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# TRADITION AND THE CHURCH

*By*  
Msgr. George Agius, D.D., J.C.D.

*“But there are also many other things  
which Jesus did; which, if they were writ-  
ten every one, the world itself, I think, would  
not be able to contain the books that should  
be written.”* —John 21:25

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“Therefore, brethren, stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word, or by our epistle.”

—*2 Thessalonians 2:14*

## Foreword

### To the Second Edition

**M**ONSIGNOR George Agius was born on January 10, 1873 on the island of Gozo—a 40-square mile island with 30,000 inhabitants in the central Mediterranean Sea about three and one-half miles off shore to the northwest of the island of Malta.<sup>1</sup> He studied at the Jesuit Seminary on Gozo and was ordained in 1895 by Bishop Camilleri for that diocese. In 1897, he entered the Gregorian University in Rome and by 1901, Father Agius had earned two doctorates—one in Theology and the other in Canon Law.

One of his classmates at the Gregorian University was Father Eugenio Pacelli, who later became Pope Pius XII (1938-1958). Fr. Agius observed, “While I was a student at the Pontifical University, I never thought I was sitting on the same bench with a future successor to Saint Peter.” Shortly after Father Agius completed his doctoral studies in Canon Law, he received a letter from Bishop Thomas A. Bonacum, the first bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska, offering him the position of secretary and chancellor for the Diocese of Lincoln. Having accepted this offer, Fr. George Agius arrived in Lincoln in September of 1902 and imme-

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1. Biographical information was taken from *A Priest Forever* (Sr. Loretta Gosen, C.P.P.S. The Catholic Chancery Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1988) and “A Glimpse of Our Heritage” (as found in the *Southern Nebraska Register*, by Sr. Loretta Gosen, June 2, 1995 through July 28, 1995).

diately assumed his duties as Secretary and Chancellor for the Diocese.

Father Agius continued to serve as Secretary and Chancellor for the Diocese of Lincoln for ten years. In addition to his administrative responsibilities, he had several pastoral responsibilities which included, among others, the assignment by Bishop J. Henry Tihen as resident pastor in Seward, which is the town in which the modern-day seminary, St. Gregory the Great, is located. After being pastor at Seward, Fr. Agius was transferred to Geneva, Nebraska in 1916, where he was able to devote time to study and research, in addition to caring for the spiritual needs of his parishioners. The purpose of his study was to define and then help meet some of the challenges that confronted the Church in the 1920's. He observed that the authority of the Church was being rejected, some of her doctrines were being "thrown to the wind," and some people were denying the divinity of Christ. It was during this time that Fr. Agius wrote *Tradition and the Church*, which was originally published in 1928. Testimonies on the depth of thinking demonstrated in this book were numerous. These praises came from the hierarchy, as well as from editors of newspapers and periodicals. Bishop Beckman wrote: "Dr. Agius takes a place alongside other leaders in the realm of Catholic thought and joins them in the noble effort of presenting the claims of the Catholic Church to a generation that can be saved by nothing else."

After serving for more than 18 years in the Diocese of Lincoln, Father Agius decided to seek permanent status as a priest of that diocese. Accordingly, he requested his *exeat* (official release) from his native Diocese of Gozo and was incardinated into the Diocese of Lincoln in 1921. In 1937, Fr. Agius was given the title of Mon-

signor. He was later the official representative of the Lincoln Diocese at the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on November 1, 1950.

As a former classmate of Pope Pius XII, he enjoyed the privilege of a special place near the throne of the Holy Father. After serving as a priest for 67 years, Msgr. Agius died on March 6, 1962 and was buried on the island of Malta, in the same year which saw the beginning of Vatican Council II.

This book is one of the best texts written in English on Tradition, even though originally it did not enjoy a large circulation. It is understandable to the average layman, yet it provides a solid historical and doctrinal coverage of the basics of the theology of Tradition. The publishing of this book by TAN comes at an important time in the life of the Church when many are seeking a greater understanding of the entire subject of the Catholic Church. Those seeking a basic understanding of the Tradition of the Church—unencumbered by the influences of Modernism—would be well served to read this book. It is, therefore, my hope that *Tradition and the Church* will become widely circulated and known everywhere by the Faithful.

Fr. Chad A. Ripperger, F.S.S.P., Ph.D.  
Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary  
Denton, Nebraska—September 3, 2005