

My Journey in the Society of Saint Pius X

Fr. Post, SSPX

To begin with, let me say that this will not exactly be a complete history of the Society of Saint Pius X, but only the story of my life in this Society along with the earlier experiences that helped to shape this life. I am writing this on the occasion of fiftieth anniversary of our Society of Saint Pius X, which was founded by His Grace Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in Fribourg, Switzerland, in response to the requests made to him from several students of the French Seminary in Rome.

The Society of Saint Pius X is a community of priests without vows, and also of brothers and sisters with vows, which is dedicated to the preservation of the holy Mass, as well as all the other acts of public worship performed in the Catholic Church. The Mass, of course, is the most important part of these traditions. And Archbishop Lefebvre saw very clearly the absolute necessity of maintaining the tradition of the Latin Mass.

Thus the work of the Society of Saint Pius X is primarily a liturgical one. We know very well, as do many people outside our Society, that that entire existence of the Catholic Church, its very life, is dependent on the Mass and the other parts of the liturgy; the word “liturgy” clearly meaning “public worship.” In 1969 some of the students of the French Seminary in Rome came to see the Archbishop and asked him to do something for those seminarians and priests who were beginning to see the real effects of the changes brought into the Church.

My own journey to the Society of Saint Pius X began on Sunday, January 7th, 1940, when I was born to Dorman and Marie Post in Saint Mary’s Hospital in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I had an older brother, Dennis, who was born there in 1938. World War II came along and my father got a job at D. W. Onan, making generators for the military. By 1945 and the end of the war my parents decided to move out to San Francisco since my mother had a sister, Audrey, who was out there and who urged us to relocate to that city. There was warmer weather and a good job market, so off we drove. We took a couple of weeks to get there, visiting relatives along the way and at one point trying to swim in the Great Salt Lake in Utah. I remember that we could not sink in the water because it was so full of salt, but we emerged from it coated with the stuff.

My brother and I attended grammar school at Saint Agnes, where we received our First Holy Communion in 1947. Later the family moved to the Sunset district and we attended Holy Name School, a four block walk from our house. The pastor at Holy Name was Father Richard Ryan, who helped my

family out financially so that I could attend the San Francisco minor seminary, Saint Joseph's College in Mountain View. While I there, Pope Pius XII went to his reward in October of 1958. We were in the study hall having a talk by the seminary rector, Father James T. Campbell, when one of the seminary professors came in and told us that the pope's death had just been announced on the radio. We immediately knelt down and said prayers for the repose of the soul of this magnificent man of God. I went through the whole six-year course there, graduating Magna Cum Laude in 1959. The seminary building unfortunately was heavily damaged in the 1990's by an earthquake and so, partially also because of the small number of students, was torn down.

In 1959 I went on to the major seminary, Saint Patrick's in Menlo Park, about ten miles to the north. After one semester there, I felt something pulling me away and so changed over to the University of San Francisco, graduating from there in 1961. On to Berkeley to study linguistics, and then to San Francisco State University to get a high school teaching certificate, which I used in 1964 to teach Americanism, language and social studies from various parts of Latin America, Europe, and Asia. It was an interesting job.

In the summer of 1964 I visited Latin America, with a bus trip from the border of California, the Mexican city of Tijuana, to the capital of the country, Mexico City. I spent a few days there, visiting the Latin American Tower, La Torre Norreamericana, and of course the Mexico City Cathedral, including its side chapel with its walls completely covered with gold leaf from all over the country.

After three days in the capital, I went to the airport to decide upon my second and final country on this trip. Looking at the possibilities, I decided that the best deal was a flight on Peruvian Airlines to Lima, the capital of Peru. Unfortunately, I had forgotten that Lima is south of the equator and so it was winter down there. But it was not too cold. I walked all over the city and up some of the hills, then down into the city where I saw the chapel in which Saint Rose of Lima had been baptized by the then Bishop of Peru,¹ whose diocese included the entire country. I have a relic of both there canonized saints in one container.

At this point I considered going into the Air Force and went up to the base north of San Francisco to take all the required tests. I was told that I could report to an Air Force training base in San Antonio, Texas, to begin officer training. But then, in the evening of Easter 1964, as I was having dinner in a restaurant close to home in San Francisco, I got the inspiration to go into the religious life. I resolved that, if this inspiration lasted for three days, I would go and speak to my pastor about it. It did remain in my mind for that length

of time; and so I did go and talk with my pastor, Monsignor Stanley Reilly, pastor of Saint Emydius parish in the Ingleside area of San Francisco, a part of the city in the west-central area. Monsignor Reilly as an army chaplain had been captured by the Japanese in World War II and had been forced to go on the Bataan Death March. When he returned to America, he was so emaciated that the Archdiocese of San Francisco gave him a year off to recuperate. Around this time I was told that all four priests in that rectory were taking tranquilizers because of the stress brought on by all the changes in the Church after Vatican II.

Monsignor Reilly gave me the names and addresses of five religious Orders in the western U.S. I wrote to all of them and received an invitation to come and visit the novitiate of the Discalced Carmelites in Oakville, about sixty miles north of San Francisco. So the following weekend I took a bus up to Oakville, was met by one of the priests at the bus stop, and was driven to the novitiate about a mile to the west. This novitiate is deep in the California wine country. From the front of the building one can look out over the vast expanse of vineyards in the Napa Valley.

And so I got to see the inside of a Carmelite novitiate and felt the atmosphere of a true religious house. The main building had been built in the 1920s as the residence of a wealthy family. The Anglo-Irish Province of the Carmelites had bought it in the late 1950s and made it into the California novitiate of the Anglo-Irish Province. The California Carmelites now have their own Province with four houses in California and one each in Oregon and Washington. The entering group of 1964 was comprised of four young men for the priesthood and two for the brotherhood, with one young man already there in his second year in preparation for the priesthood. And so on July 25th I said goodbye to my father at his work and my brother Dennis at home and began the sixty-mile drive with my mother up to Oakville via San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge. We were met by two brothers; and, after making a visit to the chapel, my mother and I said our teary goodbyes, she going back to our home in San Carlos and I to my room on the second floor.

We were not allowed any contact with our family, or anyone else, until Christmas time, when we were permitted to send a Christmas card to our homes. I wrote to my family telling them all about the place, the atmosphere, and so on. From then on we could write more; as I recall, once a month.

The mornings were taken up with Mass; the Divine Office (five nights a week we said Matins at midnight); Lauds, Prime, and then an hour of meditation followed by breakfast in silence. After this there was a class with the novice master and then our “manualia,” which consisted of various

cleaning jobs all over the building. At noon we said Sext and None, then went to the refectory for the noon meal—we never called it “lunch.”

We then experienced a little bit of the Spanish origin of the Order. We were reminded that the Discalced Carmelites separated from the “calced” when Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross began to set up houses of the old observance, in which the friars were truly “discalced,” that is, not wearing shoes. Sometimes this became a bit uncomfortable, for example, when a small stone managed to get between your foot and the sandal.

In January of 1965, one day, as the afternoon work time was ending, I felt some pain in my abdomen which I thought was just some gas. However, since it did not stop but just continued to get worse, I went to the prior and told him about it. He then drove me down to the hospital in Napa, about ten miles away. There, in the emergency room, a test was performed and sure enough it turned out to be appendicitis. And so, without any delay, I was taken to the surgical building and the operation to remove the inflamed appendix was performed. The prior of course telephoned my parents about this and told them that I would be in the hospital for about a week. According to the rule at the time, if I had been out for two weeks, I would have had to begin the novitiate year all over again. Fortunately this did not happen, since I was up and about in just a week.

So the novitiate year continued, and all went well. Then on September 8th, 1965, I took the simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in the novitiate chapel along with Brother Carmen, the other novice who was studying for the priesthood. My family of course was there for the ceremony.

After a small banquet, we said our goodbyes and were driven down to the Carmelite seminary in the hills east of San Jose, which is called Mount Saint Joseph, where we joined the student body of—as I recall—five other students for the priesthood. There were also six priests in residence, bringing us to a total of fifteen Carmelites, including two brothers. Houses of the Discalced Carmelites are typically this small. Saint Teresa of Avila made it a rule for the Carmelite nuns that if a convent reached the number of twenty-two Sisters, some of them had to leave and start up another convent.

So we began the academic year of 1965-1966 with our courses in various areas of philosophy, Church history, and related subjects. We had a few students from the two other Carmelite provinces, the southern and eastern provinces. I did fairly well in these subjects, since I had a strong academic background of seven years in the liberal arts. At the conclusion of the academic year in June of 1966, since we had been told that we were now combining houses of study with the other two provinces of the Carmelites, the

even in the midst of the normal activities of a parish. Several of the good parishioners here can be seen at various places in the church from time to time maintaining and developing that life of prayer and meditation that is absolutely essential for a Catholic who wants to live as a true follower of Our Lord. These people know that they simply cannot do this as long as they are in constant daily contact with the world with all its allurements and invitations to live the life of contemporary pagans we see all around us. We must have a means of getting away, on a regular basis, from all this moral and spiritual rot and putting ourselves into the presence of Our Eucharistic Lord and His Most Blessed Mother. Through His Grace, the Most Reverend Marcel Lefebvre, this has been made possible for us, in these times when the devils are walking the earth in the full knowledge that their time is short and that they thus have to live in the anticipation and fear of that day, as she told us, “My Immaculate Heart will triumph.”

¹ I.e., Saint Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo who was the bishop of Lima from 1579 to 1606. Saint Rose of Lima was born in 1586 and died in 1617.

² Father Fredrick J. Nelson died at age 65 on August 13th, 1988. He also published the *Maryfaithful* magazine.

³ *Caisse* in French means a crate.

⁴ Archbishop Lefebvre’s body was in fact transferred from the crypt to the new church built at Ecône on September 24th, 2020.

⁵ The first chapel of the Ecône seminary, located within the building, was called *Noire-Dame-des-Champs* (“Our Lady of the Fields”). A large stone church dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary has since been built, and was consecrated in 2012.

⁶ I.e., “station.”

⁷ Father Abdo’s tragic death occurred on July 26th, 1987.

⁸ The offices and printing facilities of *The Angelus* were moved to Kansas City, Missouri in 1990.

southern and the eastern, I traveled by plane to Washington, D.C. and was taken to the Carmelite house there, which is about a mile south of Catholic University. There were, as I remember, eighteen of us in this house, fourteen studying for the priesthood and several Brothers.

So then in September our studies of theology began, in dogma, moral theology, Church history, speech, chant, and canon law.

Nothing unusual happened this year, and in June we traveled up to New Hampshire for the summer vacation at the Carmelite house in Peterborough, a town that was known as a sort of retreat for writers. We visited a few people while there and made a few trips down to Boston to see the historical sites.

One thing that sticks in my mind from this summer was the weekend visit from the Newman Clubs of the area, in the course of which, one Sunday, the procession of students to the church was led by a young man carrying a banner on a pole. Naturally I would have expected this banner to be something religious. Imagine my surprise when I saw that, instead of this, the banner was honoring Snoopy, the dog from the comic strip. Of course I refused to take part in this mockery. There were also banners in the chapel with similar nonsensical themes. This was my introduction to the inane world of the Novus Ordo Church, one more example of which I witnessed later in the Carmelite house as I saw a priest saying “Mass” on a card table with his “congregation” of three students at the table—his “Mass” was read out of some magazine.

This foolishness was then continued in the Washington house, with the typical Novus Ordo banality, all of us standing throughout the daily “Mass” and receiving the “Host” or piece of bread at “Communion” time. Every day at least one of the community did not even get out of bed to witness this empty-headed insult to Our Lord, so that he was not privileged to listen to one of the students’ lame attempts to play a guitar during this Mess.

The stupidity of all this—and more gross liturgical insults to Our Lord—led to such an atmosphere in the house that the main topic of discussion at the monthly Community Meetings became “How do we make the community Mass more interesting?”

(I have sometimes imagined Saint Peter at the Last Supper leaning towards Our Savior to ask, “Lord, how can we make this more interesting?”)

And I can remember one visit of our Provincial Superior that year, in which he stated his unhappiness with a first-run movie that we had seen the previous evening, since it contained a scene of a man and a woman on a couch—they were not discussing philosophy! But he did nothing to guard against this in the future. I suppose that this would have been uncharitable.

Asian District, Father Daniel Couture, who is now working in his native Canada.

On arrival, I took in quite a few of the sights in this former British colony that has retained quite a few reminders of the fact that this land was for a while a symbol of “Western Imperialism”—to the benefit of all concerned! At least fifty shipping lines have offices in Singapore. We wore our white cassocks, or *soutanes*, as they are called.

In Singapore we were the guests of the Sumantri family, a very devout traditional Catholic family who moved down from Hong Kong when that territory was returned to China from the British at the end of their lease on the territory. Recently we have seen on the news a few scenes of violence that has occurred as a result of the Chinese government’s attempt to bring Hong Kong more fully under its control.

Later I paid visits to other Asian lands, where for example I gazed into Red China across a barrier dividing the Communist country from Hong Kong. As I recall, I saw this city on three separate occasions on my way to other places.

I would like to add that, on my last Asian visit, I paid a one-week visit to our priory in Sri Lanka, which used to be called Ceylon, in which country was filmed the classic film, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. During this visit I was able to see a couple of the beautiful old Catholic churches built in this country while it was guided by Portugal. Thus there were still some remnants there of Sri Lanka’s Catholic heritage.

After my transfer to the priory in Syracuse, New York, in 2010, I had a whole new Mass circuit including our Mass centers in Buffalo and Geneva, New York—not the city of this same name in good old Switzerland!

In 2016 I went back to Dickenson, Texas—my third time there. But this year, in August of 2019, four of our priests at Queen of Angels were transferred out, including myself to our priory in beautiful western Oregon, where I am now stationed.

The priory in Oregon, located in the city of Veneta about a hundred miles south of Portland, is one of the largest and most beautiful properties in the United States. It consists of several buildings, namely, the church, the priory, the convent, and a larger multi-purpose building that contains the church and school offices, school classrooms and library, a teachers’ room, and an auditorium where stage productions can be presented.

Our property is in a quiet area of the city of Veneta and so is an ideal place for a type of contemplation that is indispensable for the spiritual life of the priests and sisters who live there. For me solitude and prayer are absolutely essential for a priest or religious who wants to concentrate on the interior life

Which brings up the end-of-month celebration we had at the close of each month of the school year. It began with cocktails in the lower level of the library; they were put together by a classmate of mine from Milwaukee, who, I must admit, was quite adept at this. He and I were both born in January of 1940; and he had several skills, which I hope he put to good use later since—*Deo gratias*—he did not continue on to the priesthood. I suppose you could say that he was part of the tremendous drop in vocations we saw in the wake of Vatican II—the Council that was going to make the Church “more meaningful to modern man.” O, how often did we have that expression thrown at us!

This also ties in with the installation of color television in the library during that bad year of 1967. This television was on just about all the time during school hours. It showed just how far the religious Orders had sunk in the glorious wake of Vatican II. Previously the Carmelite Order had maintained a strict ban against a television set in any house of the Order. This ban was so severe that in the rules of the Order any prior who allowed a television set in his priory was automatically suspended. In the wake of Vatican II, he would be suspended or moved if he did NOT allow a television set in his house. On one occasion, I went into the library to look for something and I saw the TV on, specifically a soap opera, being watched by a sixty-something Spanish priest of the Order.

Years later, speaking to a member of the Order, I learned that both the prior of this house and another priest there, both of whom had been priests more than twenty years, had left the priesthood to get married. One of them was helping his “wife” run a motel in Florida. What a glorious end to a priestly life!

At the time I was developing health problems, obviously because of the abandonment of the religious life. This was not why I became a Carmelite! I wanted a religious house, a religious life, not a membership in a monastic country club!

So then in the summer of 1968 I received permission to fly out to California to help my family move up from San Francisco (actually San Carlos) to Post Falls, Idaho. So we packed everything up and began the two-day drive to Post Falls and Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. My parents moved up there to join a traditional group of Catholics begun by a man named Francis Schuuckardt who moved there from Seattle.

After some persuasion, I wrote and told the Carmelites that I was not coming back after my vows would expire on September 8th, the Birthday of

After an hour or so of walking in the workers’ paradise, I returned to the wall. But I could not get my ten dollars back, just a receipt for twenty-five Ostmarks (East German money). So I have now contributed ten American dollars to the cause of Communism. I then rejoined my decadent West Berlin friends and was driven to the hotel.

The next day I took the flight down to Geneva, a train to Riddes, and went by car to our seminary. The next day the first General Chapter of the Society of Saint Pius X began. We had some people outside the building, as also at the subsequent General Chapters, to ensure that there was no one there to observe or to record the activities of the Chapter.

This was the first of the three General Chapters that I attended. As for what went on there, of course, I was under sworn obedience of non-disclosure, so that I cannot say any more, except to note that I saw some old friends there, notably my old Fribourg classmates and friend Father Jean-Yves Cottard, who is still working for us in France.

Years later, on one of my five visits to East and Southeast Asia, I had another one of those unusual experiences with the “Idiot Box,” i.e. television. It was a similar experience in a Tokyo hotel, in which I switched on a TV channel and saw a Japanese reporter interviewing a Japanese baseball player before a game in New York, with background noise all in English. This again was a bit unusual, hearing in Tokyo the Japanese-language interview of a player with shouts in the background of “Get your beer here!”

A short time before this trip to Asia, our seminary at Winona had been visited by a Catholic bishop from one of the diocese in Thailand. I had attended his talk there, and had learned that he had received his degree in theology from Catholic University in Washington!

After going through Security at the Bangkok airport, I saw this Asian bishop who, I believe, was His Excellency Bishop [John Bosco Manat Chuabsamai], standing there with other locals to greet me. I was familiar with this bishop because I had heard him present the conference at Winona which stirred up my old desire to visit Asia. When we had exchanged the normal Thai bow of courtesy, with hands joined in prayer, we proceeded to the baggage area, retrieved my suitcase, drove off to the hotel where I was to stay for a couple of nights. This hotel was owned by a traditional Catholic man. What a small world we live in!

So, several days in Bangkok seeing the sights, talking to the Catholic people there, traveling with the bishop and a few laymen up to a northern rural retreat center, saying Mass there for a group of faithful, and then back to Bangkok and the flight to Singapore to visit with the then-Superior of the

Our Lady. They were glad to learn this. I heard later that the prior in San Jose was glad I was gone because I was “too traditional.”

This Francis Schuckardt had begun a sort of traditional group in the area, drawing followers from some Catholics from the West Coast who had begun to see that the changes in the Church were not good at all but were drawing many people away from the Church. There was a small community of Sisters and a few Brothers around Schuckardt, who was always addressed as “Francis” in his attempt to appear as a pious man of about forty years of age and not a religious leader.

Mr. Schuckardt had a good speaking style, and he had been the leader in the Seattle area of the Fatima Crusade, in which he began to see clearly the results of the Vatican II changes. The Sunday Masses for this group were said sometimes by visiting priests, particularly by Father Lawrence Brey of Milwaukee. Every week on Tuesday evening we had a holy hour which was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. but never began before 8:15 a.m, sometimes as late as 8:30 a.m, even though the Sisters’ house was less than a ten-minute drive from Mr. Schuckardt’s.

Around this time a traditional-minded priest, Father George Kathrein, C.Ss.R., was transferred into the Catholic church of Coeur d’Alene. And so our traditional group began to attend his Masses. Of course, some of the group caused a commotion when they switched sides in the church so that they could receive Holy Communion only from Father Kathrein, who never used the new Canon of the Mass. Because of this and other problems, Father Kathrein was eventually transferred to the Redemptorist house in Oakland, California.

So then Father Brey came to visit more often and even began to say Mass out in the group’s new “chapel” west of Coeur d’Alene.

But the real problems with this group began to surface. Mr. Schuckardt had told my parents in California that he was forming a group in Coeur d’Alene to continue tradition, that he had located a spot on which to build a church, and that he was forming a group of four “insider” families who would pay equally to purchase the land. It was priced at \$18,000, which meant that each family would put up \$4,500. He neglected to mention the taxes, building permits, and other expenses that are incurred in putting up a building. Then we learned that two of these families, whose names I could mention but I will not, could not put in anything like the requested \$4,500. They could not come up with forty-five cents between them.

Mr. Schuckard somehow bought the land—which his own father, himself a realtor, had tried to persuade him not to purchase, to no avail. Many things

Mass centers (I do not like the expression “chapels,” which to me sounds a bit Protestant) continued to be opened up, until finally I was transferred in 1987 to our priory in Dickenson, Texas. Around this time⁸ it was decided to move *The Angelus* offices to our priory in Saint Louis, Missouri, from which I continued to take the airlines, especially Trans World Airlines (TWA), to various Mass centers, for example Memphis, Nashville, and Orlando. I can recall that I served our priory in Orlando (now our priory in Sanford, Florida) from 1995 to 2003. The coordinator, Mr. Bruce Rhea, had worked in radio up in Pennsylvania and now was putting up at least one radio tower in Florida. I also stayed each weekend at his lovely home in Sanford. Mr. Rhea passed from this life a couple of years ago, and I continue to remember him and his family at Mass.

The next few years went on without any great events, except that I was invited to attend the Society’s General Chapters in Ecône, Switzerland in 1982, 1994, and 2006. On my way to the Chapter in 1982, I went by way of Berlin, and booked a room in the Berlin international Hotel. Wanting to see some real German television, I turned on Channel six. What a surprise I got when a baseball game from Yankee Stadium appeared on the screen! Channel six is the Berlin outlet for the Armed Forces Network (AFN). Travel six thousand miles to watch a baseball game?

The following Sunday after Mass some of the faithful drove me to Checkpoint Charlie so that I could see the workers’ paradise of East Berlin. They could not go in themselves, being citizens of the decadent West [Berlin]. So I agreed to meet them in an hour or so, walked in, went past the three border guards who were bored to death, exchanged ten American dollars for I think twenty-five East German marks, and proceeded to pay a Sunday-afternoon visit to the Communist part of the city. I turned around to take a photo of the eastern side of the wall, whereupon a guard up on the walls waved his arms, “No, no photos!” I supposed he was afraid that I was going to pass some top-secret information about East Germany to the decadent West. So, I could take photos in East Berlin, but could not carry a tape recorder there—I might be carrying some horrible decadent Western propaganda to be played to the happy citizens of the East. Or, horror of horrors, I could be planning to record the comments of East Berliners on the wonderful life they were living under Communism. But nothing happened. Since it was Sunday afternoon, nothing was open except a few restaurants. I walked past the guard of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, resisted the temptation to ask them who was buried in there, and continued on my merry way.

happened, but the climax came when Father Brey visited and said a Mass in the make-shift chapel on the property, in which he pointed out in his sermon some of the unbalanced things the people were doing, for example, walking out of church backwards so not to turn their backs on the Blessed Sacrament, and other things that I could mention but I will not. As soon as the Mass was over, Francis jumped into the pulpit and proceeded to contradict everything that he had said. This last straw finally persuaded Father Brey to leave and to cut all ties with the “Fatima group,” which a few of us had been asking him to do for some time. It escapes my memory what Father Brey did then; but he did move over to a town in Minnesota, where he eventually passed away.

Meanwhile, my family and I, who had moved out into the country north from Coeur d’Alene, bought a piece of land in a rural area, where I spent a couple of years helping to cut down trees and stack wood to burn for the coming winter. My mother’s parents visited us on one occasion, the last time I was going to see them until my ordination in 1972.

Then, one day in 1969, our neighbor Ron Fillion, who was also a traditional Catholic and a realtor, came by to see us and told us there was in Sandpoint, city ten times to the north, a priest taking the pastor’s place during a vacation, and saying the traditional Mass. So the next morning my mother and I drove up there and sure enough we saw Father Ed DeBusschere saying the old Latin Mass. We attended Mass, received Holy Communion and spoke with Father DeBusschere afterwards. We asked him whether he would be willing to say the old Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation for a group of families down around Coeur d’Alene. He said yes; we make arrangements, and we had one of our families, the Peters family, offer the use of a building on their property as a chapel for the Mass. Father DeBusschere brought the Mass kit, missal, bread and wine, etc., and I served as his altar boy until I went to Switzerland.

This was a real sacrifice for the Peters family, since they were thinking of renting out the building for some added income.

Meanwhile, our little group that began as six families quickly grew to ten families; and then, as more people were coming, they had to move to a larger building. This is the origin of our Society of Saint Pius X priory in Post Falls, which has the Society’s second biggest attendance in the United States, after Saint Mary’s, Kansas.

The Masses, then, were said for more than a year. Then, when my mother told me that she had been having regular correspondence with Dr. Robin Anderson in Rome about their common interest in Cardinal Merry Del Val, the Secretary of State for Saint Pius X. Dr. Anderson told her that Archbishop

The people at the *Examiner* did not want to give Father Angelino my telephone number, to protect my privacy. But he put up such an uproar that they finally let him have it. He called me by telephone and we set up a meeting his San Francisco apartment. The Bumb family of course heard about this and naturally insisted on meeting Father Angelino at the San Jose Flea Market offices. They used their usual tactic of sitting around him so that he was always facing at least one of them who would fire questions at him. But they had not counted on what they got. They got a strong-minded man whom they could not control. But the flea market crew had not figured on this, and they gave up and drove him home. Father Angelino was a very cultured man; he stayed in touch with me, and he knew people in the San Francisco Opera. On the following Christmas of 1975 we rented a large hall in San Francisco and had a sung Mass for the feast. After the Mass we had lunch in a nearby restaurant, and Father Angelino was so excited that he almost walked off without the box containing his chalice of silver and gold, a chalice that had been used once by Pope Pius XII while Father Angelino was a seminarian in Rome. But just then World War II got started and, since Italy was about to side with Germany in the war, the Vatican urged American and Canadians to go back home. Father Angelino made a brief visit to India a little earlier on; he got off the train, took a look around, and got back on. At least, that is what he told me.

About this time, the Society sent me an assistant priest, Father Gavin Bitzer from Kentucky. So we divided up the Masses and other work, so that I now was taking care of Mass centers to the south, namely those in Bakersfield, Santa Barbara, and San Diego (actually Carlsbad, a little north from San Diego).

Father Bitzer served the northern Mass centers of Concord, Sacramento and South Lake Tahoe. The Masses in Salt Lake Tahoe were at the home of Father DeLallo’s parents. Mr. DeLallo worked for the local fire department, and he got for us the permit for Masses at his home.

Quite an interesting thing happened in that chapel a little later on. Two of our California families, the DeLallos and the Kaisers of Bakersfield, had sons and daughters getting married at the same time; the sons of one family marrying the daughters of the other. Father Hector Bolduc, the current District Superior of the time, performed the ceremony. I really do not know how, but he managed to get the names mixed up. We are still trying to figure who got married to whom. (Not really; it all got straightened out at the Mass, which, get this, was the first Solemn High Mass of the Society of Saint Pius X in California!)

Lefebvre was now retired and paying several visits to Rome, where he planned to live, write, and give retreats. He was meeting regularly with Dr. Anderson. The good Dr. Anderson told my mother that, if she would send a letter from me to the Archbishop, he would be happy to pass it on. I wrote the letter, she sent it, and the Archbishop wrote to me telling me that he intended to come to America soon to speak with some bishops about opening up a house of the Society in the United States. He was going to travel first to Pittsburgh, where he knew the bishop of that city and was going to stay at the house of the Holy Ghost Fathers there. And so I wrote to him, telling him that I would come to Pittsburgh on the day indicated and meet with him.

I thus traveled to Pittsburgh, got to the Greyhound terminal, and called the Archbishop at the Holy Ghost house. He told me that since it was already late, I should come to meet him in the morning. He gave me the address of the house, and I agreed to meet him the next day. Thus I spent the night at the bus station as an all-night vigil. Next morning I asked about the first bus going to this suburb of Pittsburgh, which I believe was Fox Chapel. I then got a bus and took it to Fox Chapel, where I rang the doorbell at the Holy Ghost house. The doorkeeper told me that the Archbishop was saying his Mass; and he directed me to the chapel, where His Grace was halfway through the Mass. I knelt down to serve the rest of this Mass. The Archbishop gave a slight look to his right, saw me, and turned to finish the Mass.

We knelt to make our thanksgiving and then proceeded to the dining room for breakfast, and American breakfast, not the usual European breakfast of a bowl of coffee and a slide of bread with butter or jam.

We then spoke about my visit and, he was a bit amazed that I had traveled such a distance just to see him and speak with him. He then gave me the form to fill out to apply for admission to his seminary at Ecône, Switzerland. I had already called to tell my cousin in Falls Church, Virginia, that I would come for a visit.

So, I took another bus trip and came to my cousin's home in Falls Church. My cousin Bud greeted me there, along with his wife and four sons. I had not seen them for several years, and so we were all happy for the reunion. I stayed with them through the weekend, in which they drove me to an Eastern Rite church. At this point they went to attend their own Episcopal service (my father was a convert).

The next day, a Monday, Bud drove me to the new Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C. (actually it is in Virginia). We were there exactly

coming out of San Francisco, and winding up going east towards Oakland, instead of back to the City. I knew that the car, a 1955 Chevy 4-door, was low on gas; and so I tried to make a u-turn on the upper level of the bridge; and—guess what?—the splendid engine of this vehicle just then decided to die. Another quick prayer and I got out of it. I expected to be hit at any moment, but managed to return to San Francisco without further incident.

Meanwhile, back to 1974, we managed to get down to San Jose, California, and settled into our temporary home. I contacted a Mr. George Bumb, whose telephone number had been given to me by someone who knew the area. He assured me that there were people in the area who wanted the traditional Mass and Sacraments, and so we went about setting up for a Mass every Sunday in his home in east San Jose. The following Sunday morning I said the Mass for twenty people in Mr. Bumb's home. From there things progressed until we had so many people coming that we had to rent a hall in San Jose.

Meanwhile a couple of priests helped me out temporarily, one from Latin America whose name I cannot remember, and one from the diocese of Fresno, California, Father Joseph Eberhart. As soon as Mr. Bumb found out about Father Eberhart, he began talking to him and trying to lure him into the role of his private chaplain. Meanwhile, I was receiving telephone calls from different areas asking whether I could come and give Mass and the Sacraments in various cities of California, beginning with Bakersfield. So then I shared the work with Father Eberhart, who moved into the rectory of the old church we had managed to rent in Cambell, a western suburb of San Jose. I had Father Eberhart stay in the rectory while I slept in the back end of the church because I wanted to make Father Eberhart feel at home.

Another priest called me from San Francisco, Father Henry Angelino, after he had seen an article in the major San Francisco newspaper, the *Examiner*, in which the reporter had made the usual bad mistakes in interviewing us, which errors and misquotations were to be seen in the news media for some time. However, this did not disturb His Grace, who had the same experiences in Europe. Most notably he had given an interview to the German magazine, *Der Spiegel* (which means "The Mirror"), in which he was asked, "Your Grace, are you starting up a new church?" He replied, "No, not at all." The next question was, "Are you establishing a new organization in the Church?" "Yes, and it is called the Society of Saint Pius X."

Of course you can easily imagine what happened next. The article came out with the Archbishop saying that yes, he was starting up a new church. I have a copy of this issue of *Der Spiegel* in my files, if it did not get destroyed in the great Dickenson flood of 2017.

a week after it had been opened. It was mostly empty; most of the airlines had not taken their places there yet.

So I flew back to Spokane, where my family picked me up. I told them about my meeting with the Archbishop and about his plan to preside over the annual weekend dedicated to Our Lady of the Prairies in Powers Lake, North Dakota. By an interesting coincidence, this was the very same state in which my mother had been born. So she called Father Frederick Nelson in Powers Lake, and he agreed to make arrangements for my mother and me to stay there for that weekend.

Thus we drove to Powers Lake in late August of 1971 and were warmly greeted by Father Nelson and shown to our rooms in the town movie theatre which he had converted into a little hotel. This was one of the many things Father Nelson had done there, as he was quite the businessman, as well as a professional level organist and singer. In his earlier life he had converted to the Catholic faith and entered the St. Paul, Minnesota, Seminary instead of accepting the invitation to join the chorus of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. The diocese of Bismarck, North Dakota, is in the province of the St. Paul Archdiocese; and so Father Nelson was sent to the parish of Powers Lake, where he proceeded to establish various things: a school, a home for the elderly, and a convent; all of which continued to function for many years until Father Nelson's death.⁴

On our first full day in Powers Lake, my mother and I walked over to the dining room building and asked Father Nelson whether it would be possible to see the Archbishop. We were surprised to learn that His Grace was in the building and not meeting with anyone at the moment. And so we went into the dining area and saw him by himself at one of the tables. He at once recognized me from our meeting in Pittsburgh and greeted us with his customary quiet courtesy. We returned his greeting, kissing his Episcopal ring, and sat down for our—what turned out to be—hour long discussion about his seminary in Switzerland, the Society of Saint Pius X, and associated topics. My mother and I both found it hard to believe that, in this world, there could possibly be a Catholic bishop with such traditional ideas and practices.

But the Archbishop convinced us completely, and we were sold. We were especially amazed—not to say awe-struck—at his complete composure, not a trace of anxiety, nor of bad feeling towards the people in the Church who were—or soon would be—throwing aspersions at him: “disobedient,” “a rebel,” “Who do you think you are?” and the like. It seemed to us that nothing in this world could disturb this man. He had an incredible calmness that I have never seen anywhere else on this planet. His was the tranquility of a

Switzerland with Mr. Reno Verani, met with Archbishop Lefebvre, and agreed that the congregation in Detroit would become our first establishment in this country. But unfortunately by the end of 1973 he had departed for reasons unknown to me. The coordinator there, Mr. Robert Barnick, called Father Ward; Father Ward called me, and once again my life between airports resumed its course. I had expected to go back and teach at Ecône, but the Lord had other plans for me. I informed my family and booked a flight to Detroit.

And so I spent a few months there, during which at one point I took a group of young men across the water into the Canadian city of Winsor, Canada. In January of 1974, Father Ward came back from Ecône and took over this chapel, thus allowing me to resume my plan to teach and direct the English-speaking seminarians, whom the French called *les Anglophones*. No, this is not some kind of French telephone.

So another flight to Geneva—maybe I should have just bought a house there—took a train to the station closest to Ecône, in a hamlet called Riddes; called the seminary; was picked up; again shown a room at the seminary; and settled in for a second time. This time I was ensconced in the new wing that had been under construction in 1971, in my first stage of Ecônization, the wing in which Archbishop Lefebvre himself had lived, the site which is now a shrine to him. He is of course buried on the property, in the nearby crypt that also contains the coffin of Father Stephen Abdo, who was killed in a highway accident a year after beginning his priestly life in his native New Zealand. The Society's first martyr!⁵

The only seminarian I remember from that year is Father Terrance Finnegan from South Dakota. He was ordained shortly thereafter and began serving in our church in Phoenix at 750 East Baseline Road, which has now developed, with Father Bolduc's help of course, into a beautiful property including a renovated church, a retreat center, and a school.

Thus it went for the next several years. While I was in Phoenix, twice my evening Mass was scheduled for Vancouver.

And so I flew out again, this time to Spokane, Washington (I do not recall every having my suitcase out of use for a long time), to help my family move again, this time from Idaho back down to San Jose, California, area. My father drove his pickup and I drove the family car pulling a trailer full of boxes. On a downslope in Nevada, I think, the “automatic pressurized brakes” of the trailer did not immediately engage. My mother and I both had images flash before us of our vehicles and their contents beautifying the landscape. But quick prayers to Saint Christopher and our Guardian Angels saved us, just as in 1960 they had done when I mistakenly got lost on the Bay Bridge

person who is right, who knows that he is right, and whose calmness comes from the depths of his soul in the knowledge that he is following the path that the Lord has laid out for him.

Could it be that Archbishop Lefebvre is the fulfillment of our Lady of Good Success' prediction that one day a prelate would come along to help the Church during a difficult time?

Then, after our conversation had ended, we said our goodbyes and continued our day.

The following day, Sunday, August 30th, Archbishop Lefebvre sang his High Mass at the outdoor altar with about two thousand people in attendance. You can imagine how many ciboriums were needed for the Holy Communions. After the Mass His Grace blessed with a monstrose a large group of people who were in wheelchairs, without pausing at all, in spite of the fact that there were at least sixty of them. I saw this myself, being one of the servers.

Following this there was a banquet, which obviously involved a huge amount of work. But, as I said, Father Nelson was a first-class organizer and knew how to do this to perfection.

The Archbishop and the priests there had their own dinner in the main dining room. The following day, Monday, everyone went back home; my mother and I to Sagle, Idaho, and the rest to wherever they lived. (Sagle is a wide spot in the road ten miles south of the city of Sandpoint, Idaho, where I did a little high-school teaching before going to Ecône. The rest of the time was spent in cutting and stacking lumber to burn in the long, cold Idaho winters).

Finally, I received a letter from Ecône saying that I had been accepted for the fall semester. This letter had taken a full month to reach me, since the person who had sent it decided to send it by surface mail instead of airmail, thus saving themselves about twenty-five cents postage.

And so our little group of traditional Catholics in the area of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, began preparing for my trip to Switzerland. The main thing was to raise the money for the trip to Switzerland. The family of Ken and Beulah Peters, in whose extra building we had had the Mass for two years, put together a booklet (a copy of which I am still trying to find), the sales of which would finance the trip. The whole group there cooperated in various ways. They were so proud that a young man from their chapel was going to join the group of Americans traveling all the way to Switzerland to finish their seminary training.

Then, after weeks of preparation, I said goodbye to my family in the Spokane, Washington, airport and flew off to New York and thus connected

auxiliary bishop of Fribourg, glared at me as he signed my attendance book. I should have worn my orange-colored Buddhist robe, in which case he probably would have hugged me.

The second year at Fribourg was like the first, except that by now two of the original American seminarians had joined me at Fribourg: Clarence Kelly and Anthony Ward, both of them from New York. Clarence spent the class hours working on his book, *Conspiracy Against God and Man*, while I read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and other material. This last-named work had as much solid theology in it as the course we were sleeping through—oops, I mean attending. I am not saying that the courses were boring, such that we just needed something to keep us awake.

During this year we had an unusual experience one evening in the priory. A French priest had just had his Master's Theology dissertation rejected by the —get this—one-man evaluation board at the University. Father Paul Aulagnier, our rector, had allowed him to come live with us for a few days because he was clearly in a bad mental state. The university Theology Department that year had the incredible practice, as I said, of appointing only one professor to read the thesis, and pass or reject it. Well, he rejected it; and that action sent this poor priest off the edge. He was going around that night knocking on our doors asking us to stop all the noise. Then we eventually came out of our rooms, gathered in the living room, and invited him to join us. He did so and I do not know what happened after most of us had left, but this priest was gone the next day.

Thus my second year at Fribourg came to a close. I packed my bag and took the train to Geneva, where, as I mentioned, the train station is right next to the airport. I flew to New York, then on to Houston, where some of our faithful picked me up and made arrangements for lodging and so forth. We drove down to Dickenson, about thirty miles southeast of downtown Houston, and took a look at what was to become Queen of Angels Church in Dickenson. Father Hector Bolduc was in the process of buying this property, and it has now one of our largest congregations in this country.

From there I went on to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where the faithful group had grown to a hundred souls or more. While in the area I received a telephone call from Father Anthony Ward, who had become the Society superior for the United States, asking me to travel up to Detroit, where the diocesan priest who was serving our group there had suddenly departed and left our congregation of more than a hundred people stranded. This priest had visited us in Fribourg several months earlier and had agreed to bring the Detroit congregation under the mantle of our Society. He had come to

with Icelandic Airlines, which was the least expensive way to get to Europe. As far as I know it still is. The flight went to Keflavik, Iceland, its home base. I do not think that I got much sleep that night. But it is not as if I had never flown before.

Then I took an overnight train from Luxembourg, and another one from Paris, arriving the next late morning at the train station. I called the seminary at Ecône, and two cars came since I had told them that I had two cases [caisses²] with me. This was only the first of my many mistakes in the French language. And so I arrived just as they were taking lunch in the Ecône refectory, which at that time was located in the Ecône basement. The Archbishop greeted me and showed me where to sit. I took my place but was not able to converse much with my fellow seminarians, since my knowledge of French was about the same as their knowledge of English.

After the meal I was shown to my room in the old wing of the building, on the third floor.

Very soon we went in cars to the nearby town of Grolley, to a retreat house run by a group of Swiss priests, two of whom also taught classes at Ecône, Fathers Barrielle and Riviere. So for five days the other American newcomers—Clarence Kelly, Donald Sanborn, and Anthony Ward—and I listened to retreat conferences given in French. There was a real penance, since my knowledge of French at the time was minimal.

At the end of this retreat, we returned to Ecône and Archbishop Lefebvre called me to his office, where I showed him my certificates of tonsure and the four minor orders that I had received in the lower-level chapel, called the “crypt,” in the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on the campus of the Catholic University of America. The Archbishop told me that he was going to send me up to Fribourg, where he kept a house of advanced students for the priesthood, since I had already finished most of my courses of theology.

When in 1969-1970 Archbishop Lefebvre was looking for a place for his seminarians to live and study, by divine providence the buildings at Ecône became available. They had been a house of the Canons of the Great Saint Bernard, a local Order that had moved to another location after giving their name to the breed of dogs that were famous for rescuing people lost in the Alps and carrying the little containers of—I do not know, some kind of liquid refreshment—to these mountain climbers.

Ecône is a tiny village—it would probably be more accurate to call it a hamlet—situated in the southwestern part of Switzerland, about ten miles up the highway between Martigny and Sion. The highway follows the course of the Rhone river. The two hills of Sion, on opposite sides of the valley, form a

But there was something else in the bed. I noticed this when I crawled in my bed that first night. It had something in it that was soft and warm. I thought, “Oh gosh, there is an animal in here!” But on closer examination it turned out to be a plastic hot-water bottle. And thus I had my first practical example of culture shock. I learned quickly that other countries, even though they speak English (more or less), do not always do things the Good Old American Way.

And for speaking English—well, to illustrate, of course I visited the two main tourist attractions in Edinburgh, both of them on Princes Street, the Palace and the Castle. I had no trouble with the Castle, but in the Palace I happened to wind up joining a group of tourists, to whom the guide was explaining something in the main bedroom. I really did not know what he was explaining, because he said it all in Scottish English—if there is such a thing. In any case I was able to grasp maybe half (half) of what he was saying. It all reminded me of the actor Sean Connery in the old James Bond movies. As you probably know already, Mr. Connery was born right there in Edinburgh.

Thus in January of 1973 I took the trains and ship—your train ticket included the ship part—over to France. The ship was arranged on five levels, to suit all tastes and pocketbooks. The crossing takes about an hour and a half, so that the passengers on the highest level can finish off their very expensive repasts in a leisurely manner.

In our time of course there is the “Chunnel.” The English language has an unbelievable ability to combine words in this way, as I learned when studying linguistics at Berkeley. So we have the situation in which “Channel” and “Tunnel” get squeezed into “Chunnel.” I wonder why it did not turn into “Tannel.” Well, I supposed that some Oxford dean in his smoke-filled study decided that this “simply will nawt do.”

For my second year at Fribourg, from Spokane, Washington, I flew to Calgary, with a long layover so that I could travel around and take in some of the sights; the third flight to New York; the fourth to London, sitting a long time in a deserted part of the airport because I had deplaned thinking to go shopping, only to find that the shops were not open yet, it being around six in the morning. Oh well, I still had my customary solitude. The final leg was on to Geneva, Switzerland, where I then took a train on to the *gare*⁵ in Fribourg. From there it was an easy walk to our priory at 50, rue de la Vignettaz. Wow, five flights across eight time zones. My inner clock was not only off, it was so far off that it was back on.

My second year at the University of Fribourg was like the first, although this time a little more on-edge because the bishops’ attitude towards our Society was growing a bit unfriendly, not to say hostile. One professor, an

natural observation spot for the valley, and have been used as such since ancient times. The Roman army definitely passed through this area about the time of Julius Caesar. When the digging was done in 1970-1971 for the connecting wing at Ecône between the old building and the new, Romans coins were found and duly reported to the archaeological authorities. The local tradition has it that Caesar himself may have spent time at the location of our seminary. But in any case the scenery is gorgeous. I would not mind it at all if the Society would have me spend the rest of my life there, especially since our property contains a crypt in which can be found the burial coffin of Archbishop Lefebvre. The coffin is due to be transferred to the seminary chapel sometime next year, during the fifty-year anniversary celebration of the Society of Saint Pius X.⁴

To back up a little, after the Canons left Ecône, the main building went up for sale. A group of businessmen wanted to buy it and make it into a night club—a *boite de nuit*, as the French language has it. When Mr. Marcel Pedroni, a friend of Archbishop Lefebvre, heard about this, he and four other local businessmen put their funds together and purchased it. A religious house was not going to become a bar! One can still see the café in a local town where these men decided to buy the house at Ecône. This is truly divine providence at work.

At the times when I have been fortunate enough to come and revisit Ecône, I have found there a kind of peace I have felt in no other place, particularly since I know that Archbishop [is buried there?]—the Society no longer uses the house in Fribourg, since we now have our own seminaries in Switzerland, France, and Germany.

Soon thereafter one of the priests drove me to Fribourg, eighty miles to the northeast. I was installed in one of the bedrooms there. Three French seminarians of our Society also lived there, plus the head of the house, a French priest who was helping us out, Father (or, as they say there, Monsieur l'Abbé) Trauchessec. All of them were polite to me, hiding the inborn feeling of many French people that they are the most cultured and advanced of the Western peoples. But there was also a real sense of gratitude from what America had done for them in World War II.

All of us seminarians of the Society of Saint Pius X, of course, wore our cassocks all the time, so that we stood out like Eskimos in the Sahara. Some of the other students there were friendly; most of them just ignored us. The professors, of course, still wore their Dominican habits. One of these Dominicans actually came down that year to give Scripture classes at Ecône. The year after that, of course, he was forbidden to do this, since our Society

13

Archbishop Lefebvre performed his first ordination on American soil for his first American priest of the Society of Saint Pius X.

Before the actual laying on of hands, my mother and I exchanged a brief glance. Nineteen years of preparation and now it was finally happening. Any mothers reading this will understand what was in our heads and hearts at that moment.

My father and brother Dennis were also there, and I am sure that they were in the same world as my mother. Also present was my adopted sister Mary Petra, whom my mother had gone to Germany in 1962 to adopt.

After the ordination Mass was finished, during which I had spoken the words of consecration along with the Archbishop—what an honor!—and the members of my family were given Holy Communion first. After the ceremony, outside the chapel, there were the customary blessings of my mother, father, brother, sister, aunt and uncle, grandmother, followed by those of the number of the faithful who had been able to get into the chapel or kneel outside.

All in all, it was a glorious morning and the ordination Mass and blessings were followed by a banquet. As Father Fred Nelson was a master organizer, everything went so well that people were commenting on it for weeks afterwards.

So then, on the way back to Post Falls, Idaho, we made a detour to the small town of Taylor, North Dakota, to see the house where my mother had been born on November 21st, 1915. The family now living there graciously allowed us to tour the house, and so we saw the very room in which my mother had been born. Again, what an experience!

We continued on to Past Falls; and I said Mass there until my return to Switzerland the following October, this time taking a rather complicated way, taking advantage of a part of a ticket that I had not had to fly on the previous year. For Christmas and New Year's day that season, Father Peter Morgan, the first priest ordained by the Archbishop for the Society, had me take the train from London up to Edinburgh, Scotland, where a taxicab delivered me to one of our families there. I was amazed at the high ceilings in the buildings there. I thought that this might make it difficult to heat the homes. But the thrifty Scots had solved the problem—they just did not bother with heat. They solved the problem by dressing heavy in the winter.

With a couple of exceptions: they had small electric heaters in the large bedrooms, placed appropriately in the fireplaces. The heat was on a timer so that by the time it turned off, a person was comfortably in bed.

16

was branded as a *seminaire sauvage*, which is hard to translate accurately; maybe “wildcat seminary” comes closest to its meaning.

The following spring Archbishop Lefebvre ordained me to the subdiaconate, in the chapel at Ecône called *Notre Dame des Champs*—Our Lady of the Fields; then later to the diaconate, the last stage before the priesthood. This was done at a local church across the valley of the Rhone river, at a church where the pastor was friendly to the Society.

During the Easter vacation of 1972, Father Trauchessec took me as his Mass server on a little vacation trip through eastern France, stopping at Ars to see Saint John Vianney’s church with its separate confessionals for men and women; the bed in which he had slept and on which we could see on the wood the burn marks from the devil’s attacks; and his poor rectory that had only the essentials. We had people telling us how the good Curé would sometimes hear confessions for fifteen hours a day. From all over France people flocked to go to confession to the Curé. Even some bishops confessed to him. At one point, during the devil’s attacks, Saint John Vianney heard the demon’s horrible voice: “If there were three priests like you in France, I would lose the whole country!”

Father Trauchessec and I continued in his little *deux chevaux*, a French expression that means “two-horse,” referring to the small, no-frills car that so many of the French people used to drive. You never saw one of these cars in damaged condition. One little accident and it is all over.

We continued down to Marseille, the famous Mediterranean port. We visited a church that had quite a few model ships mounted on its walls. Father Trauchessec told me that in the past, if a sailor had a disaster at sea and survived, he would buy or make a model ship and put it up on one of the walls of the church.

Another interesting thing that happened that year at Ecône was that one evening I was summoned to the front door by the voice of the Sister who was stationed there. *Monsieur Gregory Post est demandé à la porterie*. So, off I went, to the front door, to find there to my surprise my Turkish priest friend whom I had met on the first Traditional March on Rome, Father Samuel Ozdemir, who at the time was in charge of a small church of the Syrian Catholic Church in the city of Mardin in southeastern Turkey. I have for a long time been interested in the Eastern rites, particularly those in the Middle East. I really do not have any idea of how he found me in Switzerland, but he did. So of course I invited him in, spoke with the *econome* (treasurer) of Ecône, and got for Father Ozdemir a room, a meal, and permission to say the Syrian rite Mass as the community Mass the next day.

I do not remember the Archbishop’s reaction to this; but I can easily imagine him saying, in French of course, “Well, Gregory, if you know this priest, of course he may say the community Mass tomorrow morning.” That was just how the Archbishop was. He honestly thought that everyone was as simple and honest as he was. Before long he was to learn otherwise.

And so the following day Father Ozdemir said that community Mass at Ecône, probably the only time in the history of that place that an Eastern-rite priest said the Syrian Catholic Mass as the community Mass for our Society.

At the end of the scholastic year, His Grace called me into his office at Ecône and told me that Father Nelson had invited him to preside again over the August celebration of Our Lady of the Fields—is this name a coincidence?²⁵ And [asked], if I was ready, would I like to be ordained to the priesthood? Well, you could have knocked me over with a feather. The Archbishop had known me only a year and a half, had had me as a seminarian less than a year, and was ready to raise me to the priesthood? Of course I stammered my consent. I do not remember what I did next; I probably walked into the nearest wall.

Of course I informed my family about this right away. I did not witness their reaction, but it was not difficult to imagine.

And so we did all the end-of-year things and I made my way back to northern Idaho. I traveled on Amtrak, across all of Montana, with the train making a long unexpected stop in that state. This had the result of our pulling into the station of Williston, North Dakota, more than an hour late. This was before the era of cell phones, so that the boys who got me could not call Father Nelson; or they tried to and did not succeed. In any case, Father wondered about the delay but was happy that I had arrived safely.

Everything went according to plan, and then the next day the big events began. The weekend pilgrimage proceeded as it had done the previous year. We all went to bed that night in eager anticipation of the next day’s events. Of course, I was still on my ordination retreat and so could not meet or talk with anyone.

My mother’s brother, Gene Erdling, his wife, Ehel, and his parents, Harry and Frances Erdling, had arrived from Minneapolis and Plainview, Minnesota, and had been warmly greeted and shown to their rooms by Father Nelson and his staff. On the following day, they of course were in the front pews of Our Lady of the Prairies Chapel. The ceremony began at 10:00 a.m., a solemn high Mass, with Father Nelson at the organ, the choir in their places, and about ten priests in the sanctuary. And so began the ceremony in which