miserable Catholics about. They are very unhappy. But we are blessed. It seems that the new Mass has been tampered with by people who do not know what they are doing. I used to come out of church confused and troubled, but now much of the burden has been lifted.

**Lancashire Evening Post**  
No. 27,562 THURSDAY OCTOBER 9, 1975 6p

# 'Rebels' in outlawed Mass

## LANCASHIRE CATHOLICS DEFY PAPAL 'BAN'

**By DARRYL FREEDMAN and DAVID GRABAM**

RELIGIOUS riots, outlawed by the Catholic Church, are being held in an isolated Leyland house. Roman Catholics from all over Lancashire including Preston and the Fylde Coast flock to the house to celebrate the prohibited, old-style Latin Mass every two months.

Asks, today a spokesman for the diocese of Liverpool, Archbishop Donald Hume, said that the riotous were being conducted against the laws of the church. They are carried out without the approval of the bishop and the Vatican and they are illegal.

People from as far away as Lancashire and beyond are flocking up to the village of Leyland to attend the Mass. The priest, Fr. Morgan, is a member of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits.

The Father and his family are staying in the house. Fr. Morgan is a member of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits.

**PETER HILL**

... says he has been told that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland. He says that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland. He says that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland.

**ALLEN**

... says that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland. He says that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland.

**REFORM**

... says that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland. He says that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland.

**SCHISM**

... says that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland. He says that the Mass is being celebrated in a house in Leyland.

**SMILL**

**Watten**



Fr Morgan in front of the altar at the Taylor house.

The Vatican has a sharp line, says a source in Rome, and will not allow a Mass to be celebrated by a priest who has been excommunicated.

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Fig. 3a: Lancashire Evening Post article 9th October 1975. Copyright of the Lancashire Evening Post.

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By autumn 1975, Father Peter Morgan had been travelling for over eighteen months to 222 Longmeanygate on a semi-regular basis to celebrate the Tridentine Mass. About this, Mr Taylor stated ‘I would like him to come up here every day if he could. It is like Christmas when we know he is about to arrive’.

The struggle of being a traditionalist in the 1970s not only concerned spiritual matters but also practical ones.<sup>21</sup> For example, the researcher secured an interview with Father Peter Morgan himself who gave some insight into the lives of traditionalist English Catholics at the time:

By the mid-1970s, few priests were willing to perform the Tridentine Mass which meant that traditionalist Catholics had to travel further afield to find Masses in the Tridentine Rite.

Mr and Mrs Taylor were very brave for standing up against the authority of the Church, particularly because they were ordinary working-class people remaining steadfast in their belief which was also quite unusual.

The Church was surprised when Catholics didn’t obey to the changes because the Church had got used to their members always obeying.

This reveals why Mr and Mrs Taylor’s decision to open a Mass centre at their home was significant in that it was probably the only place solely offering the Tridentine Rite in the north west of England at the time, especially between April 1974 and October 1975.<sup>22</sup> Father Peter Morgan attested to this:

The Mass centres in Lancashire, in my time, were very few. It was your grandparents’ Mass centre that was the first one really, even before Liverpool and Manchester.

222 Longmeanygate was the focal point for the Society in Lancashire at that early time.

By following the timeline of *Lancashire Evening Post* articles addressing the activities of the St Pius V Association, it seems the article that had featured the Taylor family had inspired other centres to form. For example, by December 1975, a Tridentine Mass was being celebrated at Blackpool<sup>23</sup>, and by February 1976, the first



Tridentine Mass organised by the Association was celebrated in Preston town centre.<sup>24</sup>

The 1970s was also a time of financial struggle for many which impacted the Taylors in particular as Mr Taylor could no longer rely on the coal mining industry for work to raise his ten children. Of the Taylor's living conditions at the time, Father Morgan recalled:

I got the impression that they were really quite poor.

They gave everything they had to the traditionalist movement. Although they were very poor, if we needed something for the altar for instance, they would not question in getting it for us, probably even if the children had to go without.

Outspoken traditionalists like the Taylors tended also to face both secular and ecclesiastical ridicule. From outside the Church, they were labelled rebels<sup>25</sup> while members of the clergy did not hesitate publicly to condemn the Taylor's actions, calling them cranks for instance.<sup>26</sup> Others who had set up Mass centres in their homes in various parts of the country were also subject to disapproval by the Bishops' Conference.<sup>27</sup>

Crucial to Mr and Mrs Taylor's involvement in traditionalist Catholicism was the backdrop of their home 222 Longmeanygate. Mr and Mrs Taylor chose to transform their house and its grounds into a place of traditionalist pilgrimage and integrated Catholicism into every aspect of their family life. This decision is emblematised in Mrs Taylor's writings in the October Letter: 'We are only Catholics, living Catholic, desiring to live to the teachings of God made Man'.<sup>28</sup> The house at 222 Longmeanygate became an expression of the couple's dedication to the traditionalist cause. From the researcher's own recollection and from that of some interviewees, Mr and Mrs Taylor decorated their home with life-size statues of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady and fixed a stoup for holy water in their hallway. They owned a scroll of popes listed since Saint Peter and a large tabernacle. Many devotional cards featuring saints were placed throughout the house and a list of the Ten Commandments was framed and nailed to the wall in the living room. The list could go on. The point is that understanding that

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house as it was is central to understanding Mr and Mrs Taylor and vice versa. Mr Taylor had built his home at Longmeanygate in the 1960s to house his ten children while the size of the house and its grounds conveniently did a great practical service to the early traditionalist cause. In essence, 222 Longmeanygate is the crucial third party in the story of Mr and Mrs Taylor.<sup>29</sup>



Fig. 3b: 222 Longmeanygate, the home of Irene and Derrick Taylor, in the 1980s.

Beyond their commitment to hosting Tridentine Masses at their home, what draws further interest to the Taylors' story is Mr Taylor's apparent aptitude for supernatural experience. From very early in the traditionalist movement, Mr Taylor made it known to his family that he had experienced a session of locution as a consequence of his disillusionment following the implementation of the liturgical reforms. It was only in 1995, however, during an interview with the *Sceptre Bulletin*, that Mr Taylor made these

experiences a subject of public knowledge by providing details on what had been said to him during the locutions. As part of this research, an interview was secured with Ms Judith Sheehan, a family friend and Mr Taylor's interviewer. Ms Sheehan clarified that Mr Taylor's recollection of the locutions were completely spontaneous.

The Locutions of the Sacred Heart occurred in 1971 and are so titled because it was the Sacred Heart of Jesus that apparently spoke to Mr Taylor at the climax of his spiritual dilemma. When interpreted from a traditionalist perspective, the content of the first locution supports the idea that the Tridentine Rite is the true rite of the Latin Church. In 1978, the second locution, titled *The Priestly Locutions of Brownedge*, was of a different nature, coming not from the voice of God but from the more familiar voice of Mr Taylor's confidant Father Patrick McNally. In the second locution, Mr Taylor was told to remain loyal to the Pope when he came seeking answers due to his disaffection for the Church after years of ridicule following his decision to found the Leyland Mass Centre.

A key fact to remember about Mr Taylor is that he was a convert.<sup>30</sup> As an Anglican, Mr Taylor would have grown up reading the Book of Common Prayer, but in 1950, at the beginning of his conversion, he would have been introduced to the Catholic faith in its Tridentine form. With the Catholic liturgy shifting to vernacular use and doing away with pre-conciliar customs, it is not surprising why a convert to the faith would fear that the new liturgy resembled a more Protestant-like service. With the 'zeal of converts' a documented phenomenon<sup>31</sup>, it starts to become clearer why a Catholic like Mr Taylor would experience such disillusionment after Vatican II perhaps even more so than his wife who had been a cradle Catholic. Mr Taylor spent the first twenty years of his life as an Anglican, underwent a conversion for six years and then fourteen years after his confirmation, the Tridentine Mass changed as did many of the old customs he had been taught were central to Catholic practice. This demonstrates why Mr Taylor underwent a spiritual turmoil when the reforms began to be implemented from 1970.<sup>32</sup>

For Mr Taylor, his disillusionment was strong enough that he experienced, on at least two occasions, the phenomenon of locution –

– an event in which a person hears a supernatural voice. The concept of interior locution has a long history in the spirituality and mysticism of the Jesuits, Carmelites and Salesians. St Teresa of Ávila gave possibly the most complete analysis of locution in her 1588 work *The Interior Castle*. St Teresa created a framework for deciphering genuine locutions based on their fulfilment of three criteria.<sup>33</sup> Firstly, the words spoken must be clear and possess both power and authority; secondly, a tranquility must descend upon the locutor that extinguishes all their troubles to allow them to focus on praising God; thirdly, the locutionary words remain permanently imprinted in the person's memory as they were exactly spoken.<sup>34</sup>

Returning to the post-conciliar era, in 1971, on the feast day of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mr Taylor entered the Church of St Wilfrid in Preston and there, before a picture or statue heard the voice of the Sacred Heart say a couple of short sentences. Mr Taylor relayed these words during an interview some twenty years later: 'Keep up with your Mass. Everything is all right'.

Based on his actions after the apparent locution, it is clear that Mr Taylor interpreted the words to mean to keep up with the Tridentine Mass that he held a deep affinity for.<sup>35</sup> Mr Taylor experienced another locution on 15th December 1978 in St Mary's Church in Bamber Bridge. This locution involved his confidant Father McNally who had died exactly two years earlier yet told Mr Taylor:

Do not look to the right or to the left but carry on living your faith as always, always be faithful to what the Pope is saying, which will never, in matters of faith and morals, be anything other than what you learned in our beloved catechism.

Mr Taylor's locutions are significant because they motivated the Taylors' support for the St Pius V Association. However, his locutions were not the first time Mr Taylor had experienced Catholic fervour and possible divine communication. In his 1995 interview, Mr Taylor recalls a notable experience he underwent that became a prophecy of his conversion. It took place on 1st July 1938 and involved a then seven-year-old Derrick entering the house of a Catholic friend and seeing there in the hallway a depiction of the

Sacred Heart for the first time. Derrick asked his friend's mother to light a candle for him in front of that devotion to mark his affinity to it and the candle has since come to symbolise his later conversion.<sup>36</sup> This backstory provides some context as to why Mr Taylor returned thirty years later specifically to the Sacred Heart for guidance in a moment of desperation.

On 8th October 1975, Mr and Mrs Taylor decided to escalate their involvement with the St Pius V Association<sup>37</sup> by agreeing to open their kitchen-turned-chapel to the press. This opportunity resulted in a front-page exclusive article in the *Lancashire Evening Post* with the headline 'Lancashire Catholics defy papal ban' (fig. 1).<sup>38</sup> Having run the first northern Mass centre for eighteen months by this point, Mr and Mrs Taylor would have become used to hosting Tridentine Masses in their home, but this article was one of the first public expressions of their Latinist views. This prompted the parish priest, auxiliary bishop, and Archbishop of Liverpool George Beck to condemn the Tridentine Masses taking place at Longmeanygate.<sup>39</sup>

The *Lancashire Evening Post* article followed on from a spate of news coverage in August 1975 over the decision of Father Oswald Baker of Downham Market to defy his bishop by continuing to only say Tridentine Mass at his church St Dominic's.<sup>40</sup> The Tridentinists seemed to realise during this time that the media had the power to spread their movement and so began using the local press to produce sensational articles each time a Tridentine Mass was celebrated in the area.<sup>41</sup>

The priest crucial to Mr and Mrs Taylor's involvement with the traditionalist movement was Father Peter Morgan whom they first met at the Bath Mass centre in March 1973. Father Morgan, who was widely documented in the local and national press at the time, split opinions to the extreme: some praised him while others reviled him for his forthright approach to spreading the Latinist movement in England.<sup>42</sup> Mr and Mrs Taylor were among those Catholics who praised him and he would come to say Tridentine Mass at their home for a period of four years before his Superiorship of the St Pius V Association ended in 1978.<sup>43</sup>

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The chapel in the kitchen at 222 Longmeanygate apparently had become popular enough with fellow traditionalists that Mr and Mrs Taylor constructed a makeshift church building just to the west of their home. This small building was used for the regular worship services held at Longmeanygate, including Tridentine Masses, catechism lessons and rosary groups.<sup>44</sup> Now remembered as the Old Church of Longmeanygate after being long-since demolished, the building was filled with statues and rows of pews and stood as an emblem of Mr and Mrs Taylor's aim of running their own Latinist church.

After their deaths in 2011 and 2015 respectively, many stories involving the dedication of Mr and Mrs Taylor have emerged from family and friends. One such story involves Archbishop Lefebvre<sup>45</sup> himself who apparently once visited 222 Longmeanygate to perform a large open-air Mass in the grounds of the house.<sup>46</sup> During the consecration, a gust of wind blew the Host the Archbishop had raised up out of his hand and it fell to the ground. After the Mass had ended, Mrs Taylor built a small brick structure over the exact place where the Host had fallen so that no one would walk over the spot which was now sacred ground. Open-air Masses seemed to take place quite frequently at Longmeanygate from the mid-to-late 1970s according to newspaper reports, with some of the Taylor children participating as altar boys for instance.

By the 1980s, however, the St Pius V Association had morphed into the SSPX while other societies began to break away from the SSPX over liturgical issues, most notably the Society of Saint Pius V (SSPV), co-founded by *sedevacantist* bishop Clarence Kelly.<sup>47</sup> Of the amalgamation of the St Pius V Association into the SSPX, Father Morgan stated:

When Father Edward Black took over as Superior in 1978, he desired to reorganise the St Pius V Association by bringing it fully under the auspices of the SSPX which meant dispensing with all the non-SSPX priests who had been running the Association with me since the beginning, all of whom were either retired, semi-retired, or had left their dioceses in defiance of the reforms.

This transition also involved taking the Masses out of private homes and moving them into official churches.<sup>48</sup> Father Black wanted to buy church buildings in town centres so he could close down the Mass centres in people's houses. The people who worked hard to build up a centre like your grandparents became a little bit disappointed when the Mass was taken away from them during this transition.

This transition in turn rendered redundant the house Mass centres that had been established throughout England during the Society's first decade.<sup>49</sup> In his own testimony, Father Black stated 'your grandparents were, I think, no longer attending Society Masses and the priests were renting a house at Walton-le-Dale'.

Father Black explained how Mr and Mrs Taylor sometimes provided lodging for SSPX priests at their home, but that this offer began to be withdrawn as the couple started to sever their ties with the Society. The Society instead began to house its priests at Charlton Beaches at Walton-le-Dale.<sup>50</sup> A *Lancashire Evening Post* article from June 1978 concerning Catholic traditionalism makes reference to the priests at Walton-le-Dale travelling to Manchester, Liverpool, Bury, and Bingley, but there is no mention of new Masses taking place at Longmeanygate. Despite their house church having lost its status as the movement's hub in Lancashire, Mr and Mrs Taylor still helped to arrange later events such as the visit of Archbishop Lefebvre to Preston in June 1979.<sup>51</sup>

Although it is not known exactly when Mr and Mrs Taylor officially stopped organising events for the SSPX, it is clear that by the mid-1980s, their role in the traditionalist movement had decreased. It is likely that Mr and Mrs Taylor did not appreciate the changes initiated by the new SSPX superior. After dedicating considerable resources to the Society for the best part of a decade, their Mass centre at Longmeanygate had quickly become dispensable. When the Tridentine Masses were conducted in the confines of their home and its grounds, Mr and Mrs Taylor could preserve the Mass on their terms, but with its expansion in the north, the Society had outgrown the Taylors.

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It is likely that having to coordinate with new priests made practical matters difficult for the Taylors, especially as hosting Tridentine Masses was still controversial by the 1980s. Despite the shifts taking place in affiliation, the Taylors continued to open their home in the 1990s and 2000s, albeit less frequently, to certain Catholic organisations they trusted such as Opus Dei but with the notable exception of the SSPX itself. Ultimately, the decision to make redundant the Mass centres in private residences coincided with the Taylors' transition from their public activism for traditionalism to their retreat from the world.

During the 1970s, there was a fervent conviction among traditionalists that there existed a chance they could reverse the Vatican II reforms. This belief would have been crucial to lay traditionalists in becoming dedicated to the movement.<sup>52</sup> In essence, the traditionalists had to believe their movement would eventually result in a reversal of the reforms in order to give their actions legitimacy. However, by 1988, tensions between Archbishop Lefebvre and the Vatican escalated with the archbishop's unlawful episcopal consecrations at Écône which led to the schism of the SSPX.<sup>53</sup>

At this stage, any possibility of reversing Vatican II would have been more remote than ever and so it appears Mr and Mrs Taylor decided to retreat from public view. This sparked a curious turn of events in their story during the 1980s and beyond. Where their house had once been visible from Dunkirk Lane, Mr and Mrs Taylor planted many tall trees that hid their home from public view. 222 Longmeanygate from then on remained a strictly private domain for the family being open to very few visitors and the Taylor family had become stigmatised in the local area for their religiosity. Surely, the realisation that they would not see their Church restored struck the couple deeply and so they tried to preserve their faith the best they could by cocooning it from the world by retreating into the sanctuary of their home. Upon realising their efforts to preserve the Tridentine Mass would not change the Vatican's course, a sense that they had been misunderstood seemed to pervade Mrs Taylor's later correspondence: 'The attitude these days is, if any is religious, they



are Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or even "mental". That is only politics'.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps as some consolation for the traditionalist movement having faded away, Mrs Taylor built the Shrine of Our Lady in a grotto to the southwest of her home where she spent many hours in devotional solitude. Mr and Mrs Taylor did, however, continue to heed the words of the Sacred Heart locution, namely to attend their Mass — the Tridentine Mass. They did attend this Mass throughout the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s and passed on their traditionalist beliefs to their grandchildren. Their personal Catholic faith never dimmed, a demonstration of which came in Mrs Taylor's final days in October 2015. Despite friends and family members urging her to take painkillers for her bowel cancer, Mrs Taylor refused, saying she 'must suffer for her own sins and for those of humanity'. Although she did not need to suffer as much as she did, Mrs Taylor opted to suffer because she believed that suffering is the key to unlocking the door to heaven.

It is important to mention the Taylors' later membership in the Latin Mass Society (LMS), an organisation that enjoys canonical recognition. During the pontificates of St John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the Vatican worked to create a space for traditionalist Catholics to feel welcome in the mainstream Church. Although it would be inaccurate to suggest the issue of Vatican II opposition had been rectified, this offering by the Church had perhaps made less acrimonious the split once tangible between traditionalists and modernists. For example, Mr and Mrs Taylor seemed eventually to find some satisfaction<sup>55</sup> during their final years because by affiliating with the LMS, they could attend Tridentine Masses said by priests sympathetic to pre-conciliar customs while remaining in communion with their bishop.

The story of Derrick and Irene Taylor presents an understanding of the fervency felt by traditionalist Catholics from a personal point of view. This research has achieved more clarity by exploring the story of two Catholics who not only refused to acclimatise to the Vatican II reforms but helped to establish the traditionalist movement in the north of England. Presenting this perspective

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recognises that many traditionalists were ordinary, well-meaning individuals whose rejection of the Vatican II reforms was not necessarily rooted in disobedience, but instead resulted from a painful inability to reconcile themselves to any change to the Mass.

In essence, the story of Derrick and Irene Taylor perhaps reflects how other Catholics of the 1970s might have felt. It was their unique home at Longmeanygate, however, their willingness to take on a public role in the traditionalist movement, their writings and life story as well as the supernatural experiences that were produced by their disillusionment that, in combination, justifies why they are notable traditionalists. To end, on whatever side of the argument over the liturgical reforms one stands, the fact that Mr and Mrs Taylor — two seemingly ordinary but decidedly extraordinary Catholics — stayed true to their convictions despite mounting ridicule demonstrates a resilience that can be universally admired.

### List of Interview Participants

1. Monica Ann Bolton (11 March 2022)
2. Judith Sheehan (12 July 2022)
3. Joan Marita Morris (13 July 2022)
4. Father Edward Black (14 July 2022)
5. Father Joseph Evans (16 July 2022)
6. Father Michael Lowenthal (18 July 2022)
7. Father Jonathan Cotton (27 July 2022)
8. Kate Joran (27 July 2022)
9. Father Peter Haverty (28 July 2022)
10. Susan O'Donnell (28 July 2022)
11. Father Peter Morgan (9 August 2022)
12. Father Vianney Vandendaele (10 August 2022)
13. Father Peter Morgan (11 August 2022)
14. Father Simon Henry (15 August 2022)
15. Geoffrey Townshend (25 August 2022)
19. Bill Adams and Theresa Swan (28 September 2022)

16. Father Peter Morgan (29 August 2022)
17. Geoffrey Townshend (31 August 2022)
18. Geoffrey Townshend (9 September 2022)
20. Theresa Swan (8 October 2022)
21. Rory White (16 October 2022)

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> R. Rymarz, “‘It’s where I feel at home’”: An investigation of young adult Catholic members of an Australian Traditional Latin Mass community’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 99 (1) (2022), pp. 32-48; <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.348170033367043> [Accessed 5 October 2022].

<sup>2</sup> Pope Paul VI (1964), *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19641121\\_orientalium-ecclesiarum\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_orientalium-ecclesiarum_en.html) [Accessed 27 January 2023]; Max Hastings, *Modern Catholicism* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991) *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> O. Stirrat, ‘Canons, councils and concerns: Vatican II and the Society of St Pius X’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 99 (1) (2022), pp. 49-60.

<sup>4</sup> A. Bugnini (1971), *Heenan Indult*, <https://lms.org.uk/heen-an-indult> [Accessed 27 January 2023].

<sup>5</sup> ‘Rebel priests get new support’, *The Guardian*, 11 October 1975, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis (2021), ‘Motu Proprio by the Supreme Pontiff’, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/20210716-motu-proprio-traditionis-custodes.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20210716-motu-proprio-traditionis-custodes.html) [Accessed 6 March 2023].

<sup>7</sup> Ronald J. Warwick, *The Living Flame: The First Twenty-five Years of the Society of St Pius X in Britain* (The Society of St Pius X, London, 1997), pp. 110-111.

<sup>8</sup> George J. Moorman, *The Latin Mass Explained* (TAN Books, Rockford, 2007), pp. 1-40.

<sup>9</sup> D. von Hildebrand (2015), ‘The Case for the Latin Mass’, [Online]. *Our Lady Help of Christians*. Available at: <http://ourladyhelpofchristians-al.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/the-case-for-the-latin-mass.pdf> [Accessed 11 September 2022].

<sup>10</sup> S. Caldwell (2022), 'Shia LaBeouf becomes Catholic devotee of Traditional Latin Mass', *Catholic Herald*, <https://bit.ly/3yhhYVU> [Accessed 5 October 2022].

<sup>11</sup> Cometan, *Irene Mary's October Letter: An Introduction to Irenianism* (Cometanica, Preston, 2021), pp. 1-76.

<sup>12</sup> J. Wallace, *Light a Candle for Me* (Sceptre Bulletin, Glasgow, 1995), pp. 18-22.

<sup>13</sup> I. Taylor, 'Greed versus morality', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 4 February 1976, p. 8; 'This form of Mass not condemned', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 6 November 1975, p. 12; 'Sex education', *Catholic Herald*, 16 January 1970, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> B. Rimmer (1976), 'Reverend rebel goes to war', *Daily Mirror*, 11 November 1976, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> SSPX (2022), *Society of St. Pius X District of Great Britain*: <https://fsspx.uk/en/society-st-pius-x-district-great-britain> [Accessed 26 January 2023].

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<sup>20</sup> 'Lancashire Catholics defy papal ban', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 9 October 1975, p. 1.

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<sup>22</sup> 'Outlaws of the faith: the thorns in the Vatican flesh', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 7 November 1978, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> 'Catholics travel for Latin Mass', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 8 December 1975, p. 7.

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<sup>27</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales (1976), ‘Statement on unauthorised mass centres’, *Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales*, October 1976, pp. 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Cometan, *Irene Mary’s October Letter: An Introduction to Irenianism* (Cometanica, Preston, 2021), p. 39.

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## The Struggle of Traditionalist Catholics

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<sup>55</sup> 'A very special person', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 30 August 2003, p. 8.