

The

*"Instaurare omnia in Christo"*

# ANGELUS

A JOURNAL OF ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION



**INSIDE**

**Conference by  
Fr. Franz Schmidberger**

**INTERVIEW WITH FR. PFLUGER**

**Ed Faust—Lost and Found**

**Is Vatican II Indisputable?**

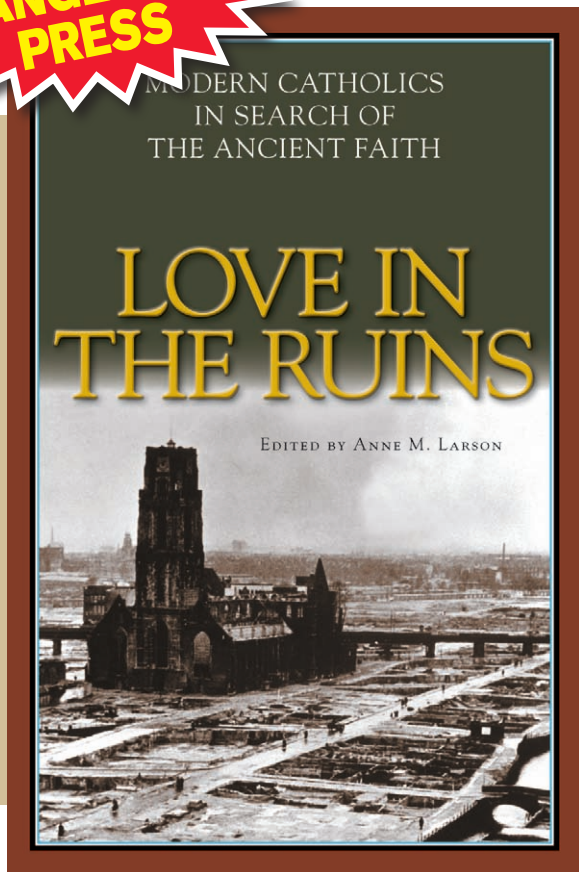
**SSPX BROTHERS**

# CONVERSION STORIES

**Every Catholic who has found refuge  
in the traditions of the Church has a story.**

**Now they have a voice.**

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"How did I know I had found the Mass of All Time, the Mass of the Roman Rite? First and most obviously, the solemnity and the dignity evidenced everywhere in the ceremony of worship. This was not the raucous rumblings of the modern world brought indoors on Sunday to continue to amuse and to entertain. This was serious worship, unlike anything in the rest of the week, unlike anything to be found anywhere else in the world. This was uplifting, this was spiritual, this was God-centered, this was higher, nobler and richer than anything the world could offer. My intellect confirmed what my emotions first sensed—this was the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Traditional Rite of Worship of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church."—**Dr. David Allen White**

Every Catholic who has found refuge in the traditions of the Church has a story. One doesn't end up at the Latin Mass by accident....The narratives...are written by Roman Catholics who have discovered or rediscovered the riches of the ancient liturgy and traditions of Holy Mother Church, powerful antidotes to the ecclesiastic and liturgical crises of our day. They are accounts of conversion, "reversion," and simple fidelity to the Faith throughout the religious and cultural upheaval that followed in the wake of Vatican II. Many of the contributors to this book suffered for years from theological dissent and liturgical abuse in their parishes, parochial schools, and Catholic universities; some grew up in tradition but refused to participate in the post-conciliar revolution; some, like me, were converts to the Faith; and all were inexplicably drawn to the beauty and mystery, the truth and holiness of the centuries-old sacrifice of the Mass. Perhaps most importantly, these are stories of what Evelyn Waugh has called the "operation of Grace...the unmerited and unilateral act of love by which God continually calls souls to Himself."—from the Preface

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*“Instaurare omnia in Christo—To restore all things in Christ.”*

*Motto of Pope St. Pius X*



“To publish Catholic journals and place them in the hands of honest men is not enough. It is necessary to spread them as far as possible that they may be read by all, and especially by those whom Christian charity demands we should tear away from the poisonous sources of evil literature.”

*—Pope St. Pius X*

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**LETTER FROM THE EDITOR.....2**

*Fr. Markus Heggenberger*

**WITHDRAWAL OF THE 1988 EXCOMMUNICATIONS**

**Letter of Bishop Fellay to Pope Benedict XVI. . . . . 3**

**Press Release from the Superior General of the SSPX. . . . . 4**

**“WHERE DO WE STAND?”.....5**

*Fr. Franz Schmidberger*

**LOST AND FOUND.....15**

*Ed Faust*

**SOCIETY OF SAINT PIUS X BROTHERS ..... 19**

**Winona, USA**

**INTERVIEW WITH FR. NIKLAUS PFLUGER .....27**

*A Swiss newspaper*

**IS THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL INDISPUTABLE? .30**

*DICI*

**BOOK REVIEW:..... 33**

*Exile in Erin* by Fr. William Barnaby Faherty, S.J.

*Patrick McCarthy*

**CATECHISM OF THE CRISIS IN THE CHURCH **PART 22** 38**

*Fr. Matthias Gaudron*

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.....42**

*Fr. Peter Scott*

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# Letter from the Editor

After January 21, when the Pope officially revoked the excommunications of the bishops of the SSPX, there was much ecclesiastical smoke surrounding the issue of “traditionalists inside the Catholic Church.” Two months later, the air has started to clear in a sense. The positions are becoming more evident to the interested viewer.

First there is the Pope. There is no doubt that Benedict XVI, as a professor of theology and a cardinal, was committed to a “modern line” of doctrine. It is well known that the famous “*subsistit*” of Vatican II (“*Ecclesia Christi subsistit in Ecclesia Catholica*”—replacing the former “*Ecclesia Christi est Ecclesia Catholica*”; “the Church of Christ *subsists in* the Catholic Church”—“the Church of Christ *is* the Catholic Church”) was proposed during Vatican II by Cardinal Frings from Cologne—through his theological advisor, Fr. Joseph Ratzinger. Being now in charge of the universal Catholic Church, things may look a little bit different. This move of the Pope with the lifting of the excommunications can be interpreted as a political measure to prevent the Church from collapsing from scandals, heresies and many kinds of disloyalty. You may think of traditionalists whatever you want, but their honesty in matters of faith and morals is undisputed...

There is a second group: the Catholic bishops all over the world. There might be some of them with inclinations towards Tradition, but many are declared enemies of it, and some of those who are not do not dare to manifest their attitude. The watchword of those bishops is now: “Under no circumstances will Vatican II be negotiable.”

This means that the opposition to the SSPX is an opposition against Tradition itself and therefore against an “interpretation of Vatican II in the light of Tradition.” This last formula had been used in conversations between Archbishop Lefebvre and the Vatican (including Cardinal Ratzinger at that time), but it is ultimately not a solution for the reason that the majority of Catholic bishops do not want “to negotiate Vatican II.” In other words: Vatican II for them is identical with the modernist interpretation of the Council that has prevailed for the last 45 years, with the New Mass, Communion in the hand, moral license, *etc.*

Which is to say that the frontline has become visible between the Catholic Faith and Modernism, between bishops and authority in the Church (the Pope), between abuse and traditionalism.

In the revolution of Vatican II, the authority is undermined first, and when it will not comply, it will finally be attacked, as in other revolutions. And it is

a very difficult process to be first considered a part of the revolution and later to try to stop the process of the same revolution—the revolutionaries will never forgive you for that.

Third, there is a group of “mainstream Catholics,” being in part those who will decide the battle. By their long inactivity and compliance with most of the modernist changes in the Church (introduced in the name of obedience), they silently encouraged the “establishment” to continue their “reforms.” At the same time, they have a certain ignorance about the true nature of the changes in the Church, and they often do not see the heretical foundation. This is why there is potential for Catholics with a certain disposition to return to the “faith of their fathers” or simply to a religion which claims to matter more than some kind of “carnival-polka” entertainment.

Finally, the last group is the so-called traditionalists, those priests and faithful who have a clear perception of the crisis in the Catholic Church. Accounting more for their responsibility towards God than for human favor, they followed the duty of a Catholic in a state of necessity. They were often outlawed simply for not accepting Communion in the hand, going to the traditional Latin Mass, teaching their children the catechism, being faithful to the teaching of the Church in dogmatic and moral questions and in sacramental discipline. “If the recent changes are trustworthy, then how do I know how long they will last?”—was their argument of common sense. Their argument from Revelation was (and is): “If any one preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema” (Gal. 1:9).

It might be a difficult and painful process to correct the situation, but “an end with terror is better than terror without end.” This should be encouraging to all who finally realize that they labored in the wrong direction in the past—but that is not a reason to continue a false path in the future. And, after all: is the Catholic Church not a “communion,” where the members help one another in charity?

Instaurare Omnia in Christo,  
**FR. MARKUS HEGGENBERGER**



# OPEN LETTER OF THE BISHOPS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. PIUS X



TO HIS HOLINESS  
POPE BENEDICT XVI

Most Holy Father,

In sentiments of thanksgiving we wish to express our deep gratitude for Your act of paternal kindness and for the apostolic courage by which You rendered ineffective the measure which was imposed upon us 20 years ago as a consequence of our episcopal consecrations. Your decree dated January 21, 2009, restores in some way the reputation of the venerated founder of our priestly Society, His Grace Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. It also procures a great good to the Church, so it seems to us, by doing justice to the priests and faithful worldwide who, attached to the Tradition of the Church, will no longer be unjustly stigmatized for having kept the Faith of their fathers.

Because of this combat for the Faith, we assure Your Holiness, according to the wish You expressed, that we “will spare no effort in exploring as yet unresolved questions through requisite discussions with the authorities of the Holy See.” Indeed we desire to begin, as soon as possible, exchanges with representatives of Your Holiness concerning doctrines opposed to the Magisterium of all time.

By following this path still necessary, mentioned by Your Holiness, we hope to help the Holy See to bring the appropriate remedy to the loss of the Faith inside the Church.

The Immaculate Virgin Mary has clearly guided the steps of Your Holiness toward us, She will continue Her gracious intercession in His favor. With this assurance, we filially ask the Universal Pastor to bless four of His sons most attached to the Successor of Peter and to His charge of feeding the lambs and the sheep of the Lord.

Menzingen, January 29, 2009  
on the Feast of Saint Francis de Sales

+Bernard Fellay  
+Richard Williamson  
+Bernard Tissier de Mallerais  
+Alfonso de Galarreta

# PRESS RELEASE FROM BISHOP FELLAY



## PRESS RELEASE FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE PRIESTLY SOCIETY OF SAINT PIUS X

Pope Benedict XVI addressed a letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church, dated March 10, 2009, in which he makes known to them the motives which guided the important step of the January 21, 2009 Decree.

After the “avalanche of protests unleashed” recently, we wholeheartedly thank the Holy Father for having placed the debate back on the level on which it must be held, that of the Faith. We fully share his main concern of preaching the Gospel “in our days, when in vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel.”

Indeed the Church is going through a major crisis which can be resolved only by an integral return to the purity of the Faith. With Saint Athanasius, we profess that “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly” (Athanasian Creed).

Far from wanting to stop Tradition in 1962, we wish to consider the Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar teaching in the light of this Tradition which St. Vincent of Lérins defined as “what has been believed at all times, everywhere and by all” (*Commonitorium*), without rupture and in a perfectly homogenous development. Thus we will be able to contribute efficaciously to the evangelization requested by the Savior (see Mt. 28:19-20).

The Priestly Society of Saint Pius X assures Benedict XVI of its determination to enter into the doctrinal talks recognized as “requisite” by the Decree of January 21, with the desire to serve revealed Truth, which is the first act of charity to perform towards all men, Christians or non-Christians. It assures him of its prayers so that his faith fail not and that he may confirm his brethren (cf. Lk. 22:32).

We place these doctrinal talks under the protection of Our Lady of All Confidence, with the assurance that she will obtain for us the grace to hand down faithfully what we have received, “tradidi quod et accepi” (I Cor. 15:3).

Menzingen, March 12, 2009

+Bernard Fellay



F R . F R A N Z  
S C H M I D B E R G E R

# “WHERE DO WE STAND?”

Conference delivered at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Kansas City, Missouri (March 2, 2009)

The theme of our conference tonight is “Where do we stand?” I want to give you an account of the present situation with our Society and our stand in the Church, including the whole situation in the Church. If we ask ourselves “Where do we stand?” we have to go back some decades. In fact, we have to go back to the Second Vatican Council. At the Second Vatican Council there were two tendencies absolutely opposed to each other: the liberal, modernist wing united in the Rhine alliance on the one hand and the more conservative Council Fathers on the other hand, united in the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*, of which Archbishop Lefebvre was the president. And already at the Council there were very strong disagreements between those two camps. Unfortunately, the “left wing” won the battle due to the support of the two Council Popes, John XXIII and Paul VI.

After the Council there was an enormous decline in the Church: in the liturgy, in the government of the Church, in the handing over of the Faith, in the manifestation of the Faith, *etc.*, to such an extent that Archbishop Lefebvre had to make a very public statement in 1974 in which he accuses the whole modern orientation. He said that errors had profoundly invaded the Church in all areas, on all levels.

You know this declaration from November 21, 1974. Here are some excerpts:

We hold fast, with all our heart and with all our soul, to Catholic Rome, Guardian of the Catholic Faith and of the traditions necessary to preserve this faith, to Eternal Rome, Mistress of wisdom and truth.

We refuse, on the other hand, and have always refused to follow the Rome of neo-Modernist and neo-Protestant tendencies which were clearly evident in the Second Vatican Council and, after the Council, in all the reforms which issued from it.

All these reforms, indeed, have contributed and are still contributing to the destruction of the Church, to the ruin of the priesthood, to the abolition of the Sacrifice of the Mass and of the sacraments, to the disappearance of religious life, to a naturalist and Teilhardian teaching in universities, seminaries and catechetics; a teaching derived from Liberalism and Protestantism, many times condemned by the solemn Magisterium of the Church.

Two years after this, on the occasion of the priestly ordinations in Ecône, on June 29, 1976, the Archbishop said that the whole drama between Rome and Ecône was the drama of the Mass. Is there not a certain contradiction between his declaration of 1974 and this statement in his sermon of 1976? In 1974, he said everything had been influenced by modernism, but in 1976, he said it was mainly the Mass which is



at stake. No, there is no contradiction between these two statements because the Mass is essentially the summary of our whole holy Catholic religion. It is the synthesis of the Faith; thus to accept the New Mass means to accept the new orientation of the Church. Archbishop Lefebvre understood this very clearly.

Even his enemies understood it in the same way. That is why they told him in 1976, before the ordinations, that if he would only once celebrate the New Mass, it would show that he accepted it in principle. Thus, the Archbishop, in his sermon of 1976, said the following:

In proof of this, consider that six times in the last three weeks—six times—we have been asked to re-establish normal relations with Rome and to give as proof the acceptance of the new rite; and I have been asked to celebrate it myself. They have gone so far as to send me someone who offered to concelebrate with me in the new rite so as to manifest that I accepted voluntarily this new liturgy, saying that in this way all would be straightened out between us and Rome. They put a new Missal into my hands, saying “Here is the Mass that you must celebrate and that you *shall* celebrate henceforth in all your houses.” They told me as well that if on this date, today, this 29th of June, before your entire assembly, we celebrated a Mass according to the new rite, all would be straightened out henceforth between ourselves and Rome. Thus it is clear, it is evidence that it is *on the problem of the Mass* that the whole drama between Ecône and Rome depends.

Archbishop Lefebvre, understanding very well that the whole orientation would be accepted if he accepted the new rite of the Mass, refused to use this new rite. Thus he was suspended after the ordinations. He continued his work, his priestly and episcopal ministry, realizing that the Faith was at stake, and Faith is more than purely external obedience.

In 1978, a new pope ascended the See of St. Peter: first John Paul I and then, very shortly after, John Paul II, on October 16, 1978. Only one month after being elected, the new pope received Archbishop Lefebvre in a private audience. He told him, “Between us, there are three problems: The first problem is that it is said that you do not accept the pope.”

The Archbishop told him that we fully accept the pope. We are very much attached to the See of Peter and we accept the primacy of the pope according to the First Vatican Council. The pope was satisfied with this declaration.

Concerning the second point, he said: “It is said that you refuse the Second Vatican Council.” But the Archbishop told him, “We do not refuse the Second Vatican Council; we accept it if it is interpreted in the light of Tradition.”

The pope was satisfied with this statement—which he used himself only some days before the audience. These were his own words, that the Council must be interpreted in the light of Tradition. But the Archbishop, I think, understood this statement a little bit differently than the pope understood it. The pope meant that the Second Vatican Council must be integrated into the teaching of the Church until

the Council, whereas the Archbishop understood it in the sense that Tradition is the criterion for the Second Vatican Council: what conforms to the constant teaching of the Church can stand. Whatever is ambiguous would have to be defined, made clear and reconciled with Tradition. Whatever cannot be brought into accord with Tradition has to be eliminated. This was the sense of Archbishop Lefebvre’s statement.

You might ask yourself, as many people do, whether it is possible that a Council contains ambiguous statements or teaches things which do not conform to what was taught by the Church until the Council? Well, there are in fact points which are very dubious, points which we cannot understand. I will give you some examples; you will find them summarized in a little booklet, *Time Bombs of the Second Vatican Council*; you can read it yourself. Let me simply summarize some of these points; for example, concerning ecumenism, the relationship of the Church with other Christian denominations. What does the Council say about this?

It follows that the separated Churches and Communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church.

If other Christian denominations—Lutheranism, Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, Calvinism, *etc.*—are also means of salvation, it is absolutely useless to try to convert these people. Why should we? If their own denomination is a way of salvation let them become good Lutherans, good Orthodox, good Calvinists, good Anglicans, and so on. That’s it. According to the Council, they can be saved in their own denomination.

Or perhaps consider *Nostra Aetate* and the relationship of the Church with non-Christian religions. For example, concerning the Muslims:

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

I do not know what you think about this moral life which is mentioned here but according to the Qur’an, every man can have four wives at once. That is not a moral life. Bombing innocents is not part of

a moral life. Or imagining heaven in a very sensual manner: is this part of a moral life?

The Council even tells us that we adore God together with the Moslems. Let me quote from the document about the Church:

In the first place amongst these [whom the plan of salvation includes] there are the Mohammedans, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind.

For weeks now, from all different sides, everyone is telling us over and over that we have to accept the Council. But how can we accept statements like these? How is it possible? In fact, it is not possible. I could never subscribe to such a statement. It is impossible. These are things which are at least ambiguous and must therefore be clarified. This is what we consistently ask.

As another example, in *Gaudium et Spes*, "On the Church in the Modern World," it is said that the center of all things on earth is man: "According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown."

In the text it says, "center and crown." That man is the crown of the visible creation there is no doubt. But man is not the center and aim of all things on earth. It is simply not true. The center and aim of all things on earth is God, not man. These are false statements. They have to be clarified. Once again, this is what we ask all the time.

We thus come back to our private audience of November 18, 1978. Pope John Paul II was quite satisfied with the statement, "I accept the Council interpreted in the light of Tradition." But once again, Archbishop Lefebvre had very clear ideas about how this should be done.

But the pope said there is also a third point: the Mass. "It is said that you refuse the New Mass." Archbishop Lefebvre said, "Yes, in our houses, everywhere we only celebrate the old Mass. We have some problems with the New Mass." The pope replied, "Well, this is surely a disciplinary question. You can clarify this with Cardinal Seper." And he called Cardinal Seper who was at this time Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith. He came and said, "Holy Father, they make a banner of the Mass! You cannot grant them this Mass. It is impossible!" The pope then said, "Well, discuss this amongst yourselves" and left.

Things remained in this situation from this meeting until 1987. In 1987, the Archbishop said, on the occasion of the priestly ordinations in Écône, that things could not continue as they were. He announced that he was likely to consecrate for his succession a bishop to ensure priestly ordinations after his death. Of course, one year later, the Archbishop consecrated four bishops due to the state of necessity.

When you speak about a state of necessity people often are confused and say: "Oh, there was perhaps a state of necessity because the Archbishop was old, because he did not want to leave his Society without a bishop," *etc.* It is as if the state of necessity was on the side of the Society of St. Pius X. But this is not true. That is a false understanding of the situation. The state of necessity was not on the part of the Society of St. Pius X. The state of necessity was on the part of the Church. Archbishop Lefebvre very clearly knew that from this new church and New Mass it is impossible to rebuild Christianity, Christian families, Christian convents, monasteries, seminaries and Catholic states. It is impossible to do this from the basis of the New Mass.

There were, at the time, no bishops in the whole world who were ready to ordain young men to offer the old Mass exclusively. If our ordinands were willing to celebrate one New Mass, then we would probably have found bishops who would ordain our seminarians. But not one single bishop was ready to ordain our young candidates to the priesthood being conscious that they would exclusively celebrate the old Mass and not the new one. So there was a state of necessity in the Church because there were no bishops willing to do so. And without a bishop there can be no priests, no priests who would celebrate this Mass and rebuild Christianity. That was the question. And so the Archbishop consecrated four bishops in order to have priests who celebrate the old Mass and build up Christianity from this Mass.

At this moment the Vatican thought that if they struck us hard, the whole flock would be dispersed and the Society would essentially dissolve. But, as you well know, this did not happen. You are witness to this. They issued an excommunication against the two consecrating bishops and the four bishops consecrated. But God blessed the work and it continues today.

The situation basically stayed the same until 2000 when we made a pilgrimage to Rome for the Holy Year. The Vatican authorities saw that there was a flock praying with discipline and displaying an absolutely Catholic spirit. This made them reflect that they could not leave the situation as it was. Thus, a certain dialogue began about how to resolve the problem.

Now, on our side, we asked Rome for two preliminary steps before we could enter into a true discussion. We did this because we said that confidence was very much lacking. We must first have proof that Rome really wants to protect Tradition, that Rome really wants to favor our movement and not destroy it or put it in a trap. So we said, "First of all, let Rome say that every priest has the right to say the old Mass, that the old Mass was never forbidden." This was the first preliminary step. And then, secondly, "Let these so-called excommunications be finished."

Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, with whom we had this dialogue, said, when we proposed this to Rome,

Concerning the first preliminary step, the Mass for every priest, at this moment it is impossible. It is true that the most important cardinals in Rome agree that the Mass was never abolished. But there are not only the cardinals, there are the secretaries, there are the sub-secretaries, and there are the bishops' conferences—and they do not agree with this. We must go slowly, and after some years this can finally be done. But at the moment it is impossible. Concerning the excommunications, if you sign an agreement with Rome it is clear that these excommunications are automatically finished.

But we told the Cardinal: “Your Eminence, we have spoken about preliminary steps. Preliminary, not accompanying, preliminary steps to re-establish confidence.” There were letters going back and forth, meetings and some discussions, but the situation did not really improve.

Finally, on April 19, 2005, a new pope was elected: Benedict XVI. Everybody knew that he was very reserved towards the so-called prohibition of the old Mass. He had said that it was absolutely unheard of in the whole history of the Church that a rite was simply forbidden like this. Moreover, it was clear that there was a certain appreciation for the old Mass. Soon there were rumors: Will there be a decree? Will there be a *motu proprio*? Will something come from Rome, perhaps a decision that the old Mass can once again be celebrated? For months it was the big question everywhere. Finally the *Motu Proprio* of July 7, 2007, came. The main statement was that the old Mass was never abrogated. The conclusion was very clear: if it was never abrogated, every priest can celebrate it. This was a very important step.

The next step was a logical consequence. If this Mass was never abrogated, why were those who celebrated it during those years sentenced, condemned, and considered to be disobedient? Why? It no longer makes any sense. So, as a logical decision, the retraction of the decree of excommunication would simply be the next step.

Bishop Fellay, in his *Letter to Friends and Benefactors* in April 2008, said that, besides the liturgy in the Church, few things have changed for the better. This made Rome very angry. So they called Bishop Fellay and he had a meeting with Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos on June 4, 2008, where the Cardinal told him “You will now accept Rome’s conditions.” “But your Eminence, what are these conditions?”

He was not very clear in his expressions, and the next day he handed a paper to us with five conditions: First, we must give a proportional answer to the generosity of the Pope. The generosity of the pope probably meant *Summorum Pontificum*. But we had already given an appropriate answer. First of all, our faithful, before the *Motu Proprio*, said 2.5 million rosaries for the *Motu Proprio*. Secondly, after the *Motu Proprio*, we thanked the Pope. Third, our priests celebrated 1,000 Masses in thanksgiving for the *Motu*

*Proprio*. What more can we give you? We always celebrated this Mass which the Pope now declares was never abrogated. I think this is a very appropriate and proportional answer.

Secondly, the Cardinal said that we must give an answer by June 30th. Bishop Fellay gave his answer on June 26th. They also said that we must keep ecclesiastical charity. But isn’t it ecclesiastical charity to attack the errors which are ruining the life of the Church? I think it is a very profound charity towards the Church to attack the errors and to help overcome these errors.

Next we were told that we must respect the pope. What can we do beyond praying for him and accepting His ministry? We cannot deny that the present pope has a certain liberal spirit. He was trained in this. For example, when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, in 1984, he said that during the time of the Council and afterwards, we accepted 200 years of liberal civilization, brought to fruit outside of the Church, and brought it purified into the Church. We do not agree that this liberalism should have entered the Church.

Moreover, last year, in September, when he went to France, he said that laicization—the separation Church and state—is completely in accord with the Faith and is in fact a fruit of the Faith. But Pope Pius XI said that this sort of laicism was a pest. This pest is not the fruit of the Faith but is a very dangerous sickness which brings people to death. So if one pope says it is a pest and the other says it is a fruit of the Faith, there is a certain contradiction.

Finally there was a fifth condition. We were told not to establish our own Magisterium against the Magisterium of the Church. But we never tried to do this. We have always simply stated that there are certain contradictions between the Second Vatican Council, the reforms which came from this Council, and what the Church has always taught and practiced. There are certain contradictions. If we have made mistakes, please show us where our errors are. Show us; we are quite ready to correct ourselves. But how can we, for example, accept that the other denominations are means of salvation? The Church always taught the contrary. Our Lord sent his apostles to the whole world to teach all nations, to make them all disciples. It is far from our desires or intentions to establish ourselves as the Magisterium. At the same time, two and two make four, not five.

So where do we stand today? I think we have to consider the above history to understand the complete situation. Let us first consider the situation of the Church. I think that, from the ecumenical movement, there is a spirit of religious relativism which has profoundly entered the Church and in souls. Let me read to you a little passage from a letter I received some months ago from a lady in Germany:



In human beings, in animals, and in plants, there is a divine light. That is why we are obliged, being brothers and sisters through the divine presence in us, to tolerate other men of other races and religions, to discriminate against and judge nobody. Every religion has a right to exist, being a particular way to God. Perhaps other religions are a detour or a more difficult way, but, in any case, they are a way to God. I have to tell you that those members of other religions who are faithful servants of God, who tolerate and love others and who keep the commandments are much nearer to God than those of our own religion who gossip about others, discriminate against them, and call them pagans. After all, there is only one God. Why should someone with a different religion not have the right to call God differently? The Jews call God Jehovah, Yahweh. Why should the Moslems not call him Allah, or the Hindu, Brahman? It is all the same God who we adore as well and only under a different name. Think about that.

So we have thought about that. And we found that the Christian religion, the Catholic religion, is quite different from the Hindus, who have thousands or millions of gods. Whereas we, in our Creed, state that we believe in one God. There is only one God. We have thought about this, and we have found that we are quite different from the Buddhists, who have given up the idea of a personal God. We have thought about this, and we have found that the Christian religion is different from Islam, where the Moslems conceiving God as one person only, whereas we adore God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And one is not equal to three. There is a difference.

So these are not different names but these are different things. Things that exclude one another. They are contradictory. God cannot be in the same way one person or three persons. It is impossible.

I read to you those lines because I think that this general state of mind today is absolutely common: we just have to tolerate, we just have to be kind to everyone, we just have to have some ambiguous concept of religion. That's it. The question of truth, the question of the Faith, the question of the First Commandment of God and the first article of the Creed does not matter for most people. I do not know how to remove from the Church this spirit of religious relativism. It is profoundly rooted in people's minds—profoundly.

The *second point* I want to bring to your attention is the knowledge of our Faith and the practice of our Faith. I do not have precise information about the state of things here in the United States, but I can assure you that in Germany and in Europe, in general, the knowledge of the Faith, generally speaking, is extremely low. Sometime ago, a lady of Spanish—thus Catholic—roots brought her son of 11 years to our priory in order to prepare him for First Communion. This 11-year-old boy and his mother, a Spanish lady, were so Catholic, but this boy had never heard about God. He did not know the word. He did not know the Sign of the Cross. Or prayer. Absolutely nothing.

A priest from southern Holland—a very Catholic area—told us that in a class of 36 children, he asked how many could make the Sign of the Cross. Remember, it is a very Catholic area. There was one child who knew the Sign of the Cross. One child in 36! How can it be otherwise? In religion class, or catechism, they teach about Moslems, they teach about the environment, they teach about peace on earth, things like this; but they do not teach the one God, the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine institution of the Church, the seven sacraments, the Blessed Virgin Mary; nothing about all this—nothing. So what is the consequence of this decline in the knowledge of our Faith? People do not practice any longer. The priest whom I just mentioned has a parish of 9,000 Catholics. On Sundays, about 300 of them attend Mass. That is only 3%. And this is more and more common across Europe and the world. You find some elderly people at the modern Masses, some families who bring children, but the youth is completely lacking. There is no longer any youth. Except when there are special events with pop or rock music and things like that. Then the youth come.

A little over a year ago, a priest from Germany told me that in a neighboring parish, in Hanover, in northern Germany, they brought a camel to Mass one Sunday. He said the whole church was fully packed with people to see it. So these people do not come to see God in the church, but they do come to see a camel.

Or consider confession. There is a well-known canonist in Germany who always says the old Mass. Years ago he made a statement that confession was a lost sacrament. People no longer go to confession. In a parish in a very Catholic area in Germany, a new parish priest was appointed who was more conservative than his predecessor. He established a specific hour every week for confession. He even called in a confessor from outside the parish. His parish had three thousand Catholics. And only one lady presented herself for confession. Other ladies said, “I don't know what I have to confess. I have no sins. I would have to invent sins if I were to go to confession.” So ultimately the knowledge of sin, the consciousness of evil, has completely disappeared.

Or consider religious life. You have a well-known book here in the United States with the statistics about religious life here [*Index of Leading Catholic Indicators: The Church Since Vatican II—Ed.*]. It shows that the religious life is completely disappearing. In some years, there will be virtually no religious life in the United States, and it is about the same in Europe. The religious are the special army of the Church; they are witnesses to the holiness of the Church. If the Church no longer has the strength and virtue to attract souls who then withdraw from all worldly business and their families, who go behind the high walls of the monasteries and convents to consecrate themselves to God and His service, then the Church is no longer the

Catholic Church because the Catholic Church must always have the strength to attract souls.

Finally, Eucharistic piety is also very much disappearing. Sacramental processions, sacramental benedictions, the adoration of Our Lord during the day in churches. In Europe, most churches are closed during the day. They say they do this because otherwise there are thieves and burglary in the churches. This might be very true. But why are there robberies? Because there is no one in the churches present to adore Our Lord.

Near Frankfurt, in central Germany, a new parish priest was appointed who was similarly more conservative than his predecessor. The first thing he did was clean the pews of his church because his predecessor gave Communion to everybody: Catholics, Protestants, everybody. In many cases, they apparently did not like the host because the Protestants attached them to the bottom of the pews. So this priest had to purify the pews. This was a great sacrilege.

Where do we stand? You see where we stand. I heard, from a lady who has close contacts in the Vatican, that one day the Pope said to those surrounding him, in a very private circle, that he did not know how to re-awaken the Faith.

Where does the Society of St. Pius X stand, especially in its relations with Rome? We have always maintained a three-step plan. The first two steps were preliminary: the Mass for every priest and the end of the excommunications. Although the *Motu Proprio* was not perfect, it nevertheless basically fulfilled the first condition. Now, with the decree of January 21, the second condition has also been fulfilled. The 1988 decree of excommunication has been taken back.

We said that when these two preliminary steps were taken, we would ask for theological discussions. We want to discuss the Council. We want to discuss what does not conform to Tradition. We want to discuss the profound sources of the evils of our time: the decline of religious life, the loss of faith, *etc.* What are the reasons for this? We want to discuss this.

In the decree of January 21, Rome said that theological discussions are now necessary and must follow. This is what we have always asked. It corresponds exactly to our demands. So I think that in the next weeks or months these discussions will begin. They will be mainly written discussions, and not oral—but it does not matter. We need to discuss all of these points either way.

Let me give you an example of how things might be clarified. In the Council's decree on ecumenism, there are some terrible words about the hierarchy of truths. The modernists interpreted this in the sense that some truths are more important than others. Thus, when discussing things with Protestants, you could leave out certain less important truths, such as the primacy of Peter, the sacrificial character of the Mass, the dogmas about the Blessed Virgin Mary,

*etc.* These "second degree" truths could be left on the side: this was the Modernist interpretation. Rome itself, at the beginning of the 1980s, gave an authentic interpretation, saying that the hierarchy of truths does not mean that one truth is more important than another; rather, it means that one truth comes forth from another. One truth is the source of another. For example, the truth of the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ comes, in a certain way, from the truth of the Holy Trinity. The divine institution of the Church comes from the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This is very clear. You see how an ambiguous statement of the Council must be clarified. It can be done and must be done. This is what we mean by theological discussions: if this statement means A, it is wrong; if it means B, it is right.

The third and final step then would be the Society of St. Pius X's enjoying a canonical structure. In Rome they have already foreseen such a canonical structure which would absolutely satisfy us. The most important question now is the theological discussions.

Let me now say a word about our duty in the midst of this crisis today. What should we do? We must first have an enormous strength of soul. The crisis continues on. It is easy to become tired and throw away one's arms. My dear friends, we must be very firm and strong in our convictions. We must ask God every day for this strength to stand for the Faith. We should not sacrifice to the idol of the modern, liberal spirit of the world. Not one grain of incense—nothing. Absolutely nothing.

We have to overcome the spirit of modernism and liberalism. We have never looked first for our own corner where we can live in peace, calm, and tranquility as the Fraternity of St. Peter does. They have this attitude a little bit. No, we do not work for ourselves; we have always worked for the Church. The Church is our passion. The Church is our life. We want to see that the Church is cleansed from the spirit of liberalism and modernism.

Amidst all these trials and difficulties, there are profound consolations. When I consider our pilgrimage to Lourdes in October of 2008 where we saw a large flock gather, 20,000 faithful, in the Basilica of St. Pius X. Children, youth, families, seminarians, priests, the four SSPX bishops, religious, over 200 sick and infirm—to hear them all sing "*Credo in unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.*" What a wonderful manifestation and testimony to see all these hearts lifted to God.

There are real consolations. In Germany in November, the only Trappist monastery in the country returned to their monastic tradition and the old Mass. There had been much discussion and rumors about this in the newspapers. This step was approved by Rome, by the pope himself! They were given special permission to completely return exclusively to the old Mass.

We must also pray hard for perseverance. As an example of what prayer brings forth: After World War II, part of Germany and Austria was occupied by the Soviet army. In Vienna, there was a Franciscan priest, Fr. Petrus Pavlicek, who called for a Rosary crusade that Austria might be freed from the Communists. More than 700,000 people enrolled in this Rosary crusade. The obligation was to say one decade of the Rosary every day for the freedom of Austria. This was 1949. In 1955, Austria was freed; the Communists left without compensation. This was the first time the Soviet army left a country without either a fight or compensation. This was the fruit of prayer.

I think we must do the same for the Church. We must continue to pray that the Modernists either leave the Church or leave their errors; the latter would obviously be better.

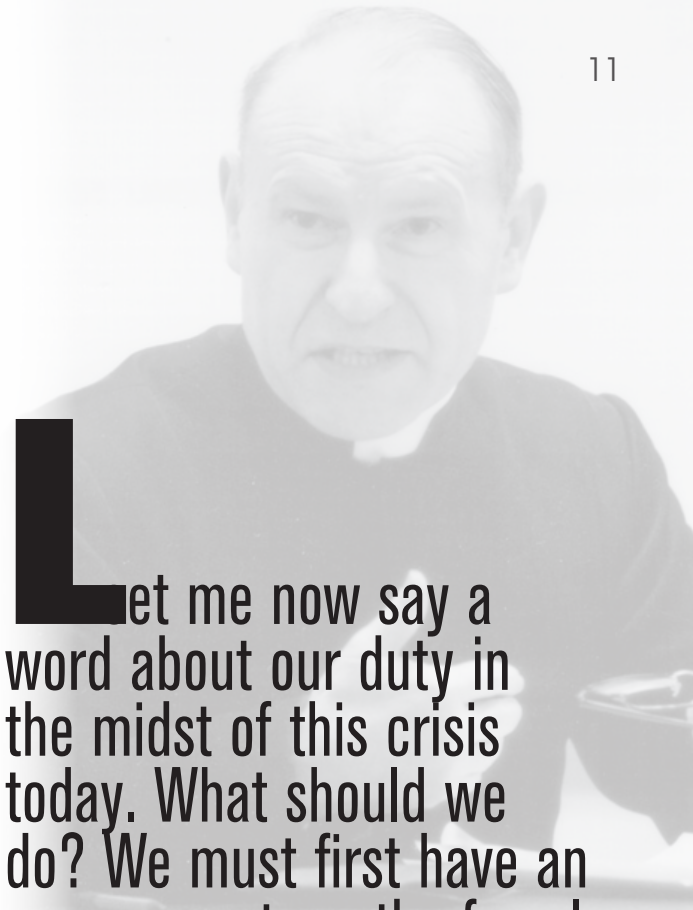
The *third point* is that we must form ourselves by reading. We must read solid literature and books which nourish our soul, enlighten our spirit and enkindle our hearts. Books like *They Have Uncrowned Him* and *Open Letter to Confused Catholics* by Archbishop Lefebvre. These are precious books. Here in the United States, you have Angelus Press, which is very precious. Do not simply read good books; read only the best books. We all only have a certain amount of time; thus read the most precious books.

Also, in America, you have three SSPX retreat houses: in Arizona, Connecticut and California. It is worth making a retreat, especially if you have never done so or if it has been a great amount of time since you have been on one. I invite you to do so. If you buy a car, from time to time you must take it to the garage for maintenance since some things need attention. Well, so it is with our souls, and these retreat houses are like service stations.

We must all be apostolic and missionary in these times. God wants us to save other souls. There is no question that the salvation of other souls depends on our prayers, efforts and Christian examples.

Let me finally give some an account of the most recent events. On November 1, 2008, Bishop Williamson, in our seminary in Germany, ordained a former Protestant pastor from Sweden to the diaconate. For this event, a Swedish television station came to the seminary to film the ceremony. Afterwards, they did three interviews: one with a Swedish deacon, one with the new deacon, and one with Bishop Williamson. In this last interview, he was led into a trap by being asked about the Holocaust. And he said that only 200,000 to 300,000 Jews were killed by the Nazi regime and, further, that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz.

The Swedish station said that the interview would not be viewed until the beginning of the new year. So there was already a certain plan. They then took this interview to the Lutheran and Anglican churches in Sweden since we were renting a church from the Lutherans in Stockholm and one from the Anglicans



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one Sunday a month for Mass. The result was that we were no longer allowed to rent the churches.

Afterwards, *Der Spiegel*, a very left-wing liberal German magazine, was collaborating with and connected to this Swedish television station. At the same time, I wrote a letter to the German bishops on December 1 with a copy of *Time Bombs of the Second Vatican Council*. I said therein that now that the Mass has been granted to every priest in principle, we now ask for theological discussions. One of the bishops gave this booklet to the Central Council of the Jews in Germany. Thus there was a first attack of the Vice-President of this Council against this booklet.

On January 19, *Der Spiegel* published an excerpt from Bishop Williamson's interview. The title of the article was, "The Pope will have Problems." They did not say "Bishop Williamson will have Problems" or "The SSPX will have Problems"; the focus was on the Pope. From the beginning there is thus an obvious orientation. Immediately after we read this interview, Fr. Morgan, District Superior of England, published a statement saying that in no way are we racists or anti-Semites. We have members of our Society from many different races and countries. Since Our Lord Himself, His mother, the Apostles and the first Christians were Jews, we cannot be anti-Semites. How could we be anti-Semitic?

I myself also published a similar statement saying that we are in no way anti-Semitic since Archbishop Lefebvre's own father died in a concentration camp. But we maintain that the Jews must be baptized and are called to accept Our Lord Jesus Christ. This we state very clearly. January 20th was when both of these statements were published.

On January 21st, the decree taking back the excommunications was issued although the document was signed the previous Wednesday. On this Wednesday, the 21st, the Swedish television station released the interview with Bishop Williamson. Thus it is probable that even in the Vatican itself, there are people who are against the Pope and who wanted to attack the Pope. Perhaps they arranged things in this manner. Or they wanted to stop the Pope because they knew that there was a plan to remove these excommunications. And if they could not stop it, at least they could damage or discredit the Pope. I think there was a certain plan.

The decree was published Saturday, January 24th. From this moment, there was a whole wave of media attention breaking out. It was incredible. Thus Bishop Fellay himself, in a press release on January 27th, said that he did not approve of Bishop Williamson's statements. His reasoning was thus: A bishop has the task and duty of preaching the Faith. It is not his duty to speak of political or historical points. I myself had to make a similar statement because the attacks became very violent.

Bishop Williamson, on January 28, sent a letter to Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos:

Your Eminence,

Amidst this tremendous media storm stirred up by imprudent remarks of mine on Swedish television, I beg of you to accept, only as is properly respectful, my sincere regrets for having caused to yourself and to the Holy Father so much unnecessary distress and problems.

For me, all that matters is the Truth Incarnate, and the interests of His one true Church, through which alone we can save our souls and give eternal glory, in our little way, to Almighty God. So I have only one comment, from the prophet Jonas (1:12):

"Take me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you."

Please also accept, and convey to the Holy Father, my sincere personal thanks for the document signed last Wednesday and made public on Saturday. Most humbly I will offer a Mass for both of you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Richard Williamson

In Rome, they were astonished to have such a good letter from Bishop Williamson. Nevertheless, the media continued to attack us in all countries. It was especially violent in Germany, France and Argentina.

What was to be done in the midst of such a storm? We asked ourselves if we should withdraw from the mass media entirely and not give any commentary. Or should we try to lead things a bit? After a certain hesitation, we decided to give some commentary to some newspapers and television programs. One of our confreres, Fr. Gaudron, had a discussion with an auxiliary bishop in Germany on February 10. This turned out quite well.

But it became very clear that there was an unholy alliance between the Central Council of the Jews in Germany, the bishops, and the left-wing progressivists in the Church. This was blown up by the mass media. Every word we said was examined. It was terrible, diabolical. Several cardinals even said that it was above all human means.

On February 11, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, three seminarians from Ecône died in an avalanche. It is very curious that it was in Lourdes that Bishop Fellay called for another Rosary crusade to obtain the second preliminary step, the taking away of the excommunications. But these are the ways and mysteries of God.

More and more it became clear that the true aim of the attacks was not so much Bishop Williamson. This was but a pretext; a terrible pretext, but a pretext all the same. The true aim was not even the SSPX. The true aim was to attack the Church and the Pope. As proof, in Austria, several weeks ago an auxiliary was appointed to the Diocese of Linz. He was a parish priest, quite popular, with many youth in his parish. He says the New Mass and, as far as I know, he has never attacked the Council. But he has conservative reputation: he has no altar girls, which is, of course, a terrible crime. He also said that Hurricane Katrina

was a punishment from God. But you should not say things like this! A storm arose and before he was consecrated, he stepped down from his appointment. The Vatican gave in and accepted this. You see: this priest says the New Mass, has never attacked the Council, or said anything against the Holocaust, and was nevertheless destroyed. Wherever there is some conservative force and some resistance to the destruction in the Church, they are punished.

Once again, on February 26, Bishop Williamson apologized:

The Holy Father and my Superior, Bishop Bernard Fellay, have requested that I reconsider the remarks I made on Swedish television four months ago, because their consequences have been so heavy.

Observing these consequences I can truthfully say that I regret having made such remarks, and that if I had known beforehand the full harm and hurt to which they would give rise, especially to the Church, but also to survivors and relatives of victims of injustice under the Third Reich, I would not have made them.

On Swedish television I gave only the opinion (...“I believe”...“I believe”...) of a non-historian, an opinion formed 20 years ago on the basis of evidence then available and rarely expressed in public since. However, the events of recent weeks and the advice of senior members of the Society of St. Pius X have persuaded me of my responsibility for much distress caused. To all souls that took honest scandal from what I said before God I apologise.

As the Holy Father has said, every act of unjust violence against one man hurts all mankind.

+Richard Williamson

There are four conclusions to be drawn from these present events. First, the statements of Bishop Williamson are a painful circumstance of a most joyful event. By the decree of January 21, the four SSPX bishops were freed from a most unjust stigma. Whosoever reads the texts sees that even Archbishop Lefebvre and Bishop de Castro Mayer were rehabilitated since the juridical consequences of the 1988 decree were taken back. The new decree said that the juridical consequences no longer exist. Thus the “excommunications” of Archbishop Lefebvre and Bishop de Castro Mayer no longer exist.

The second conclusion is that the painful experiences of the last weeks make us all concentrate a bit more on Our Lord and Savior. This corresponds exactly to the plan of God since, for as St. Paul says, we are all predestined to become conformed to the image of the Son of God. Jesus is the crucified Truth and Love; persecuted, calumniated, and rejected. The Founder of the Christian religion did not promise to his disciples a paradise on earth. On the contrary, we are certain of pain and crosses, to be misunderstood and, as Our Lord said, to be as sheep among wolves.

Let us consider a few quotes:

The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord....If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household? (Mt. 10:24-5).


If the world hate you, know ye, that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (Jn. 15:18-19)

In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world. (Jn. 16:33)

The third conclusion is that the big sin of the conciliar and post-conciliar Church’s orientation is the fleeing from the cross of Christ. It seems now that God wanted to bind the becoming known of our Society in the whole world to the Cross. And this all the more since we are engaged ourselves in the defense of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in its old and venerable form, for the sacramental continuation of the Passion of Christ on our altars. Moreover, such trials always mean a purification and cleansing of both the individual soul and that of the community. The divine husbandman purifies, from time to time, the fruit-bearing branch so that it can bear even more fruit. God writes straight with crooked lines. He is never deceived in His providence.

The fourth conclusion is that the devil also does not deceive himself. It seems that he understands, much better than many Catholics, what is at stake for him with the decree of January 21. Thus he mobilizes his troops to damage the Church, to discredit the pope, and to annihilate our Society. If you still need proof that we are doing a good thing, here it is.

For the last 20 years, by the so-called excommunications, God has granted us a life relatively calm. Our adversaries considered us an insignificant little group. By the decree of January 21, the unbroken Tradition was brought inside the Church. Thus the storm breaks out.

But we have confidence in Our Lord assuring us that the gates of hell will never prevail against the Church. We also have confidence in Our Lady, who told us that, in the end, her Immaculate Heart will triumph. 

Fr. Franz Schmidberger was Superior General of the Society of Saint Pius X (1982-94) and is currently the District Superior of Germany.

A certain question after the conference was answered by Fr. Schmidberger in the following way.

**...I think the SSPX is distancing itself from the truth. The Dominican motto is “Veritas,” truth, because God is Truth. And what Bishop Williamson said: is that closer to the truth than the party line as far as the Holocaust is concerned?...**

I do not agree... This is not the question. We do not need to discuss this. That is not our charge. Archbishop Lefebvre consecrated four bishops to hand down the sacraments, to preach supernatural truths such as the Holy Trinity and the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not consecrate them to fight against the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz! If the Archbishop were here today, he would say to Bishop Williamson: “I did not consecrate you for this.” This is a fight for historians—let them figure it out. We are not historians in particular. The experts can discuss these things and consider the arguments for and against.

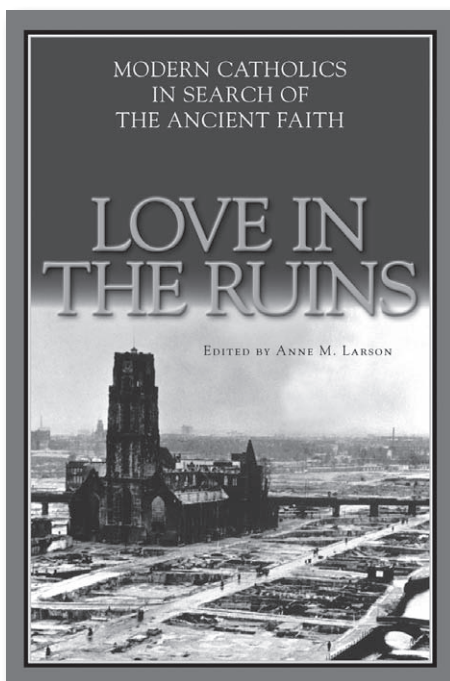


## POSITION STATEMENT OF THE SSPX GERMAN DISTRICT SUPERIOR, FR. FRANZ SCHMIDBERGER (MARCH 6, 2009)

At the conclusion of the General Assembly of the German Bishops, they addressed in detail their relationship to the SSPX and issued a Statement. As the District Superior of the SSPX in Germany, I would like to state the following:

1. The SSPX does not reject the whole Council. Archbishop Lefebvre himself participated in the Council, was in the preparatory commissions and approved most of the documents.
2. The German Bishops' Conference makes a condition out of the full adoption of the Council, including the contentious and ambiguous. That means nothing other than to stop the dialogue before it even begins. We see that the German bishops do not want to discuss the controversial points of the Council, but wish to construct taboo zones.
3. The German bishops do not behave in a spirit of brotherhood. Instead of dialogue and talks in a peaceful, constructive way, they act against the signal from Rome that was given by the withdrawal of the Decree of Excommunication and reject every offer of dialogue from the SSPX.
4. The bishops are bound by the Eighth Commandment, which reads: "Thou shalt not give false testimony." We therefore urge the Episcopal Conference to take back the defamatory accusation of anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish sentiments within the SSPX. In the Williamson affair, the SSPX Superiors have reacted immediately. The German District stated immediately after the publication of the unspeakable statements clearly and unambiguously [that it] condemned any kind of trivialization of Nazi crimes and apologized to those who were injured by the statements. We would again point out that the father of Archbishop Lefebvre lost his life in the Sonnenburg Concentration Camp.
5. The bishops are calling on the SSPX to recognize the authority of the pope, although the SSPX never put this authority in doubt. This shows that the bishops have never given serious thought to the positions of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X, substantially addressed them, nor want to.
6. The SSPX, on the contrary, detects within the German Episcopate a subtle rejection of papal authority. The attitude towards papal decrees of the recent past in this context is relevant:
  - a. The desire of the Pope to translate correctly the falsely rendered words of consecration, was ignored by the German bishops.
  - b. The Motu Proprio for the liberation of the old Mass is implemented by some bishops so restrictively that it almost remains ineffective.
  - c. The Good Friday prayers of the Pope were also erroneously described by some theologians in Germany as anti-Semitic.
  - d. The clear position of the Pope about the ecclesiastical understanding within Protestant communities in Germany was made overwhelmingly misunderstood.
  - e. Despite repeated calls, the German bishops do not withdraw the Königstein Declaration, which makes the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* of Pope Paul VI ineffective.
  - f. Finally, the declaration *Dominus Jesus* was strongly criticized by German theologians because it only talked about the unique path to salvation offered by the Church.
7. Given these facts, we see that some bishops reject the path of charity and reconciliation laid down by the Pope. They apparently want the complete elimination of all conservative attitudes within the Church. This opposition to the Pope is currently (still) not disclosed, but has long been subliminally present in many utterances.
8. Faced with this situation, we thank the Holy Father for his paternal responsiveness. We will make every effort, on our part, to formulate the positions of the SSPX—which are not their own, but those of the Magisterium of the Church—in an understandable, selfless and loving way, that a fruitful discussion with all Catholics of good will may be possible. We are pleased that there is now a basis for theological discourse.
9. In order to manifest our desire to work in the service of the eternal and true Rome, the SSPX wishes especially to reject the untenable accusations of illicit ordinations. These envisaged ordinations were never prohibited, as has been confirmed in personal conversations in Rome. Here the bishops ensnare themselves in obvious opposition: they emphasize that there is not yet unity with the SSPX, while at the same time wanting to place a ban on ordinations. One can only refer to what Archbishop Zollitsch even stated in his statement: It is for the Holy See—and not the Bishops' Conferences—to create and to identify the conditions for full unity.





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Edwin Faust

# Lost and Found

This is an excerpt from Edwin Faust's essay which appears in *Love in the Ruins*, the newest title from Angelus Press. A review of this book will appear in a future issue.

When [I was] asked...why I had come to Europe and I had answered "Because I'm lost," I had spoken honestly. When I entered high school in 1963, life had a single purpose: salvation. And salvation was only to be found in the Catholic Church. By the time I graduated in 1967, all of that had changed. The Second Vatican Council had intervened. Whether the council merely exposed the fragility of the Catholic edifice or undermined its solid structure is arguable. It seems that the faith must have played a somewhat superficial role in our lives for its institutional expressions to have been swept away so quickly and easily and on such thin pretexts.

By the time I graduated college in 1971, the church had plunged precipitously into its post-Vatican II madness and society, as a consequence, had also lost its sanity. Madness reigned. And in this madness I was expected to find a place for myself; to chart a career, start a family, buy a home, build equity, diversify a portfolio, climb the ladder of success, plan for retirement—in short, to behave in the prescribed ways as though it all still made sense. But it made no sense. How could a sane man acclimate himself to a lunatic asylum? How could you set out to live life when life appeared to have no purpose? It was a game without rules; a play without a plot. It seemed to me and to many of my contemporaries that we were cut off from the past; that if we were to give meaning to our lives, we must do so with little help from the usual quarters: our elders and their traditions.

Going to a strange country was in its way an escape from my native land, which had also become a strange country. No matter where I turned, I felt alienated, but it is somehow more bearable to feel this way in a foreign place than in one's own home. Travel also allowed me to postpone making any serious decisions about my future. I knew that my money would not last

long, but for however long it did last, I would be given a reprieve from a responsibility I dreaded.

When I said I was lost, I meant that I had lost a unified vision of life, and it was this I wanted so desperately to recover. And so I looked for it in many places: in the writings of Nietzsche and in many other books. I tried on idea after idea, like so many changes of clothes, to see which one suited me best. And when I grew tired of thinking, I found respite in the riot of the senses. But after a while, patterns form, and license becomes habit. Even dissipation can fall into a routine. And then one longs to escape those very things that once were an escape. But where is there to go?

After a year of wandering about Europe, collecting experiences, I was still lost; so I came home, or to what remained of my home, and I tried various jobs, none of which lasted; and I lived in various places, never for very long. I was still postponing my life, waiting for some event or idea or person that would lend it meaning and direction. I lived on the East Coast and the West Coast and parts in between; in mountains, by the seashore, in the cities, in the country; I tried sensuality and asceticism; gravity and frivolity; society and solitude. But always I ended in the same state of confusion and near despair. And I was getting older. The world forgives the young their rootlessness and lack of serious purpose, but there comes a time when forgiveness ends and the no longer young wanderer is regarded simply as a bum. I had become a bum.

My thirtieth birthday found me residing in a small rented house in a barrio in Santa Fe, New Mexico, working as a window washer. When we are young, we seldom give thought to all that it means to grow old. We can no more imagine our aging that we can imagine our death. But at the age of thirty the thought was powerfully borne in on me: I would live to be old. I also knew that I did not wish to be an old window

washer. I felt immensely tired of everything, most especially myself; yet, I couldn't rouse enough energy or enthusiasm to change my situation. I had reached rock bottom. I was nobody going nowhere.

I celebrated my birthday by walking aimlessly around town, lashing myself with such thoughts. For no particular reason, I wandered into a book store and began listlessly surveying the rack that offered self-help through psychology, diet, exercise, astrology, crystals, aura-balancing and religion. One volume caught my attention. Its cover bore the face of a man, a Hindu, and I felt an intuitive connection with him. I lifted the book from the rack and began to peruse its pages. I had long ago run through all the New Age remedies to life's ills and found them wanting, but for some reason, I bought the book and carried it home, and on my way I became aware of some faint resurgence of my flattened hope.

The book was a spiritual autobiography, a Hindu counterpart to Augustine's *Confessions*. Much of the material was familiar to me, as I had studied Vedanta and various forms of yoga, but a mysterious thrill seized me whenever I opened its pages. The master, let's call him Baba, claimed that one could not become free, *moksha*, without receiving the grace of an enlightened being, a genuine guru. The book, though punctuated by paeans of praise to his teacher, was chiefly concerned with presenting detailed descriptions of the author's own experiences in meditation: experiences that he assured his readers were available to anyone fortunate enough to seek and receive the guru's grace. Without such grace, he claimed, no amount of learning or ascetic practices could bring one onto the path that would lead to liberation from Maya, that is, from all the pain and delusion of this passing world.

His message was certainly not unique, but his effect on me undoubtedly was. Why? Perhaps it was a measure of my desperation that I felt so attracted to him; perhaps it was something more, something preternatural, as I later came to believe. I formed a desire to see this man and, as though on cue, I learned that a local group of his devotees ran a weekly meditation session in a home not many blocks from where I lived. I went there and discovered that he would soon leave India for another tour of North America. He had already established his U.S. headquarters at a sprawling complex in the Catskill Mountains. I was tempted to make the pilgrimage, but hung back, remembering so many of my failed adventures and fearing that this might prove to be just one more.

One of the devotees had given me a picture of Baba, which I hung in my bedroom and which came to have an increasingly hypnotic effect on me. I would find myself staring at his face for long periods, unaware until later of how much time had elapsed; and during these trances my thoughts would fall away, the clamor in my brain grow fainter, more distant, until it was replaced by a quiet and gentle euphoria. When my thoughts did return, they appeared to be less important,

less my own, too, as though I were faintly conscious of some senseless jabbering by an intruder. Then, one night, I had a dream unlike any other I could recall. I dreamt I was sitting in the house where I had grown up, watching the staircase, waiting for something; then, I saw descending the staircase a figure in a long orange robe, such as that worn by Hindu monks. I did not see his face, for as he approached I fell to the ground, prostrated myself, reached my fingers toward his feet, then felt his hand on my back, making some sort of adjustment to my spine. At that instant, I awoke and sensed heat rising in my spine from its base toward my neck. I had the unshakable feeling that something significant had happened to me.

At the next meeting of the meditation group, I told a few of the devotees about my dream. They nodded knowingly. "You've been given *shaktipat*," one said. This is the Sanskrit word for the guru's grace. "It's a powerful form of initiation, to receive it in a dream," the leader of the group said. "You'd better go see Baba."

And so I did.

I had little money, so I hitchhiked from Santa Fe to New York and spent my last few hundred dollars to pay for my stay at the ashram and to attend a program called "The Intensive." The Intensive consists of mantra chanting, talks by devotees, talks by Baba, translated from Hindi by an interpreter, and the chief thing, a meditation session during which the lights are lowered and Baba passes through the sitting crowd, touching people's heads with his wand of peacock feathers or pressing his thumb against their foreheads. The heavy smell of musk perfume marks his approach and a variety of noises follows in his wake: crying, laughter, strange words, animal sounds; feelings of intense joy, overpowering sorrow, visions of lights. Some people simply pass out, their heads lowered to the floor, where they remain until the end of the session. These reactions are called *kriyas* and are supposed to have a purgative effect on consciousness, freeing the subject from all that binds him to this world: karma from lives past and present. The purpose of the guru is to initiate these *kriyas*. When the devotee is completely cleansed of karma, he, too, becomes realized, enlightened, a free soul, one with God. Such is the belief. But this liberation may require a lifetime of meditation; perhaps, several lifetimes. Above all, it requires *shaktipat*, the guru's grace.

My stay at the ashram brought me many vivid experiences in meditation. I was told by veteran devotees that I had been especially blessed. After a few weeks, I left, convinced that, at long last, I had found the real thing. Nothing seemed to matter now. If the world regarded me as a bum or a fool, so much the worse for the world. I had found truth. I was blessed. All that I need do is allow the *shakti* to work. All else was insignificant. I returned home, broke, and spent the winter chopping and selling wood. The next few years found me working a variety of jobs, getting away on occasion for short stays at the ashram in the Catskills

until, one summer, I was invited to join the staff as a night security guard. I accepted....

....I was now and again assailed by doubts: could it be that the truth was known only by a few thousand devotees of a Hindu holy man? Did it not seem improbable? Yet, there were precedents, as with the apostles. And why had God created a world of illusion in the first place? The answer was that the world was the Divine *Lila*, or play. It was a form of amusement for the deity. The answer seemed superficial and unsatisfying. And what about evil? Well, that was just karma. But what was karma? How did it originate? The reasoning appeared to be circular. We were told, of course, that the mind was the enemy; that were we to give it free rein, it would lead us into endless torments and delusions. Trust the guru. Trust the *shakti*.

....I had not frequented the library, for I had a large collection of my own books, but I thought I might take a volume with me to help pass the hours until dawn. My eyes fastened on a title: *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, by St. John of the Cross. I had tried to read it many years before and had found it exceedingly strange and almost unintelligible. But I took it with me and perused it as I sat at my security desk by the front entrance, waiting for my relief.

As I read, I felt the sort of thrill that had seized me seven years earlier when I had first read Baba's book. I had the sense that Providence had placed this book in my hands for a purpose I could not yet discern. When I returned to my room, I read until my eyes grew tired and sleep overcame me; when I awoke, I immediately picked up the book and resumed where I had left off. The early chapters seemed to confirm me in my path, as they dealt with the necessity to detach oneself from the pleasures of the senses. All their advice and admonitions accorded with my ascetic practices. It was when St. John began to treat of experiences in meditation and contemplation that I realized he was counseling me to reject all that I had accepted as the guarantee of the authenticity of the guru and his teachings. He even named specific experiences highly prized by devotees, such as the visions of lights, the waves of bliss, inner sounds and apparitions. All of these, the saint warned, are rooted in the senses, internal or external, and in the imagination. They may come from God, or the demons, or be the product of our own invention. His standing order is to reject them. Totally. One is neither to become attached to them in memory, reason about them nor desire them. To do so is to open oneself to delusions, human or demonic. Even if the experiences come from God, he warns, we may misunderstand their meaning and allow them to become a source of vanity. We will lose nothing by turning away from them, he assures us, for God will do His work in our souls as He pleases, and He prizes our good intentions above our curiosity and longing for the exotic.

I found St. John's reasoning simultaneously comforting and troubling. It freed me from my thrall to the admittedly fascinating occurrences in

meditation, but it also stripped me of my certainty that I had found the true path to God. I could not doubt that St. John was right, yet, he cast me into a spiritual no-man's land. What was I to do now?

Reading the *Ascent*, however, had another effect on me: it roused memories of my boyhood devotion. I began to re-examine the claims of the Catholic faith, casting aside all the stupidities of the post-conciliar debacle and concentrating on essential doctrine. I bought a copy of the New Testament and spent most of my spare time reading and pondering passages from the Gospels, particularly that of St. John. I felt increasingly uncomfortable in the ashram and studiously limited my contacts with other devotees. I avoided the dining hall and subsisted mostly on a cache of fruit, rice cakes and bottled water.

One afternoon, shortly after waking, I felt a strong desire to take a long walk, to get away from the ashram. It was winter, but I decided to brave the cold and stuffed a few provisions into my pockets along with the New Testament. I made my way to a dense wood beyond the bounds of the ashram property. A rough path led into the forest for about a hundred yards, then ended; I proceeded into the trackless wilderness until the ground began to climb and rocks and boulders appeared. I came to a clearing amid a grove of oak trees where I found an outcropping of rock like a flat table jutting from the hillside. I climbed onto it and sat there cross-legged and began to read St. John's Gospel.

Thus, I formed a daily routine. I spoke very little to anyone, and my job afforded me the solitude I desired. One afternoon, after assuming my accustomed perch atop my rock table, I read the passage in which St. Peter denies Our Lord. A terrible sadness overwhelmed me: I felt sorry for Peter and thought of how, later, he would have given anything if only he could take back those words of betrayal. I felt a kinship with Peter, and then a realization of my own betrayal swept over me. I wept, as Peter must have wept. But I knew, as Peter must have known, that I was forgiven.

When I returned to the ashram, I knew that I was finished with it. I resigned my post and, once again, headed out into the world with no prospects, having only a few dollars, a half-formed faith, but a great hope. I tried to return to the Church; went to confession for the first time in nearly two decades, talked to priests and read voraciously, but I was ill at ease. Something was fraudulent, either in my conversion or in the new teachings I was receiving. Eventually, I came to realize that the faith had been altered by those charged with its protection and propagation. The new Mass became a torment to me, as did many of the homilies I suffered through, but I tried to make the best of it. There seemed no other place left to go.

I had, meanwhile, gotten a job on the copy desk of a daily newspaper, the resort of many ne'er-do-wells. When it was learned that I had an interest in religion, a rare thing in a newsroom, I was asked to contribute a weekly feature on the subject. The paper published a page every Saturday with announcements



of church services and an article on some personality or event of an ecclesiastical nature. While casting about for my weekly topic in the summer of 1988, I came upon a story about a French archbishop who had been excommunicated for disobeying the pope. In my researches, I learned of outposts manned by the Society of St. Pius X and by independent priests where the Traditional Latin Mass was said and the full Catholic faith preached and practiced.

I wrote my article, a rather transparent apologia for Archbishop Lefebvre, but as it was only a religious matter, the agnostic editors either didn't mind or didn't notice its tendentious nature and allowed it to be published. I also traveled that Sunday to the nearest Tridentine Mass at an independent chapel about eighty miles distant.

After Mass, I remained in the chapel to make my thanksgiving and I remembered something ironic the guru had once said: that it doesn't matter if the teacher is false, so long as the disciple is true, for the true disciple sooner or later finds the true teacher.

I had been lost for so many years, had traveled down so many dead-end streets and lived through so many desperate hours, but God had never let me go, for no matter how far astray I went, I carried in my heart a longing for the truth, a desire to know God. And as St. Augustine wrote: "He who seeks God has found Him."

And so, on the verge of middle age, with my unified vision restored, I felt ready to begin life in earnest. I married, had three children in quick order and resigned myself to my job in the newsroom, which I regarded with a measure of gratitude for enabling me to support my family and granting me a modicum of respectability. It was, in other ways, purgatorial: slogging my way through all the dull and poorly written copy I regarded as a way of expiating my sin of sloth. God had given me a small talent for writing and I had never developed it, partly because I was confused but largely because I was lazy. And so I was now reduced to the school-marmish task of correcting the grammar and punctuation and syntax of the marginally literate.

But God is merciful, and St. Paul wrote truly that all things work together for good for those who love God. I continued to read about and ponder the condition of the Church and came to know some well-informed traditional Catholics. One of them suggested that, as I was in the newspaper business, I should write articles for Traditional Catholic publications. I had never considered doing so, but the idea grew on me and, at long last, I submitted a piece. It was published and became the first of more than a hundred such offerings during the past fifteen years.


I know little of theology or philosophy, so I write about what I do know: my life. For I realize that I am but one of many children in this sorry epoch who has felt abandoned by Mother Church and has wandered through strange lands, physically and spiritually, trying to find her again. I tell my stories and try to find in each

anecdote something instructive, a bit of good counsel that might be of use to others.

And in doing so I have discovered that nothing goes to waste in the economy of salvation; that every idea, whether it come from Nietzsche or Baba, contains some truth, or else it would have no substance and be inexpressible. I am, in a way, still guided by the notion of eternal recurrence as I now realize that all we do in time gives shape to our eternity; that all of my actions indeed have an everlasting character; that I will forever taste their sweetness or bitterness in heaven or in hell.

And all of my hours of meditation in the ashram taught me how to sit quietly. It is sad how few of us know how to do this, for it is a prerequisite for contemplation, which is the goal of the spiritual life and the vocation of every Catholic. Heaven, after all, will be simply unbroken contemplation. Our Lord told us that eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and we cannot know God if we are constantly bustling about, full of our own thoughts and plans and desires. We have to empty ourselves of all this and make room for God. So the Desert Fathers and the great Carmelite mystics tell us. And so the lure of false mysticism rests on a solid truth: that our true nature can only be realized when we surrender our will in silence to our Creator.

And I learned something else from my years of attachment to Baba: how to be a disciple. This sense of closeness to the master is what so moved the apostles and the early Christians, and is so lacking among many modern Catholics, even those loyal to Tradition. We may disdain the sentimentality of certain Protestants who talk volubly about their "personal relationship with Jesus Christ," mostly because Protestants don't really know Christ or His Church. But a personal relationship with Our Lord is the only way to salvation: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me."

And I also now realize that one must be patient with those who lack faith, ever hoping for their reclamation and refraining from judgment. For many years I remained away from the Church and the sacraments. I gave ample reason for those who loved me to despair of me, and little promise that I would ever right myself and do anything in the least worthwhile. But God waits for us, sometimes through the greater part of a lifetime, and we never know who He has marked out for His saving grace. Nor can we be certain of our own perseverance. It is part of the mystery of Providence that God sometimes allows us to fall and to wander far away, only to bring us back to Him, wiser through our fall than we were in our former virtue. We learn mercy by receiving mercy.... 

Edwin Faust has worked as a newspaper journalist for the last twenty-two years. He also writes for *Catholic Family News* and *Latin Mass Magazine* and was, some time ago, a columnist for *The Remnant* and a regular contributor to *The Angelus* magazine. Ed and Kathleen, his wife of 21 years, have three children and live in Northfield, New Jersey.

# BROTHERS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. PIUS X WINONA, MINNESOTA, USA

# Traditional Religious Orders



**A**rchbishop Lefebvre drew his inspiration for the Brothers of the Society of St. Pius X from his own Congregation, the Holy Ghost Fathers. The Brothers of the Holy Ghost Fathers were of inestimable service in the African missions as carpenters, woodworkers, mechanics, architects, and teachers. The Congregation put its Brothers to good use in running many trade schools throughout Africa and providing training in the varied arts of woodworking, tailoring, brick-making, shoe-making, beer brewing, tanning, weaving and printing. The quality of these schools is amply illustrated by the fact that the Brother-Director for the school at Zanzibar became the private technical advisor of his Royal Highness the Sultan. Like the Brothers of the Society of St. Pius X, the Holy Ghost Brothers were not contemplatives; this was because they carried out an external, active apostolate as missionary Religious who aided the missionary Priests by their technical expertise. However, they knew from their training as Holy Ghost Brothers that all external action is submitted to and dependent upon the spiritual life of prayer and contemplation for which their rule provided.





Postulants



Profession Ceremony

Archbishop Lefebvre realized, though, that Brothers' vocations "are rare in our age because they require a spirit of faith which is tending to disappear from a world wholly obsessed with human advancement" (*Marcel Lefebvre*, p.456). One wonders if this might not be because we do not really appreciate the beauty and joy of the consecrated life, and how necessary it is, not just for the Society, but for the life of the Church itself.

### The Religious Is Free

One of the reasons why young men shy away from a religious vocation is the feeling that the Brother's life is horribly constraining, that it is made up of unbearable restrictions, that it stands in the way of being able to do as one wants, that it prevents one from developing one's personality, that it stifles all natural feelings, that it makes one into little better than a







This is why the religious vocation is radically different from the priestly vocation, and why the religious is not at all to be considered as a man who does not have the aptitude for Seminary studies and who cannot become a priest. His is quite simply a different vocation. The priest is consecrated to the service of the Church, so that no man has a right to priestly ordination. This is why it is the first duty of the Seminary Rector to exclude from ordination any seminarian who does not have the requisite learning, piety and uprightness of life. However, every Catholic man has a right to the religious life, provided that he seeks it for the right reasons and uses it to strive for perfection, and has no impediments. Furthermore, if it is true that no religious can be lazy, some are more educated and others less so. There is absolutely nothing to stop a more educated Catholic who is not called to the priesthood from applying to enter the religious life. Indeed, it would be a great blessing for the Brothers of the Society to receive as vocations men with academic degrees, for it would enable the Brothers to play an even more active role in the education of boys.

## The Religious Thinks and Merits for Himself

By practicing obedience to the rule as to the will of God and to his superiors as to God's representatives, the religious in no way loses his own will, nor do his acts become any less voluntary and meritorious. Much to the contrary. For it is by his own generous sacrifice that he embraces the rule as the will of God, that he joyfully and generously sees in the commands of his superiors the manifestation of God's plan for his life and activities. Indeed, just as the vow of poverty makes voluntary and meritorious the religious' state of possessing nothing of his own, so likewise does the vow of obedience make more willing and meritorious everything that he does. The rule of life, including the Divine Office, prayers, meditation and meals in common, is embraced as the signified will of God; and the decisions of superiors, as God's will of good pleasure. However, in both cases the religious knows with absolute certainty the will of the Almighty, and this gives to his acts and duties a willingness impossible for those who are wandering uncertain, and often aimless, amongst the vagaries of the world.

Nor is there anything childish about the religious' dependence. It is a whole and complete abandonment to the will of Almighty God. This is accomplished through the living of the vow of poverty, which is nothing less than the generous response to the invitation of our Divine Savior mentioned in the Brothers' profession ceremony: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in

slave, that it takes all the fun out of life and gives very little in return.

Nothing, indeed, could be further from the truth. Far from hampering personal freedom, far from holding a man back in a state of puerile dependence, the religious state has the exact opposite objective and truly accomplishes it. It is a state of perfection in which a man commits himself to take the means necessary to strive for perfection every day. This is in fact what makes the religious free, free to make a total and perfect gift of himself, free from the obstacles of his own disordered attachments, free to love God, free to place the divine Honor, Glory and Holy Will over and above every created thing, free to make of himself "a sacrifice of perpetual praise to the divine majesty" (Brothers' profession).

Indeed the religious who is not a priest has the ultimate freedom, for without the direct responsibility for others' souls, he gives himself entirely to the striving for personal perfection through the living of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. If the Church presumes the priest to be free through his detachment and through his consecration to God, the religious actually takes the means to become so.





heaven: and come follow me” (Mt. 19:21). Truly, the religious life makes a man free.

Nor is it to be thought that the religious life somehow discourages a man from thinking for himself or making his own decisions. Again, the truth is entirely the opposite. Obedience is not at all a blind virtue, and the religious learns to always consider the ultimate reasons for decisions and duties as they fall into God’s plan. The religious is thus trained in the virtue of prudence—namely, how to govern himself for heaven and how to govern those for whom he is responsible. This requires the humble seeking of counsel both from his own spiritual director and from his superiors; it requires the ability to make the right judgments as to how to overcome his faults, bad habits and disordered attachments, as well as to fulfill his duties; it requires, finally, follow-through, or the ability to execute both with respect to his own spiritual duties and with respect to his responsibilities of the apostolate and for the community. These are the three acts of prudence that the Brother must be trained in, as a thinking man, without which he cannot be faithful to his vocation.



## The Joy of the Religious

The practice of poverty and detachment, of willing and obedient submission, necessarily presupposes a community in which the religious lives along with superiors and fellow religious. A community is both a mortification, as is any family life, but also and especially a great treasure, for it is a supernatural family that shares its life together. The community is indeed an incomparable consolation for the religious who has vanquished his self-centeredness.

Archbishop Lefebvre had this to say about the Brothers’ living of community life, when he wrote their rule:

Let the Brothers make efforts to manifest in the community their profoundly religious spirit, one of silence, of union with God, of fraternal charity, of zeal to give service to others, but without neglecting the service of God. May all those whom they approach, and all those in the midst of whom they live, be edified by their behavior, and never disedified. Let them be like the guardian angels of our communities. (§20)

There is certainly nothing inhibiting in such an ideal, nor could there be anything sad, depressing or lonely about a community of men who share together the same magnanimity, who live side by side the absoluteness of self-sacrifice. Indeed, if natural family life is enjoyable and consoling, how much more is the



supernatural family life that is open to the man who has willingly offered up the passing natural joys of this earth for the unchanging ones that will never perish. This is powerfully impressed upon the soul by the following counsel, also contained in the Brothers’ Rule: namely, that the Brothers

strive to understand the profoundly supernatural nature of this life....May they find in this conviction and in this reality, more heavenly than earthly, their unchangeable joy, their unceasing consolation, their steadfast serenity. (§§4-5)





## Manliness in the Religious

The modern world holds the mistaken idea that the man who is willing to make the vow of perpetual chastity is somehow lacking in virility, that he is less of a man, that he hates women, or is someone who finds it difficult to love, or who refuses to take the responsibility of supporting a family. Again, nothing could be further from the truth. Such a person, not a real man, could never be a candidate for the religious life. Furthermore, manliness is not just a prerequisite of the religious life, but the religious formation positively strives to develop and perfect it. Grace does not suppress nature, nor does the religious life suppress the manly desire to support, help and cherish the weak, especially the sick and the elderly, women and children. But it does purify it from all disordered or self-centered attachments, and it does encourage the elevation of the sensitivity by the appreciation of art, music and beauty, starting with the Liturgy and the Gregorian Chant, in which all the Brothers are trained.

Modern psychology uses the term *sublimation* for what it describes as a psychological process, without understanding any of the reality, considering it to

be but the substitution of one emotion or interest in order to make up for the lack of another. However, in the etymological sense of tending towards the sublime, it is eminently true of the religious life. Far from suppressing natural feelings, life in community and the vow of chastity indeed elevate them to a much higher plane. They are not substituted for, but purified from the selfishness so easily inherent in purely human relationships. The religious is indeed indifferent with respect to himself, but he cannot afford to be with respect to others. He must have a true concern, affection and care for the members of his community, as for all souls with whom he enters into contact.

Thus a Brother is in no way unmoved by suffering and hardship. To the contrary, he is very familiar with it, thanks to his constant meditation on the Passion of Our Divine Savior. Without in any way denying the reality of human pain, he will constantly strive by his words and example to encourage others to sanctify it by offering it up in reparation for their sins and in union with our Divine Savior on the Cross. His human feelings find their perfection in their union with those of Our Lord. In this he learns to scrupulously avoid all particular friendship,





destroying as it does any true community and undermining his ability to imitate Our Lord, who loves all without exception, “who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim 2:4). Sublimation it is, if by this is meant the lifting of the natural affections to the sublime affections of God truly made man, the bearing in one’s heart of His own love of truth and beauty and of His hatred for the ugliness of sin.

However, it is especially in the formation of a sense of responsibility that this manliness consists: responsibility for one’s own soul, for one’s spiritual family, and for edifying one’s neighbor. This sense of responsibility is characterized in particular by the manly moral virtue of fortitude, manifest in the strength of character of the mortified religious. The Brother constantly emulates the martyrs, who lived this virtue to perfection, for the religious life, a constant dying to oneself, according to the words of St. Paul “I die daily” (I Cor 15:31), is an ongoing martyrdom, as said St. Anthony of Egypt, disappointed when he could not endure the martyrdom of blood. This manly fortitude is manifest in his striving for perfection in the ordinary duties of state of every day.

## Who Is Called?

I think, then, that it is clear what kind of men God calls to the religious life. It is not the weak, inconstant, effeminate who cannot make a go of it in the world, who do not have the desire to marry and raise a family. No, God calls to the religious life strong, virile, responsible men; men whose feelings, convictions and passions are firm and unshakable, yet under control; men who would like to raise a family if it were the will of God, but men who would like much more to consecrate themselves to His service, to His honor and Glory if this is the will of God; men who would much prefer to joyfully and willingly “humbly ask for the favor of consecrating myself totally to God the Holy Trinity, to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to the Holy Church by the three vows of religion” (Brothers’ Profession). God is seeking for those truly prudent men who are willing to devote all the energy of their manhood to striving for perfection, to the practice of the holy virtue of religion.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### What is a Vocation to the Brotherhood?

A religious vocation is based on one sublime and continuous act: the complete gift of self to God. Since the



# DAILY SCHEDULE

6:00 AM	Rise
6:30 AM	Prime and Meditation
7:15 AM	Holy Mass
8:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM	Classes
12:15 PM	Sext
12:30 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM	Recreation
2:00 PM	Study / Work
3:30 PM	Coffee Break
3:45 PM	Study / Work
5:30 PM	Spiritual Conference
6:00 PM	Rosary
6:30 PM	Dinner
7:00 PM	Recreation
7:45 PM	Study
8:45 PM	Compline
10:00 PM	Lights Out

Brothers workshop,  
Zaitzkofen, Germany

virtue of religion is founded upon acts which render to God the worship that is due to His divine majesty, St. Thomas Aquinas defines Brothers as “certain men who vow to give their entire life to the worship of God, detaching themselves from the world” (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q.81). By immolating themselves for the greater glory of God and the good of souls, the Brother, like the priest, becomes a man consecrated solely to the service of the Divine Will.

In fact, the Brother embraces a higher state of perfection than the secular priest by taking the three solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (the secular priest only vows chastity). Most souls realize that they must obey God’s commandments in order to save their souls; the Brother not only fulfills this obligation, but, in his desire to attain perfect union with Our Lord, embraces the evangelical counsels.

## What vows do Brothers take? ...and why do they take them?

As stated above, all religious take the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Through these vows, the Brother strives to strip himself of all self-will in order to prepare a foundation upon which he will build

an intimate union with God, a union that can only develop when pride and selfishness have been totally eradicated. These three vows are recommended by Our Lord in the New Testament and are the surest road to sanctity for a generous soul.

**Poverty:** “If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor: and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me.” (Mt. 19: 16-21) The vow of poverty detaches the religious from all exterior goods and attachments that might be an obstacle to his service of God.

**Chastity:** “All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given [for] there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He that can take it, let him take it.” (Mt. 19: 11-12) Since the religious desires to completely give himself to God, he gladly forgoes the joys of raising a family.

**Obedience:** “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mt. 16: 24-28) Through the vow of obedience the religious strives to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, who

for our sake became obedient unto death. The religious renounces his own will in order to be completely docile to the movements of the Holy Ghost in his soul and the will of God expressed through his superiors.

Consequently, even the most menial acts gain a religious value and special merit because they are performed by a consecrated soul for the glory and honor of God. This is the beauty and grandeur of a religious vocation. No doubt God readily inclines His ear to the prayers of such generous souls.

### **What is the Role of the Brothers in the Priestly Society of St. Pius X?**

First and foremost, Archbishop Lefebvre founded the Society of St. Pius X in order to ensure the continuation of the Catholic priesthood in these troubling, modern times. The Brothers of the Society are, therefore, meant to come to the aid of the priests in all their duties, facilitating their apostolic task. According to the Statutes of the Society, Brothers are to relieve the priests of material jobs (for example, handling finances, gardening, cooking, upkeep of buildings, secretarial work, *etc.*), as well as participate more directly in the apostolate by directing a choir, teaching catechism, working in the sacristy, teaching in primary schools, and other related tasks vital to the priestly ministry.

These are the temporal functions of a Brother in the Society, but governing these daily activities is the overarching spiritual goal that must inspire all of the Brother's life. Archbishop Lefebvre established this goal in the Brothers' rule of life:

The Brothers, consecrating themselves to God in the religious life, have as their primary goal and purpose the glory of God, their own sanctification, and the salvation of souls. Since their entire life and all their actions are offered to God through Our Lord, especially at the holy altar, they must strive to understand the profoundly supernatural nature of this life, whatever their exterior activity may be. May they find in this conviction and in this reality, more heavenly than earthly, their unchangeable joy, their unceasing consolation, their steadfast serenity. May they avoid looking for any other solution to their desire for perfection.

Whatever his temporal function may be, the Brother is above all a consecrated soul and, in the words of the Archbishop, must be a "guardian angel of the community," always manifesting his profoundly religious spirit through silence, union with God, fraternal charity, and zeal to serve others while never neglecting the service of God.

### **How does one become a Brother?**

No impediment should hinder the aspiring Brother in his total gift of self to God, such as outstanding debts, administrative responsibilities concerning temporal affairs, or primary care for a family. To become a Brother of the Society of St. Pius X, the applicant must be at least 18 years of age. It is strongly encouraged

that, before entering the Brothers' Novitiate, the applicant make a five-day Ignatian retreat and visit St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary to get a better understanding of the vocation of a Brother. To begin the process of application, the aspirant must contact the District Superior of the United States to explain his vocation and obtain a letter of recommendation from a traditional priest.

### **What is the Brothers' Novitiate?**


The novitiate is the first stage of a Brother's religious life, where he receives the religious formation which will serve as the foundation for his future life in religion. However, before a layman becomes a novice, he spends at least one academic year at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary as a postulant. During this time he tests his vocation and thoroughly studies the catechism and spirituality. If at the end of the postulancy he is found sufficiently disposed to the religious life, the Brother takes his first vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience before the Blessed Sacrament on the feast day of St. Michael the Archangel, September 29. At this time he also takes the traditional habit, donning the cassock, collar, and a tassel-less sash. These first vows last for one year, the duration of his novitiate.

During the novitiate, the new Brother will be taught the importance of his three vows and will continue his study of spirituality. Additionally, he will attend classes on the psalms sung daily in the Divine Office. At the end of the year, he will renew his vows for another year, thus concluding his training as a novice.

A third and final year at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary follows, during which the Brother receives professional development in the field where he shows most promise. He also studies apologetics and masters the catechism so as to be able one day to teach it effectively to others.

His formation complete, the newly forged Brother is sent to one of the schools or priories of the Society where he begins his apostolic life.

After renewing his vows annually for three years, the Brother twice renews his vows for a period of three years (six years total) and then takes perpetual, lifelong vows.

Throughout his religious life, the Brother takes a month-long vacation every year with the approval of his superior. Also, an annual six-day retreat of prayer, rest, and recollection is held at Our Lady of Sorrows Retreat House in Phoenix, Arizona, for all Brothers. 

Compiled from a Letter from the Novitiate by then novice-master Fr. Timothy Pfeiffer, an issue of the *Southern Sentinel* by then Holy Cross Seminary rector Fr. Peter Scott, and from the Brothers' page on the website of St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary.

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Fr. Niklaus Pfluger accompanies Bishop Bernard Fellay during the Pilgrimage to Lourdes (2008).

# INTERVIEW

## FR. NIKLAUS PFLUGER

Interview of *Neue Luzerner Zeitung* (Feb. 15, 2009) with Fr. Niklaus Pfluger, First Assistant to the Superior General of the Society of St. Pius X. *Neue Luzerner Zeitung* is a Swiss newspaper. Its questions are of a liberal tenor and very critical towards the SSPX and the Catholic Church.

### **Father Pfluger, the lifting of the excommunications of the four bishops of your community created a violent uproar. Do you understand this?**

No. The lifting was overdue and is ultimately only the consequence of the freeing of the Latin Mass in 2007. The withdrawal of the excommunication entails in the countries of German language and especially in Germany a violent attack against Pope Benedict XVI; it is a struggle for power and an orchestrated festival of indignation. The reason is a deep resentment against the German Pope; the “anti-Roman effect” is reinstated. The SSPX is only a stalking horse.

### **The Pope has been heavily criticized not only in Germany, but also in Switzerland.**

Every bishop tries to tell the Pope what he has to do or what he must not do. A preposterous example is the Church in Switzerland. The faithful are running away, the seminaries are empty, the bishops have the “Röschenz problem” [an apostate priest in Switzerland who receives a lot of public attention—*Ed.*], they have one scandal after the other, but Bishop Kurt Koch [current president of the Swiss Episcopal conference—*Ed.*] undertakes to prove in a “letter to the faithful” of seven pages that the SSPX is not Catholic—giving a

rather frightened and whiny impression. Or consider the lecture of the bishop of St. Gallen to the Pope regarding the lifting of the excommunications. This is simply embarrassing. If the bishops feel compelled to talk all the time about the “good news” and the “love of neighbor,” why do they not apply it to us? It is a minimum of human decency not to strike someone who is lying on the ground, but that is exactly what the bishops are doing.

### **The debate was enhanced by the revisionist theories of your bishop, Richard Williamson.**

Bishop Williamson is a unique case, but since he is a bishop, this single event is shedding an unreal light on our community; it makes it look as if the Pope rehabilitated a group of historical revisionists. This is nonsense.

### **Is the Church allowed to receive someone back who denies the gas chambers of Auschwitz?**

To the remarks of Bishop Williamson, Cardinal Barragan rightly stated that you can be excluded from the Catholic Church only because of a serious disagreement with its teaching, not because of a sin. The Church knows many dogmas but not the dogma

of the Holocaust. In any case, it is neither in the Apostle's Creed nor in the Creed of Paul VI. Not yet!

**Do I understand correctly that Bishop Williamson's opinions about the gas chambers are not the opinion of your congregation?**

Of course not. A bishop can speak about questions of doctrine, faith or morals with religious authority. In secular questions the Church does not have any teaching authority. In such questions everyone is fallible, even a bishop or the Pope. Bishop Williamson does not deny historical truth.

**Is anti-Semitism one of your principles?**

In view of the fact that Jesus Christ was, in His human nature, a Jew Himself, as were the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Apostles, and many Fathers of the Church, anti-Semitism would go against our own existence. This is not even an option.

**But this reproach is raised against your congregation.**

As early as 1928, the Holy Office, the organization that preceded the actual "Congregation of the of Faith," issued a decree in which any form of anti-Semitism was strictly condemned. Under the term "anti-Semitism" was understood any form of hatred or hostility against the people who were the chosen people by God in the Old Covenant. Anti-Semitism was and is totally outside the intentions of our founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and of the SSPX as a whole.

**Why do you pray for the conversion of the Jews on Holy Friday?**

If this is anti-Semitic then you have to consider all Christianity as such. The missionary commission of Christ implies the Jews as well. According to the Bible, the New Covenant, which was instituted by Christ, replaced the Old Covenant of the Jews. There are texts in the Council with a double sense; they give the impression that the Church says "good-bye" to its former teachings. This is exactly the question which we ask the Pope to answer: Is the Council opposed to 2,000 years of Tradition or is it to be understood in the context of traditional teaching? If it has to be understood exclusively in the context of Tradition, then there won't be any theological differences. But if there is a break with Tradition, then we maintain the Catholic dogmas, because those have been proclaimed as unchanging and eternal truth. This is imperative for us.

**Is it possible for your Society to recognize the Council, as you have been asked?**

As I mentioned, we do not deny the Council as an historical fact, but we ask that ambiguous texts

and decrees be explained and revised if necessary. In the decree of January 21, 2009, it is clearly stated that after the annulment of the excommunications, "necessary" discussions about the doctrine of the Council would have to follow. This is willed by the Pope, and we have asked for it over the last 30 years: this is why the bishops are so upset.

**If the Pope follows your interpretation of the Council, a dialogue with Jews and other religions would be difficult.**

There is a difference between a dialogue concerning practical, humanitarian questions—for instance, religious assistance in Christian hospitals or worldwide poverty. Why should there not be a common initiative of Jews and Christians to condemn civil war in the Gaza Strip? But in matters of eternal life, of the salvation of souls, a dialogue is not possible. Here is needed a mission and conversion.

**According to your beliefs, 1.2 billion Muslims, 900 million Hindus, 500 million Buddhists, and millions of Protestants and members of other beliefs are wrong. How is that possible?**

I am much more worried about those Christians who are baptized in the name of Jesus but do not live according to the Christian Faith. They are living a kind of practical atheism and a spiritually lethal indifferentism—the Jews would call it paganism. For them, the saying of Christ in St. John's Gospel applies: "If you were blind, you should not have sin: but now you say: 'We see.' Your sin remaineth."

**Is such a rigorous attitude not disseminating hatred? Is tolerance not proper to Christianity?**

The concept of tolerance which you mention is alien to all monotheistic religions, not simply to Christianity. For all these religions, the question of truth has precedence. This truth became a person in Jesus Christ: you can say it became visible. This is the reason why it is exclusive without exceptions, so that Christ could say: "He who believes in me will be judged according to his works. He who does not believe is already judged, because he does not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Indifference to truth is not a religious attitude, but an expression of lack of religion, of unbelief in God. And it is certainly not encouraged by the Bible.

**The Catholic Church is losing members with its attitudes towards celibacy, birth control, and female ordination...**

Please excuse my expression, but that is nonsense. The Catholic Church does not lose members because of celibacy or its stand on the question of ordaining women, nor because of its moral teaching. Not one

single person. If this were true, then the Protestants and Old Catholics [a liberal Protestant group in Switzerland—*Ed.*] would not have to sell their churches but would instead have to build bigger ones.

### **Nevertheless, you want to maintain ultraconservative teachings against the mainstream trend?**

After 50 years of changes in the Church, in the sense of the Council, the results are devastating. In Germany and Switzerland the ecclesiastical structure can only be maintained with Church taxes—without religious zeal. If you look at France, the average age of the clergy in many dioceses is far past 60; a pastor has to take care of 50 to 60 parishes—even more in some regions. In the German speaking countries the situation will be the same in 10 to 20 years; everything will be shut down. There will no longer be a shortage of priests because there will be no more “official church” and no faithful. And it is the same thing in other countries.

For instance, I came just back from India. Regions which formerly had a Catholic majority have relapsed into paganism. Catholic bishops and priests are the leaders of this trend; these are the achievements of the Council. Or take Brazil as an example: Those who practice religion in that country are evangelicals or traditional Catholics. Since the 1960s and '70s we have not witnessed a flowering of Christianity, but a unique decline. This is evident to anyone who looks at statistics.

### **Are you happy about a “conservative Pope”?**

This is the essential office of the Pope. He has to decide whether he wants to maintain the course of the last 50 years in the face of reality or whether he has the courage to change course. We can suppose that Pope Benedict XVI recognizes this decline, which is unique in the whole history of the Church. And apparently he realizes that the Church is not able to survive without returning to Tradition. That is why we had the re-admission of the Tridentine Mass and the lifting of the excommunications. He precludes the era of “post-Vatican II.”

### **The return to Tradition will mean that even more Catholics will leave the Church. What do you want in the end: a small conservative and exclusive group at the heart of the Church or a broad, heterogeneous foundation?**

When the storm grows strong, the dry wood splits first. And that is okay. We are in the presence of a healthy shrinking process of the Church—which was overdue. A shallow and pale Christianity is bound to die. In the present crisis of faith those who do not have roots and reduce religion to a kind of humanism will leave. This is certainly not a real loss. You may have pity on the bishops and priests in the official


church. Typical is the frightened tenor in the letter of Bishop Koch mentioned above. Instead of awakening enthusiasm for the Faith, and instead of giving a Christian example, they are grieved about the loss of church taxes. What counts is not the number of those who leave, but those who practice their Faith.

### **Is this the reason why churches and monasteries are empty?**

The majority of those who left the Church in the 1960s and '70s, who did not go to Mass any longer, who did not live according to Catholic moral standards, were thrilled by the reforms after the Council. Nevertheless they left. You cannot assess a religion like a political party by means of evaluation of public sympathy. In that case, Islam would not be a challenge to us. What we need is consistently practiced Christian Faith. Read *Gaudium and Spes*, the longest decree of the Council: what an outdated document! A Church that wants to keep up with modern times will always be behind and too late. The illusions of the Council have broken. We do not have to be sad about it.

### **A last question: The Pope is lifting the excommunication of your four bishops. Would he not have to rehabilitate Hans Küng as well?**

Of course, in the province of Lucerne, people think it is not possible to bypass Hans Küng. I am not sure whether Küng really wants to be rehabilitated. After all, he made a lot of money by losing his ecclesiastical teaching position. His merit consists in the reduction of the Christian Faith to a shallow system of ethics without any importance; in a euphemistic attempt he calls it “global ethics.” To be honest, I think that the ethics of the Buddhist monk in the new movie *Mongol* by Sergei Bodrov is much more true and convincing; he dies at least for a noble and unselfish cause.

May I add a personal memory? I recall a conversation with a bishop from Switzerland who is still in office. Hans Küng was mentioned, and the prelate said that everyone knew that Küng would be upset with the Church and the Pope simply because he did not have an ecclesiastical career; unlike his former colleague, Joseph Ratzinger. So you see: it is all about money and power. Even a priest is not exempt from that. Not even after Vatican II. 

Fr. Niklaus Pflüger was ordained for the Society of St. Pius X in 1984. He has been superior of the district of Switzerland, rector of the SSPX seminary in Zaitzkofen, Germany, and superior of the district of Germany. He is currently the First Assistant to the Superior General of the SSPX, Bishop Bernard Fellay.





# Is the Second Vatican Council Indisputable?

To this question, the French bishops answered in a statement issued by the Permanent Council of the Bishops' Conference dated January 28: "Under no circumstances will Vatican II be negotiable."...

On the other hand, the decree from Rome on January 21 spoke of the "requisite discussions" to "explore as yet unresolved questions"! The note from the Secretariat of State on February 4, on its part, stated:

A full recognition of the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of Popes John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II and Benedict XVI himself is an indispensable condition for any future recognition of the Society of Saint Pius X.

Yet it affirmed again what was said in the decree of January 21:

The Holy See will not fail, in ways judged opportune, to engage with the interested parties in examining outstanding questions, so as to attain a full and satisfactory resolution of the problems that caused this painful rupture.

Since then, journalists, always quick to offer hasty summaries, have based themselves on an interview granted by Bishop Fellay to the Swiss daily *Le Courrier* in its February 26

edition, to conclude: “The Society is not ready to recognize Vatican II.” This phrase was the headline for the article, and though placed between quotation marks, is not to be found in the answers of the Superior General. It does not matter! The phrase was deliberately repeated by French news agencies and newspapers, which even saw the confirmation of a hardening position in the Letter of the Four Bishops of the Society of Saint Pius X to the Holy Father on January 29.

The news agency *France Presse* even gave the following headlines to its reports: “Society of St. Pius X (fundamentalist) not ready to recognize Vatican II (Fellay)” concerning the interview published by *Le Courrier* (AFP, Geneva, February 27, 2009) and “Four Fundamentalist Bishops Not Ready to Accept Vatican II” for the Letter of January 29 (AFP, Paris, March 1, 2009). The French daily *Le Monde* in its March 1 edition repeated: “The Four Fundamentalist Bishops Whose Excommunication Has Been Lifted Do Not Accept Vatican II.” On March 2, *La Croix* took the cue: “Lefebvrite Bishops Expressed Their Rejection of Vatican II to Pope.”

To the reporter of *Le Courrier*, Bishop Fellay only recalled the constant line of conduct followed by the SSPX since 2000: no canonical status before the doctrinal discussions which must deal precisely with the conciliar texts which are a source of difficulties. The Superior General precisely declared:

The Vatican has acknowledged the necessity of preliminary talks so as to deal with the root questions which come precisely from the Second Vatican Council. To make of the recognition of the Council a preliminary condition is to put the cart before the horse.

The problem, again, stems from the fact that the Note, issued by the Secretariat of State, on February 4, states that for any future recognition of the Society of Saint Pius X, “a full recognition of the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of Popes John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II and Benedict XVI himself [were] an indispensable condition”; while it affirmed, according to the decree of January 21, the determination of the Holy See “to engage with the interested parties in examining outstanding questions, so as to attain a full and satisfactory resolution of the problems that caused this painful rupture.”

This raises two questions: **1)** Are the discussions, which the decree even calls “requisite,” not intended to deal with the Council? In that case, we wonder what their purpose will be. **2)** Did the Second Vatican Council, which was intended to be “pastoral,” become an unquestionable dogma? In this hypothesis, the French bishops are right: “Under no circumstance will Vatican II be negotiable.”

Rather than try to answer these questions with the arguments proposed by the Society of Saint Pius X for several years, let us consider those of an

Italian religious who is attached to the Council and strongly in favor of the “hermeneutic of continuity” propounded by Pope Benedict XVI in his address to the Curia in December 2005. Fr. Giovanni Scalse, of the Clerics Regular of St. Paul, after having taught in Bologna and Florence, is presently a missionary in Asia. On his blog, in June 2008, long before the decree of January 21, he devoted a study to the question of the Council and of its “spirit.” This text shows both an intellectual honesty and a sense of the distinctions to be made which are rare today. It proves, if it were necessary, that the Society is not the only group to wonder about the fruits of the Council, its worth, and its interpretation. We give below some excerpts from this study (subtitles and emphasis ours).

## The Fruits of the Council

It was a pious illusion to think that it would just need a council to renew the Church. On the contrary, it would seem that the effects of the Council were quite the opposite of what was expected: the liturgical reform **caused empty churches**; the catechetical renewal spread **religious ignorance**; the reform of priestly formation **emptied seminaries**, the opening of the Church to the world, far from fostering the conversion of the world, meant **‘the banalization’ of the Church herself**. It is true that we must consider things with a certain detachment and with an historical sense: in the past, the Church faced many other difficulties and always happily overcame them. This is why we believe that there is no need to worry overmuch. But one fact is certain: we were expecting a “new Pentecost,” and Holy Week came; we were expecting the “springtime of the Spirit,” and the fog of autumn came upon us. (querculanus.blogspot.com)

Bishop Fellay said in his interview granted to *Le Courrier*:

These gains [of Vatican II] are pure losses: the fruits of the Council were the emptying of seminaries, novitiates, and churches. Thousands of priests have left the priesthood, millions of faithful ceased practicing or turned to sects. The beliefs of the faithful were denatured. Really, these are odd gains!

## A Pastoral Council

Vatican II was called and was introduced as a “Pastoral Council.” As far as I know, this was the first time in the history of the Church that a pastoral council was convoked. At most, there had been disciplinary councils, which, as if by chance, were all resounding failures (such was the case with the Fifth Lateran Council, which, before the Council of Trent, had vainly tried to reform the Church of that age); but never had we heard of pastoral councils. Usually councils were convoked to define the doctrine to be believed. On the contrary, this was excluded *ex professo*: “The main objective of



this Council is not to discuss such or such a topic of the fundamental doctrine of the Church....For this, there is no need of a Council....It is necessary that this certain and immutable doctrine, which must be faithfully respected, be explored more thoroughly and presented in such a way as to answer the demands of the age.... We will have to have recourse to a manner of presenting the things which best corresponds to a teaching which is *especially of a pastoral character*" (Pope John XXIII, Address on the occasion of the solemn opening of the Most Holy Council, October 11, 1962).

Hence, the problem was not to define the doctrine (since it was already defined), but to find a new way of presenting it. An objective more than legitimate on the part of the Church, whose duty is not only to define and to keep the truth, but also to spread it far and wide. Then we could object once more, using the very words of the Pontiff: Was there need of a council for that? Could they not realize that, since it was not a matter of doctrinal issues, but only of pastoral strategy, they were running the risk of putting forth an immense effort destined to become very soon outdated by new events? Didn't they realize that by acting so, they were giving to the Council *a resolutely contingent character*, bound to the transitory character of the historical moment? No one can ignore that today's world is completely different from what it was forty years ago. Can we still consider the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, with its naive optimism, as relevant for today's world, characterized by disillusion, if not *pessimism* and despair? (*Ibid.*)

Consequently, doesn't it amount to dogmatically imposing upon the Church a "pastoral strategy" already obsolete today when it is affirmed that under no circumstances, "will the Council be negotiable"?

## How to Interpret the Council?

The Council must be interpreted at the light of the uninterrupted tradition of the Church. Nothing can be said against this, unless other criteria of hermeneutic are pointed out.

Precisely, the consideration of the specific character of the Council comes first: if we wish to interpret Vatican II correctly, we must always bear in mind that it is, as we have said above, a pastoral council; this means that it has a contingent character bound to the conditions in which the Church and the world were at the time it took place. *We cannot make an absolute of Vatican II.* And the very reverse happened: what intended to be and was indeed a pastoral council (consequently with all the limitations this implied) became at a certain juncture *more constraining than a dogmatic council.* All the dogma of the Catholic Faith could be questioned, but let him beware he who would question Vatican II. As an example of this absurdity: to this day, the reconciliation with the Lefebvrites is subordinated to an unconditional acceptance of the Council. But can't they see the absurdity of this? In ecumenical dialogue, we strive precisely to determine the essential points on which we can all agree (*in necessariis unitas*), ignoring accidental diversities (*in dubiis libertas*); *inside the Catholic Church what is uniting us would no longer be the same Faith,*

*but the acceptance of a Council which defined itself as pastoral! (Ibid.)*


No comment!

## Returning to the Letter of the Council

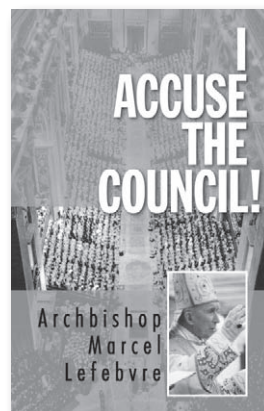
There is no question here of criminalizing whomever, even less so poor Paul VI, who did all he could to oppose extremist interpretations of the Council. But unfortunately, such was the climate, that all were in some way contaminated, and, maybe in all good faith, they were led to detach themselves from the letter of the Council.

The "spirit of the Council" was like a poison which permeated all the fibers of the Church. If we now want to purify the Church, we must not annul the Council, but free it from the alleged "spirit of the Council." What is the antidote? A return to the letter of the Council, in which is expressed the true spirit of the Council, which is also the spirit of the uninterrupted tradition of the Church....

Consequently, inasmuch as it is legitimate to discuss about the Council, we must admit that, if we want to find a balance between the different "souls" of the Church, it will probably be found only in the letter of the Council itself, the fruit of the efforts of the Council Fathers, of the wise mediation of Paul VI, and especially, of the assistance of the Holy Ghost. (*Ibid.*)

Here we disagree. Fr. Scalse, like Benedict XVI, believes that a return to the letter of the Council would serve as an antidote to the "spirit of the Council," a spirit of rupture, moving away from a letter in continuity with Tradition. It seems to us that the letter of the Council was too often the fruit of a compromise between progressivists and traditionalists for it not to be compromised itself, that is to say, at the very least ambiguous. And about this question there must be room for "requisite discussions"! 

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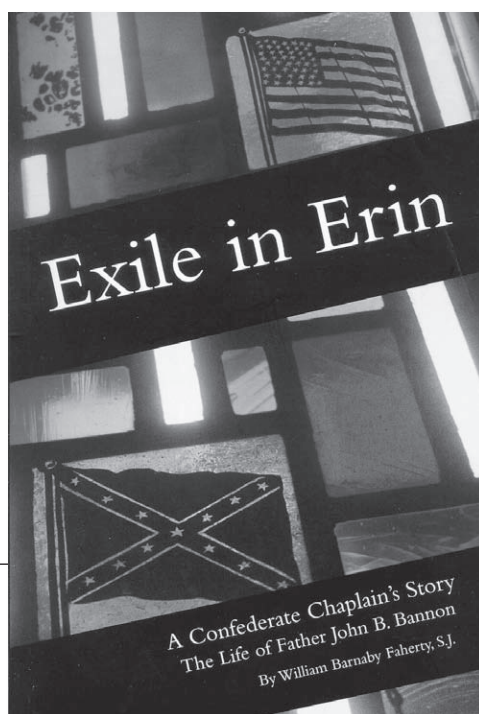
## I Accuse The Council

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

A major player at Vatican II, Archbishop Lefebvre made these 12 official statements at the Council exposing the danger of its documents. He warned that the faithful would become confused, doubting the necessity of the Church, the sacraments, the conversion of non-Catholics, and the necessity of authority. Covers collegiality, the priesthood, marriage, religious liberty, and ecumenism.

89pp. Softcover. STK# 3072\* \$10.00

# BOOK REVIEW



**TITLE:** *Exile in Erin*

**AUTHOR:** Fr. William Barnaby Faherty, S.J.

**PUBLISHER:** Missouri Historical Society Press

**REVIEWER:** Patrick McCarthy

**SUMMARY:** The little-known story of the unsung priest-hero on both sides of the Atlantic, Fr. John Bannon (1829-1913). Coming to St. Louis, Missouri, from Ireland at age 29, Fr. Bannon built a church there, then had to escape it (wearing a false beard!) with the Feds in hot pursuit to chaplain 1500 of his boys enlisted for the renowned First Confederate Missouri Infantry with which his Irish experience led him to identify politically.

March 7, 1862, had been a bad day for the Confederate forces, 16,000 strong, led by Major General Earl Van Dorn at the Battle of Pea Ridge. The previous day had been much more promising. Missouri troops led by Brigadier General Sterling Price had successfully flanked the Union position on Pea Ridge. Unfortunately, those men were exhausted, and an intended pincer movement by remaining Confederate forces failed; by day's end, all of Van Dorn's forces were in full retreat. The consequences were enormous: the Union army under Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis "had secured Missouri to the Union for all time...." Evidently, the roughly 2,000 Confederate soldiers who had died during the two-day struggle had given up their lives in vain.

If possible, the engagement had been worse for an Irish artilleryman, a baptized Catholic named McGolfe. The evening before, he turned down a priest—also, Irish—who had offered to hear his confession. A "rammer and sponger," McGolfe had confused the fire of a neighboring cannon with his own, leading to a terrible—and, fatal—wounding. What exacerbated McGolfe's death agony was his placement beside a dying Union soldier, a pious German Catholic who "kissed fervently the crucifix...." Ironically, the same Irish priest whose offer of confession McGolfe had refused heard the German's last confession, the German "intensely grateful at meeting with a Catholic priest." Not so with McGolfe: "Well, take away this Yankee; I can't make my confession with this Yankee close to me. He disturbs my mind; take him away!" The Irish priest left.

The next day, by happenstance, the priest encountered a very different McGolfe. He was full of remorse: "I can't help thinking about that poor Yankee. I behaved like a brute to him. He died last night, but after you left him he never stopped saying his prayers, and he prayed like a good one. He made me think, I can tell you. I'm just sorry for the way I treated him."

Clearly, McGolfe was prepared to make a good confession. An hour after doing so, he died.

War with all its evil is God's punishment of man for man's sin. Nevertheless, as the above episode suggests, God can extract eternal good from terrible suffering. Ironically, the German Unionist and the Irish Confederate, mortal foes on the battlefield, returned to their baptismal brotherhood at death's dread door. The priest who played an indispensable part toward that glorious end was Fr. John B. Bannon, CSA.

A quick sketch of Fr. Bannon's life as displayed in Fr. William Faherty's (S.J.) biography, *Exile in Erin*—available from Angelus Press—suggests an ordinary priest just doing his ordinary duty for much of his clerical career. Father was born to James and Fanny Bannon on December 29, 1829. After his ordination in 1853, he immigrated to the United States, assuming pastoral duties in rapidly growing St. Louis. Father became chaplain of a militia. He shepherded a temperance society. He raised sufficient funds to build a new church. Doubtless, many priests of that era accomplished similar things. After the Civil War, Fr. Bannon returned to his native Ireland. Here, too, while the detail varies, Father's priestly pattern seems very conventional. In 1865, he began his Jesuit novitiate.



When Father took his final vows in 1876, he spent most of the remaining thirty-seven years of his priesthood in residence at the Jesuit House on Upper Gardiner Street in Dublin. In fact, his biographer Fr. Faherty feels a bit pressed at times to enlarge Fr. Bannon's status through association with the celebrities of that era. Fr. Bannon engaged in friendly correspondence with the famous Jesuit missionary to the American Indians, Fr. De Smet. When Gerard Manley Hopkins, famous poet and fellow Jesuit, took up residence at University College in Dublin, Fr. Faherty devotes paragraphs trying to determine if Fr. Bannon had ever met Hopkins. Similarly, the James Joyce short story "Grace," found in *Dubliners*, mentions a priest giving a retreat at precisely the Upper Gardiner Street church where Fr. Bannon offered Mass for so many years. Perhaps, the biographer speculates, his subject formed the model for Joyce's art.

In effect, much of Fr. Bannon's pastoral life is regarded as too meager in significance to stand on its own. To be sure, Fr. Faherty furnishes piquant offsetting detail. During his parish work in St. Louis, Fr. Bannon overcame numerous obstacles in constructing his church. First of all, the idea itself came from Father's superior, Bishop Peter Kenrick, who wanted a church "large enough for pontifical functions and a rectory suitable enough..."<sup>3</sup> for an auxiliary bishop. Fr. Bannon obliged. The obstacles he confronted and overcame were daunting. Shortly after the laying of the cornerstone, a workman fell off a construction scaffold and later died. The original architect quit when he discovered that Fr. Bannon intended to consult with a rival. Perhaps most difficult of all, the project ran out of money. Fr. Bannon, displaying a decisiveness later evident on numerous Civil War battlefields, told his parishioners that, further money failing, "he would suspend work on the church at whatever position it was at the time and leave the church unfinished."<sup>4</sup> Additional funds were subscribed, and the church was completed.

One could make similar comments about the interest of Fr. Bannon's subsequent work back in his native Ireland, superficially undistinguished while full of underlying drama. One too easily forgets that the Ireland of the 1860s continued under British colonial control. While the Irish population was Catholic, the Anglicans controlled the pulpits, at least the wealthier ones. Until 1871, all Irish had to pay for the frequently empty Protestant churches: "Two hundred and eighteen parishes—nineteen of them in Dublin—did not have a single Protestant pew holder."<sup>5</sup> No surprise, English Protestants captained the Irish industry while the Irish performed the manual labor, as Fr. Bannon directly experienced at the mining town of Castlecomer. In effect, Catholic Ireland's very knowledge of the faith had considerably eroded, so Fr. Bannon and other Jesuits had important labor as traveling missionaries. The work was hard, exhausting. To get from town to town, Father and his fellow priests could only partially rely on Ireland's nascent railroad lines; frequently, the priests had necessary recourse to "bians," "horse-drawn

conveyances," to jolt them into the Irish interior, where most of the population still lived. Food was a daily sacrifice: as one priest joked about Killeary cuisine: "It varied all week—between mutton with potatoes and potatoes with mutton." Nor were the socially dominant Protestants particularly accommodating: "Penal laws forbade Catholic processions, but the Orangemen (*i.e.*, Protestants) could and did hold anti-Catholic parades." To even conduct a May procession, as Father and his associates did, required considerable courage.

Granted all the genuine interest of Father's work among Irish immigrants in St. Louis of the 1850s and lapsed Catholic Irish in Ireland of the 1860s, the heart of Fr. Faherty's absorbing biography is Fr. Bannon's Civil War work. Immediately, the interested Catholic reader must confront Father's efforts for the Confederacy, the very display of whose flag today is routinely associated with the evils of slavery and racism. Fr. Bannon, it must be acknowledged, did more than tend dying soldiers, Union as well as Southern, on diverse battlefields. In July, 1863, Fr. Bannon was with General John A. Pemberton's army which surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at the crucial battle of Vicksburg. Paroled with the rest of the Confederate army, Fr. Bannon immediately proceeded to Richmond, capital of the Confederacy, where he readily agreed to assist Confederate diplomacy. From Richmond, Father took a steamboat to his native Ireland, where he worked hard and, if Fr. Faherty is accurate, successfully to discourage fellow Irishmen from immigrating to the North and enlisting in the Union armies. The moral dimension of Fr. Bannon's support for a slaveholding society cannot be avoided.

Fortunately, his reasons for doing so hold up pretty well at the remove of a century and a half. To reduce the complexity of the Civil War to the single dimension of slavery is to engage in procrustean moralizing, not serious moral analysis. For Fr. Bannon, "the basic struggle consisted of the capitalists of the Northeast trying to dominate the agricultural...South and West for their own selfish benefit."<sup>6</sup> The Union won and proceeded to impose high tariff barriers to the predominant benefit of Northern manufacturers until President Wilson, himself a Southerner, began—somewhat—to reverse the process in 1913. To Fr. Bannon, Yankee abolitionism was inseparable from anti-Catholic nativism: "They shouted 'No Popery' as loudly as 'No Slavery.'"<sup>7</sup> Modern history textbooks suggest substance to his view. In 1834, the popular Congregationalist minister Lyman Beecher—father of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—successfully "provoked a mob to attack and burn the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts."<sup>8</sup> The anti-Catholic Know-Nothings of the 1850s had their greatest popularity in New England, New York and Maryland.<sup>9</sup> No wonder in 1854, when papal representative Archbishop Bedini was burned "in effigy in the public square in Cincinnati...,"<sup>10</sup> that the freshly ordained and newly arrived Fr. Bannon

concluded that a leading Northern characteristic was anti-Catholicism.

In 1864, a diplomatic delegation from the Confederacy including Fr. Bannon arrived in Rome to ask Pope Pius IX to formally recognize Southern independence. The Pope had many reasons to be very sympathetic. During his long pontificate (1846-1878), Pius had no illusions about the fangs concealed behind the pieties of modern liberalism. When he ascended Peter's chair, Pius, who, according to the French historian Henri Daniel-Rops, possessed a "true liberality of soul,"<sup>11</sup> amnestied political prisoners in the Papal States. The liberals of the day applauded him: "Mazzini, in the name of Young Italy, declared himself his loyal supporter...." Such enthusiasm wilted in the glare of the Revolution(s) of 1848, when Piedmont (northern Italian state) launched a campaign in the name of Italian unification against Catholic Austria, then an occupying power in Italy. Pius could hardly side with one Catholic state against another. He paid for that secular "sin" during the rest of his pontificate.

Public opinion was extremely hostile towards him. A furious press campaign, in which all contemporary liberal elements took part, began in Italy, France, Germany and England....

Simultaneously, this attack in ink was supplemented by attacks in blood. In 1853, papal police foiled a plot to assassinate the pope; two years later, Cardinal Antonelli, the papal secretary of state, "barely escaped death at the hands of a *Carbanaro* who tried to plunge a large kitchen knife into his breast." In 1864, the pope's temporal sovereignty, which had extended over central Italy for centuries, had been reduced to a small territory about Rome, with his only protection the troops of France's Napoleon III, hardly an unwavering supporter.

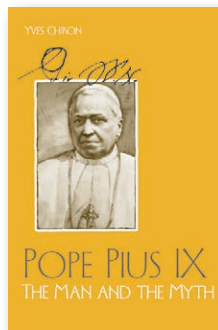
In 1864, the year the Confederate embassy with Fr. Bannon arrived, Pius IX had shed whatever vestiges of philosophical liberalism he had possessed when he became pope. He expressed his rejection of such ideology in *Quanta Cura* with an accompanying Syllabus of Errors. The latter concludes with the ringing declaration:

If anyone thinks that the Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, with liberalism and with modern civilization, let him be anathema.<sup>12</sup>

Why wouldn't the Pope be sympathetic to the South's bid for independence? He himself was directly experiencing the "liberation" entailed in uniting the historically separate Italian states. Why shouldn't he have seen a direct parallel between the violence of Sherman's "march to the sea" (taking place in 1864) and the violence of Mazzini's military associate, Garibaldi (only stopped by French troops in 1862)?

Clearly, Fr. Bannon, notwithstanding he represented the slaveholding Confederacy, had a diplomatic and moral case he could plausibly make for his people. Fr. Faherty, his biographer, furnishes interesting details about Fr. Bannon's Irish mission,

which began in the summer of 1863. Father's moral case could begin with the Union's disgraceful recruiting policy. The North, lacking a draft, relied on volunteers who, if wealthy enough, paid \$300 for a substitute. Poorer Northerners had no such means of evasion. Among them were the Irish: according to New York Archbishop John Hughes, his Catholic laity were "willing to fight to the death for the support of the



## Pope Pius IX The man and the myth

Yves Chiron

One of the most interesting and complex individuals to ever become Supreme Pontiff. His pontificate included the proclamation of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and papal infallibility, the convocation of the First Vatican Council, the publication of the Syllabus of Errors, the beginnings of Catholic Action, and the development of the foreign missions.

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constitution... but not 'for the abolition of slavery.'<sup>13</sup> In fact, during the summer of 1863, terrible race riots broke out in New York City, leading to the deaths of hundreds and the necessary recall of a portion of General Meade's troops, ironically recently victorious in the Gettysburg campaign.

Fr. Bannon had other arguments he could—and, did—use before fellow Irish considering immigration. He readily cited the slaughter of General Meagher's (entirely) Irish brigade at the terrible Battle of Fredericksburg (December, 1862). He publicized the previously cited 1854 burning in effigy of papal representative Archbishop Bedini as well as other instances of Northern hatred for Catholicism. Additionally, biographer Fr. Faherty shows that Fr. Bannon readily understood the limits of merely printing such arguments in Irish newspapers. Most prospective immigrants to America were illiterate or barely literate. Fr. Bannon accordingly harangued Irish men at major ports of embarkation, perhaps most famously at Cork, where "one thousand sturdy Irishmen, with their bundles and packs...." stood waiting for the "Cunard Steamer from Liverpool, to take them to Boston." When Father finished his speech, "all of the young fellows dropped to their knees, with the cry, 'Your blessing, Father.' When it had been given, they quietly shouldered their packs and bundles and marched away to their homes."<sup>14</sup>

In the end, Pope Pius did not feel he could choose sides during the American Civil War: too many Catholics resided on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. At the same time, he expressed great respect for both Bishop Lynch and Fr. Bannon when he formally received them. All facets of the 1860s duly considered, one can certainly understand why.

Possibly, even more impressive than Fr. Bannon's diplomatic work was the work he heroically performed



on Civil War battlefields—and hospitals—during 1862 and 1863. When Father joined General Price’s Missouri brigade in January, 1862, he did not draw a salary; rather, he depended on the voluntary donations of far from wealthy men. That situation continued for nearly a year until a sympathetic Mobile bishop successfully lobbied the Confederate government to commission Father. Food, or absence of food, constituted another hardship. When General Price successfully invaded the Union depot at Iuka (Mississippi), Fr. Bannon greatly appreciated his replenished stores. Among his “treasures” he listed: “‘mustard, catsup and vinegar’ as well as ‘carrots and pickles.’”<sup>15</sup>

Fr. Bannon repeatedly risked his life on behalf of his lay soldiers, on and off the battlefield. He implicitly disagreed with Fr. Peter Tissot, a Union chaplain, who did not approve of priests on the front lines:

If he (the priest) does expose himself he may be of service to a few—which is doubtful—but if in so doing he is killed, he will deprive numbers of others of his services after the battle...<sup>16</sup>

Whatever the merits of Fr. Tissot’s argument, when the pickets fired and the cannons roared, Fr. Bannon went directly to the battlefield. Once, during a battle leading to the siege of Vicksburg, he learned that a badly wounded Confederate officer at the opposite end of the Confederate line wanted last rites. Father mounted his horse and spurred directly to the dying layman:

His commanding figure, of course, enabled him to be recognized, and the troops on both sides, Federal and Confederate, struck by his heroism, started up from their trenches, ceased firing, and cheered him loudly.<sup>17</sup>

When Father, religious mission accomplished, returned to his original station he received a similar ovation.

Danger followed him behind the lines, particularly during the Union siege of Vicksburg (spring of 1863). At the hospital, a Union shell burst between Father and two doctors, John A. Leavy and J. H. Britt: “The shell stunned Leavy and tore away part of Britt’s leg.”<sup>18</sup> Fr. Bannon, on the other hand, miraculously escaped injury. Sadly, Union artillery did not even spare houses of religious worship. During that same Vicksburg campaign, Father prepared for Mass at St. Paul’s Catholic Church. An entering worshipper lost his arm to an entering 132-pound parrott shell. While the Mass itself was in progress, another missile “‘went in one side and out the other of the church.’” Fr. Bannon himself “‘continued saying Mass as if nothing had happened.’” He clearly had the true priest’s belief that, whatever happened, he should stay right where he was.

Throughout the sacrifices he made and dangers he incurred, Father was very conscious that he comprised but one part of Christ’s Mystical Body. He needed the assistance of other Catholics to do his work fully. In this regard, Fr. Bannon paid special tribute to the nuns who performed so selflessly in the Confederate hospitals. As Father later remembered, “‘More than eighty percent of the Protestants who entered the Sisters’ hospitals

became Catholic.’”<sup>19</sup> The Sisters’ very dress proclaimed that they comprised a different order of women. They had a remarkable effect on the Protestant patients, Fr. Bannon recounted: “They looked on the Sisters almost as superior beings, and it is something incredible how they submitted their will and their reason to them—these men who from their cradles had been reared in intellectual pride and spiritual independence.”<sup>20</sup>

Father then talked about a remarkable event. From one of the Sisters, he learned that a Protestant patient wanted to become Catholic. Initially, Father encountered considerable theological resistance from his prospective convert. The patient, not sure he could accept a thorny Catholic dogma, asked his attending nun: “‘Sister, this man (Fr. Bannon) tells me so and so. Is that true?’” “‘Oh yes,’ said the Sister smiling, ‘quite true.’” When she further affirmed she believed the doctrine, the Protestant was satisfied: “‘Very well,’ he said, turning to me, ‘all right, I believe it.’” Conversion subsequently completed, Father concluded that the Protestant’s baptism “‘might be said to be rather in *fidem Sororum*, than *fidem Ecclesiae*.” (That is, the Southern soldier believed more in the faith of the Sister than in the Church!).<sup>21</sup>

This exchange occurred in 1862. Forty-four years later (1906) the Irish writer James Joyce completed the short story “Grace,” later included in the collection *Dubliners* published in 1914.<sup>22</sup> The biographer Fr. Faherty is persuaded that Fr. Bannon formed the model for the priest found in Joyce’s tale. If so, the depiction is not flattering. In “Grace,” Dublin friends of a Protestant convert drunkard persuade him to attend a retreat at the Upper Gardiner church, where Fr. Bannon worked during most of the last four decades of his life until his death in 1913. In Joyce’s story: “A powerful-looking figure, the upper part of which was draped with a white surplice, was observed to be struggling into the pulpit.”<sup>23</sup> Fr. Bannon in his prime stood a formidable six feet, two inches and possessed a burly frame. In 1906, Father would have been 77 years old, suggestion enough for “struggling” movement. Joyce’s priest proceeds to give a retreat sermon which reeks of crass commercialism: “He came to speak to business men and he would speak to them in a businesslike way.” While at the Gardiner Street church, Fr. Bannon’s favorite sponsorship was the “Young Businessmen’s Sodality.” Even when he retired as rector superior (1889), Father continued his association with the sodality.

So far, the parallel works. One hesitates to go all the way with Joyce, however, to his sneering dismissal of the priest’s metaphorical use of an accounting ledger to evoke the balance between virtue and sin. In part, one acknowledges the critique of a Dr. David Allen White: “Joyce was a liar.” True enough, Joyce might well have abused creative license in fashioning his priest’s sermon. As well, one wonders if God’s demands on a soul are equal at every stage of that soul’s human existence. Fr. Bannon very clearly had given his all in the Civil War years of 1861-1865, during his Irish traveling missions of the late 1860s and through the


numerous fund-raising speeches he gave during the 1870s and '80s. Perhaps, by 1906 (the date of "Grace.") when he turned 77, Fr. Bannon was simply tired. He himself derived little money out of the substantial sums his talks elicited. Fr. Faherty notes: "Fr. Bannon lived frugally. In 1892, he purchased new trousers and a cassock, and had his boots and umbrella mended."<sup>24</sup> Presumably, Father maintained the trousers, boots and umbrella to his death in 1913. Additionally, Father, in considerable contrast with the politicians and clerics of our day, kept precious few notes of his accomplishments. Indeed, when aspiring historian Yale Snowden visited him in the early 20th century to learn about Father's role in the Civil War, the priest confessed "that he had little data and that his memory was not sharp."<sup>25</sup> Given how readily Father acknowledged the contributions of others—such as the hospital nuns—to his own priest's work, turn about is fair play. In sincere respect for Father's accumulated toils, this writer would like to credit him for two impressive efforts he never claimed as his public due. One is very easy to prove; the other in contrast is somewhat mysterious.

The St. Louis church—St. John the Apostle and Evangelist—which Father managed to have built in the 1850s is still in use. If you visit the church, you will find a dedicatory plaque noting that the cathedral was "dedicated by Archbishop Kenrick—1860, restored by Cardinal Ritter—1960, and blessed by Archbishop John Cardinal Carberry—1973."<sup>26</sup> Not a mention of Fr. Bannon: as this article (I hope) makes clear, without Fr. Bannon's sustained efforts, the church would never have been finished. On the other hand, Fr. Bannon's relationship with a Civil War general, John Bowen, is certainly more mysterious and, possibly, more noteworthy.

John Bowen, born in Georgia in 1830, graduated from West Point in 1853. He served in the US military until 1856, when he resigned to become an architect. He relocated to St. Louis where he established a successful practice, good enough to enable him to marry a local Catholic girl, Mary Kennerly, apparently without converting to the faith himself. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Bowen immediately offered his services to the Confederacy. He had excellent military aptitude, quickly rising to the rank of general where he acquitted himself admirably: at Shiloh, historian Shelby Foote notes, "he led his brigade of Missourians with distinction."<sup>27</sup> He performed equally well at Grand Gulf on the Mississippi River, forcing Union General Ulysses S. Grant to find a different landing site to launch his Vicksburg campaign.

Sadly, from that point forward all of General Bowen's fortunes sagged. While Union General Grant complimented his defensive efforts at Port Gibson,<sup>28</sup> Bowen and his men were nevertheless forced to retreat. General Bowen was as little successful at the ensuing engagements of Big Black River and Champion Hill, after the loss of which he and his army had to retreat to Vicksburg, there to endure with the rest of the Confederate forces the privations of a two-month siege

culminating in surrender. Worse for General Bowen, he contracted a fatal case of dysentery. The Union enemy's gallantry faded alongside his dying body. In his St. Louis days, Bowen had materially assisted an impoverished fellow West Pointer, Ulysses S. Grant. That personal tie was not enough to even get an audience with the victorious Grant, who through an aide insisted on harsh terms.<sup>29</sup> General John A. Pemberton, CSA, overall Confederate commander at Vicksburg, duly surrendered the fortress on July 4th, 1863.

At just this point, the biographer Fr. Faherty ceases mention of General Bowen, who died shortly after the Siege of Vicksburg on July 13, 1863. At his deathbed were his Catholic wife, who had been summoned from St. Louis, and...Fr. Bannon.<sup>30</sup> What took place in the last moments of John S. Bowen's life? Had he already become Catholic and Fr. Bannon simply performed his priest's duties in administering Extreme Unction? Or, did Father follow the delicate role he had so ably—and, successfully—performed at the Vicksburg hospital by the bedside of another dying Protestant? This writer does not know. He does know that Fr. Bannon did not idly speculate on hell's emptiness or allow a doctrine of universal salvation to sap his pastoral zeal. When one of his flock was in dire trouble, Father was there. In conclusion, it has been an honor and a pleasure for this Yankee reviewer to study the life of Fr. John B. Bannon, CSA. 

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<sup>1</sup> Shelby Foote, *Civil War: A Narrative—Fort Sumter to Perryville* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), p.292.

<sup>2</sup> William Barnaby Faherty, S.J., *Exile in Erin* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2002), p.69. The additional quotations in this and the following paragraph can be found on pp.69-70.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.174. The other quotations in this paragraph can be located in the same source: pp.163, 169 and 158.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.131.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>8</sup> George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 6th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2004), p.480.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.481.

<sup>10</sup> Faherty, p.133.

<sup>11</sup> H. Daniel-Rops, *The Church in an Age of Revolution—1789-1870*, tr. John Warrington (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1965), p.239. The remaining quotations in this paragraph can be found in the same source: pp.241, 269 and 268.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.284.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People*, Vol. 2 (1789 through Reconstruction), (New York: New American Library, 1965), p.451.

<sup>14</sup> Faherty, pp.135-136.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111. The other quotation in this paragraph can be found in the same source: p.114.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.78.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.78-79.

<sup>21</sup> The entire episode can be found in the same source: pp.79-80.

<sup>22</sup> I used the on-line Concordance for *Dubliners*, [www.doc.ic.ac.uk](http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, "Grace," lines 6150-6151.

<sup>24</sup> Faherty, p.205.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.208.

<sup>26</sup> [www.romeofthewest.com](http://www.romeofthewest.com).

<sup>27</sup> Foote, *Civil War*, p.347.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.350.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.608.

<sup>30</sup> Rebecca Blackwell Drake, "The Death of General John Bowen," <http://battleofchampionhill.org>.



The conclusion of Chapter VIII, on the priesthood, examines the questions of the ordination of women and priestly celibacy.

# Catechism Of the Crisis In the Church

(Continued from *The Angelus*, March 2009)

● ***Are there any recent documents on the impossibility of the ordination of women?***

Incorporating the teaching of different synods, the Code of Canon Law states the principle: “A baptized male (*vir*) alone receives sacred ordination validly.”<sup>1</sup> In his Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* of May 22, 1994, Pope John Paul II also restated the traditional doctrine:

Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church’s divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk. 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful.<sup>2</sup>

● ***What is the authority of this teaching?***

Like all the popes after Vatican II, John Paul II was loath to engage his authority infallibly. Despite

certain appearances, he did not do so here. He recalled the traditional doctrine, but by invoking the authority of the ordinary magisterium of the Church instead of personally exercising the charism of infallible teaching with which he was endowed as pope.

● ***Is this teaching then fallible or infallible?***

The teaching of the Church on the impossibility of the ordination of women is indeed infallible, but its infallible character comes from the fact that this truth has always been the object of its ordinary magisterium and not from Pope John Paul II’s document.<sup>3</sup>

## 77) What is the fundamental reason why women cannot be priests?

The fundamental reason why women cannot become priests is rooted in the order of creation. The relation between man and woman reflects the

order of creation. Man is the symbol of God, and woman, that of creation. Consequently, the woman by her very nature is not capable of being the authorized representative of God.

● ***Isn't such a position discriminatory against women?***

It is not a matter of establishing *a priori* principles (like discrimination or non-discrimination), but of observing reality and of acting in conformity with it. Only rank ideologues refuse to admit the difference that exists between the sexes.

● ***How do the differences between man and woman have a bearing on divine worship?***

To the unbiased observer, it is clear that man has a more active, enterprising, and commanding nature. His part is to act upon the world and to transform it. That is why his role is to govern and direct society. Woman's nature, on the contrary, is more passive and receptive. Her domain is firstly the close circle of family and children; her lot is more to be directed than to direct. That is why St. Paul says: "...the husband is the head of the wife" (Eph. 5:23). This is also why, in sacred Scripture, God is represented with the traits of a man.

● ***God transcends the distinction of sex: He is in Himself neither male nor female. Could He not also be represented under the traits of a woman?***

In fact, in holy Scripture, God is represented with masculine traits. He is the Father and Spouse of the Chosen People. Praying "Our Mother," as is done in some places, goes against Revelation and blasphemously parodies the Gospel. All the religions that believe in a creator God conceive a masculine idea of Him, at least as regards the principal deity. Female deities are found, on the contrary, in pantheistic religions that discern no essential difference between God and the world. It is not by chance that, becoming incarnate, God became a man, and not a woman.

● ***Does the fact that Jesus Christ is man imply that priests must be men?***

Since the fall of the first Adam, who, as head of the human race, dragged it down in his wake, Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and men, the only Pontiff, the only High-Priest. The priests of the New Testament are only instruments He has chosen to continue His work, and whom He associates with His priesthood. From the fact that, in order to be "the new Adam," the Word of God became incarnate in a male nature, only men can share in His priesthood.

● ***What does contemporary woman's clamoring to be ordained reveal?***

The polemics surrounding the ordination of women reveals the false idea of priesthood that holds sway today. If the priest is considered to

be merely a social leader presiding over the local assemblies of the People of God, consoling the afflicted and fostering the religious sentiment of the faithful, there seems to be no good reason why a woman could not fulfill this role. But a priest is something else entirely: an *alter Christus* (another Christ).

## 78) Cannot the Church be accused of keeping women in a state of inferiority?

Women were kept in a state of inferiority in pagan societies. This is still the case today amongst the Jews and the Moslems. Christianity, on the contrary, has given woman her nobility: she enjoys the same dignity as man, of whom she is—especially in marriage—the companion and not the servant. But this recognition does not exclude that she is different from him and has other duties to fulfill.

● ***But has it not been said that man symbolizes the Creator; and woman, the creature?***

Here it is a question, as the word indicates, of a simple symbol. By his nature, man is just as much a creature as woman and so must, like her, learn obedience and submission.

● ***How did the Church render to woman her dignity?***

The Catholic Church honors the woman beyond all measure in the person of Mary, virgin and Mother of God. She venerates her as the queen of all saints, elevated above every creature—apostles, bishops, popes, and even every rank of angels. The honor paid to Mary naturally overflowed to all women—in the measure that they resemble Mary.

● ***In this vein, what in particular should be said about the honor paid to the Blessed Virgin?***

Mary's principal title of glory, the one that allows her to be honored above every creature, is specifically *feminine*: she is the *mother* of God (and, subsequently, the mother of all men in that they are called to be incorporated in her Son Jesus Christ). Unlike the "feminists," the Church exalts woman in that which specifies her feminine nature, and not by denying it. On the other hand, Mary is not a priest. Pope Innocent III wrote a letter on this subject to the Bishop of Burgos: "Though the Virgin Mary is above all the Apostles taken together, the Lord entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven to them, and not to her."<sup>4</sup>

● ***What should be said about contemporary feminism?***

In its so-called "women's liberation," contemporary feminism in reality manifests the utmost contempt of womanhood since it tries to fit it to the masculine model rather than to develop properly feminine values. Indeed, woman then does



find herself at a disadvantage: a woman will always make a poor man!

## 79) Why does the Church require priests to be celibate?

As another Christ, the priest must belong entirely to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ. Since he goes to the altar every day to offer the sacrifice of divine love, he must also offer his heart to God in an undivided love. An additional reason is that the priest must be at the disposition of all souls, as the father and brother of all, which would not be possible if he had to take care of his own family.

The Catholic priest thus perfectly resembles Jesus Christ, who was not married either, and who lived entirely in the love of His Father and of immortal souls.

### ● *Are there other reasons why priests should be celibate?*

Our Lord, who was a virgin, desired that both St. Joseph and our Lady, with whom He lived for 30 years, be virgins; that His precursor, St. John the Baptist, be a virgin; that the disciple whom He loved, St. John, also be a virgin. From this the rule can be drawn that to draw close to our Lord one must be a virgin. Now, the priest is the minister of the holy Eucharist.

### *Isn't celibacy a great sacrifice for the priest?*

Celibacy is undoubtedly a sacrifice, but sacrifice is the law of natural life (nothing can be chosen without, by the very fact, renouncing something else) and still more so of supernatural life and fruitfulness. Just as Christ redeemed the world by His passion, so also the priest will not be able to do very much for the Church and the salvation of souls unless he lives a life of sacrifice. Our age, so inclined to see in human love and sexuality the only joy of life, has for this very reason a great need of the example of priests and religious, who remind people of higher values and ideals.

## 80) Isn't celibacy an inhuman constraint against nature?

Marriage is an image of the love that should exist between God (or Christ) and the soul. But it is, precisely, only an image, and not the reality. That is why marriage is ended by death. In heaven there will be no more marriage (Mt. 22:30); then everyone will live in the love of God only, which for consecrated souls is already the only love. Celibacy is thus an anticipation of what life will be in eternity.

### ● *But doesn't marriage respond profoundly to the needs of human nature?*

Human nature also gives man understanding and free will which allow him to dominate his passions and sometimes to fight against them for the sake of a higher ideal. But man can (and often *must*) renounce the satisfaction of his sensible passions for a greater good. If he does not do so, he sinks to the level of the animal.

### ● *Why is the absolute celibacy of priests not found outside the Catholic Church?*

When young men renounce the happiness of founding a family so as to give themselves totally to God, they give a beautiful proof of the Church's vitality and of the enthusiasm the Faith can communicate. If the communities that separated from the Church abandoned celibacy very quickly, it is because they were unable to communicate this strength to their adherents.

## 81) Wouldn't the suppression of celibacy help remedy the shortage of priests?

The suppression of celibacy might lead in the short-term to an increase in the number of ordinations, but the problem would not thereby be resolved; one would have only capitulated before it. Many would be ordained who were not truly called by God, or who would not avail themselves sufficiently of the means to respond to His call. Rather, we should ask why there used to be enough men ready to make the sacrifice of celibacy, while this is no longer the case today.

### ● *Doesn't celibacy remain, nevertheless, a barrier?*

Celibacy is a very useful barrier to those who are not called. Without it, many men would tend towards the priesthood for futile reasons: a sure job enjoying a good reputation; a social promotion (this is the case in many Third World countries), *etc.* For the greater good of the Church and of the faithful, these people are kept far from the priesthood, at least for the most part, by the obligation of celibacy.

## 82) Is celibacy of apostolic origin?

Celibacy is of apostolic origin (this is at least very probable); it was consequently the rule in the Church from the start. In the beginning of the Church, married men could become priests and bishops, but they had to abstain from marriage after their ordination; if they could still live with their spouse, it was only as brother and sister.

● ***Doesn't St. Paul speak explicitly of the bishop's wife?***

When St. Paul cites amongst the qualities required to become bishop or deacon the fact of being “the husband of one wife” (I Tim. 3:2; 3:12), this does not mean that deacons and bishops could continue to live in marriage after their ordination. It means rather that the fact of being remarried was considered as the sign of an inability to live in continence. One who still feels the need to remarry after the death of his first spouse does not seem to be able to live in celibacy. This prescription can have no other meaning, for if the churchman could continue to exercise the marriage right, a second marriage could not be an impediment to ordination.

● ***Did the Fathers of the Church address this question?***

One Father of the Church, St. Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315–403), testifies:

Priests are chosen firstly from among virgin men, or else from among monks; but if persons apt to fulfill this service are not found among monks, priests are customarily chosen from among those who live in continence with their spouse or who, after one marriage, have become widowers.<sup>5</sup>

● ***Was this rule observed everywhere?***

The same Father of the Church laments that this rule is not observed everywhere, and makes this comment:

In several places, priests, deacons and sub-deacons are still begetting children. I answer that this is not in accordance with the rule, but it happens because of the heedlessness of men.<sup>6</sup>

● ***Don't the laws concerning ecclesiastical celibacy date from the fourth century?***

The first *explicit* laws that we know of on the celibacy of clerics indeed were promulgated in the fourth century. It should be noted, however, that they were not presented as a novelty, but as a reminder of the ancient discipline. The Fathers of the African Council of 390 referred explicitly to the apostolic tradition when they taught anew the obligation of celibacy.<sup>7</sup>

● ***How do you explain that some authors date priestly celibacy from the 12th century?***

The affirmation according to which celibacy would be an invention of the 12th century contains only one element of truth: In 1139 the second Lateran Council decided that marriages contracted by clerics having already received major orders would no longer be only *illicit*, but henceforth also *invalid*. (Previously, the marriage of a priest or deacon was gravely sinful but nonetheless valid.)


## 83) Why are priests of the Catholic Eastern Rites allowed to be married?

The Church in the East, in a council held in the seventh century at Constantinople (the Council *in Trullo* of 691), made concessions to a widespread practice: it allowed priests to continue to live in a marriage concluded before their ordination. This Council kept the ancient discipline of celibacy for bishops only. Subsequently, this rule was then tolerated by popes for priests of the Eastern Church who returned to unity with Rome.

● ***The Oriental usage is then only a tolerance?***

The Oriental usage is only a tolerance, and it marks a break with the primitive ideal. The Church of the Orient has, however, kept some vestiges of this ideal: the deacon or priest may continue to live in a marriage contracted *before* his ordination, but he cannot contract a marriage. If his wife dies, he must then observe celibacy. Most of the time, bishops are selected from among monks, for these are always celibate. Were a married man to become bishop, however, he would have to separate from his wife.

● ***What do the faithful think of these married priests?***

The faithful of the Eastern Church often consider married priests as inferior to priest-monks. They feel more or less that the celibate priest perfectly realizes the ideal of priesthood, and they prefer to go to confession to them. 

Translated exclusively for Angelus Press from *Katholischer Katechismus zur kirchlichen Krise* by Fr. Matthias Gaudron, professor at the Herz Jesu Seminary of the Society of St. Pius X in Zaitzkofen, Germany. The original was published in 1997 by Rex Regum Press, with a preface by the District Superior of Germany, Fr. Franz Schmidberger. This translation is from the second edition (Schloß Jaidhof, Austria: Rex Regum Verlag, 1999) as translated, revised, and edited by the Dominican Fathers of Avrillé in collaboration with the author, with their added subdivisions.

<sup>1</sup> 1917 Code, Canon 968, 1 (1983 Code, Canon 1024).

<sup>2</sup> “On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone,” English version online at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents).

<sup>3</sup> On the ordinary and universal magisterium of the Church, see Question 19 of this catechism.

<sup>4</sup> Decretal *Nova quaedam*, X.

<sup>5</sup> *Expositio Fidei*, 21; PG 42, 824.

<sup>6</sup> *Adversus Hæreses*, 54, 9; PG 41, 1024.

<sup>7</sup> See further the excellent book by Fr. Christian Cochini, S.J., *Origines apostoliques du célibat sacerdotal* (Paris-Namur: Lethielleux, 1981).



## What did Bishop Fellay mean when he called the Jews our “older brothers”?

This expression was used by a journalist, who wrongly presumed that this expression came from the Second Vatican Council, whereas Pope John Paul II used it first. The Superior General of the Society of Saint Pius X, in an interview that he gave to a French magazine by the name of *Famille Chrétienne* on February 14, 2008, responded by commenting on the expression in itself, separated from the context in which it was used by Pope John Paul II. The interviewer’s direct question was as follows: “With respect to Judaism, do you accept the formula that came from the Council, and that presents the Jews as ‘our older brothers’?”

The issue has become important because Bishop Fellay has been attacked by some as if he had gone soft and compromised with Rome. He is consequently falsely accused of saying that the Jews are “our older brothers in the faith” and that they “share the covenant with us.”

Here is a literal translation of Bishop Fellay’s response to the question above:

The expression (our older brothers) can be understood in two ways. It is ambiguous. The first way of understanding it is correct and the other incorrect. Sacred Scripture contains both the Old and the New Testament. Everything that God passed on to the chosen people is found in the first Covenant. But it has been replaced by the New Covenant, the Good News, that is the Gospel. We Catholics have everything, both the Old and the New. The Jews are faithful to the Old Testament with respect to the letter. But something new happened afterwards, and Judaism stopped there. Something essential happened: the coming of the Messiah. The Jews are our older brothers inasmuch as we have something in common with them. However, for as much as that, this does not suffice to be saved.

Note that Bishop Fellay does not say that the Jews are our older brothers in the Faith, nor that they have the Faith, nor even that they are faithful to the Old Testament. All of these opinions are a part of the incorrect understanding, to which he alludes. Much to the contrary, he affirms that refusing the Messiah announced by Abraham, the Jews no longer have the Faith of Abraham. Nor does he say that they share a covenant, for he clearly states that they refuse the New Testament. All that is common is the Old Testament, and this “with respect to the letter” only, that is in a purely material sense, and not in reality, in its spiritual and real meaning. Hence, understood in the correct sense, all that this expression, “our older brothers,” means, is that the Jews have the literal text of the Old Testament as we Catholics do; yet this is entirely insufficient for

salvation or for supernatural Faith, on account of their blindness to the real meaning of the Scriptures, as St. Paul points out:

Because of unbelief they were broken off. But thou standest by faith...blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in. (Rm. 11:20, 25)

## Can I advise friends to attend the traditional Masses of priests ordained in the new rite?

It is a great grace for priests ordained in the new rite to discover Tradition for the first time, as is frequently happening at the present time. In general, they have a strong faith and firm principles; they do not want to compromise, and are learning little by little about the crisis in the Church. Of course we must encourage them to celebrate the traditional Mass, for it is by this means that the crisis of modernism will be reversed little by little.

However, it is true that there can be a problem with priests who have been ordained in the *Novus Ordo* rite. There are frequently doubts about the validity of their priestly ordination (but not always), particularly if the ordination was done in English. These are called positive, for there is a reason to doubt, albeit only slight. This reason can be a possible defect of the intention of doing what the Church does. The traditional rite repeats in many different ways in different ceremonies the Catholic intention, defined by the Council of Trent, of ordaining a priest to offer sacrifice, and not just of appointing a presider on behalf of the community. This intention is obscured on purpose and by omission in the new rite. An example of this is at the handing over of the chalice, at which time in the traditional rite the bishop confers upon the newly ordained priest the power to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the living and the dead. These words are omitted from the new rite, instead being substituted with “Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him.” Who cannot see that this is a radical and highly symbolic change?

There can also be a doubt about the form of ordination in the new rite. Although the words in the Latin are essentially the same, the prayer requests the “dignity of the priesthood,” and it can very well be wondered if the post-conciliar church gives the same meaning to this phrase “the priesthood.” The modernists have repeatedly tried to hide new concepts under the same words so as to confuse orthodox Catholics. In the New Mass and new rite of ordination, the priest is regarded as a leader of the assembly, the representative of the people, and not as a mediator, offering an unbloody

sacrifice in the person of Christ. Add to this the manifest and deliberate ambiguity in the translation of “priesthood” by the English word “presbyterate” (as in the original ICEL translation), of manifestly different meaning and connotation than the word “priesthood,” and it can readily be seen that there is a reason to doubt if it symbolizes and accomplishes the same thing, namely, the transfer of the power of holy orders.


There can also be doubts about the episcopal consecration of the ordaining bishop, either because the form of consecration of bishops was radically changed or because the Catholic intention is no longer clearly expressed. Every theology textbook explains the principle that we cannot allow any doubt to hang over the validity of the sacraments. It would be a sacrilege to do so deliberately, for it would expose the sacraments to invalidity. That is why we must follow a “tutorist” position with respect to administration of the sacraments, namely the safest possible course. Since it is generally not possible to resolve these doubts with certitude, the Society of St. Pius X will in such cases recommend a conditional ordination, not only to avoid any danger of sacrilege but also because it would be of potentially great harm to souls to allow any doubt in the administration of the sacraments by these priests.

The sedevacantists exaggerate in this, and maintain that all these ordinations are quite simply invalid. There is no logical or theological basis for this opinion. It is rather a doubt that we can have in individual cases, concerning the validity of particular *Novus Ordo* ordinations, either because of ambiguity in the meaning or translation of the words that make up the form, or because there is a doubt as to whether the ordaining bishop was really a bishop and really had the intention of doing what the Church does.

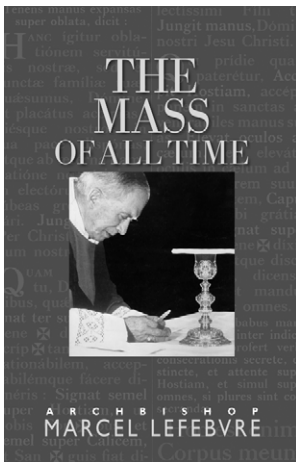
Since it is generally not possible to resolve these doubts with certitude, the Society of St. Pius X is obliged in such cases to recommend a conditional ordination in order to remove all doubt. However, it would be wrong to maintain that these priests are not priests at all; or to treat them as if they were not

priests; or to regard this doubt, positive but very slight, as if it were a certitude.

Consequently, we are obliged to follow two different paths of action. One path of action is for our own selves and for our reception of the sacraments. Here we must follow the safest path, and so if we cannot know with certitude of the validity of the priestly ordination of the priest, we ought not to receive the sacraments from him, except in danger of death. It is for this reason that the Society establishes with certitude the validity of priestly ordination before allowing a priest to celebrate Mass in its chapels. This is becoming increasingly difficult, as most priests were now ordained in the new rite and the ordaining bishops, for several generations of episcopal consecrations, were ordained in the new rite also. Investigation of the form and intentions of these ceremonies is not easy.

The other path of action is for other faithful Catholics who are not yet traditional. Such traditionally minded priests, who are now turning towards Tradition, are much better for Catholics in the modern Church than any other priests, and so we should have no hesitation in recommending that people who are still in the *Novus Ordo* church receive the sacraments from them. It would be only if asked by traditional Catholics, or if the person is seeking to find out about it, that we could mention the doubts that we might eventually have concerning the validity of ordinations in the *Novus Ordo* church. We are not obliged to say anything, for we are not responsible for the doubt, and it is certainly much less of a doubt than elsewhere in the *Novus Ordo* church. Moreover, if we were to insist too much on this point (remember that it is only a doubt, and frequently only a slight doubt) we would risk putting off Catholics of good faith who are turning towards Tradition, and who would consider this doubt as a relatively minor detail in the whole picture that they are discovering. 

Fr. Peter Scott was ordained by Archbishop Lefebvre in 1988. After assignments as seminary professor, US District Superior, and Rector of Holy Cross Seminary in Goulburn, Australia, he is presently Headmaster of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Academy in Wilmot, Ontario, Canada. Those wishing answers may please send their questions to Q&A in care of Angelus Press, 2915 Forest Ave., Kansas City, MO 64109.



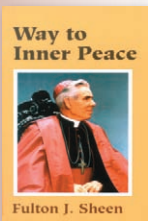
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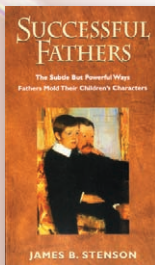
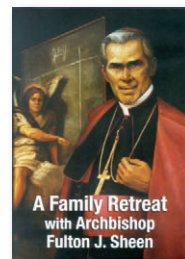
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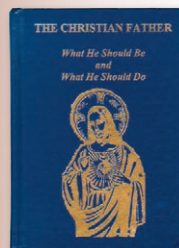
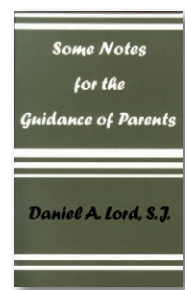
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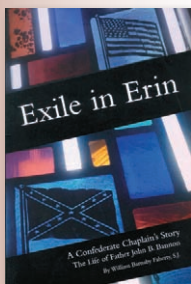
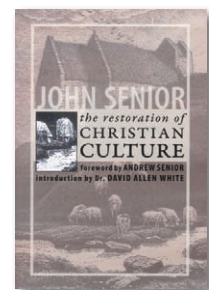
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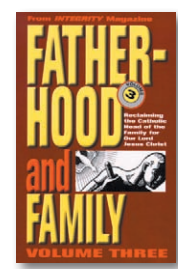
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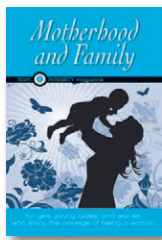
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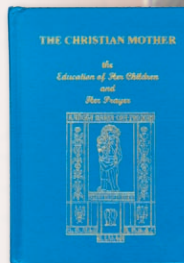
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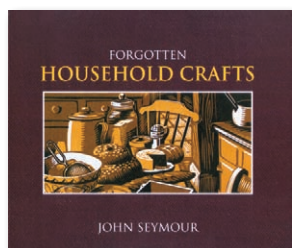
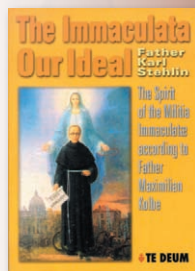
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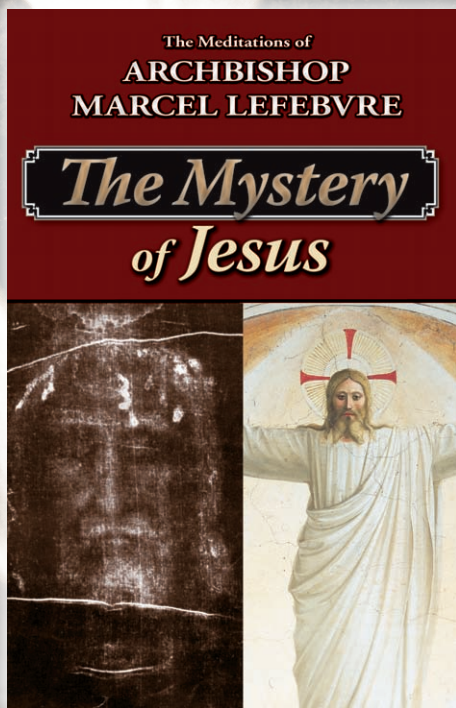




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