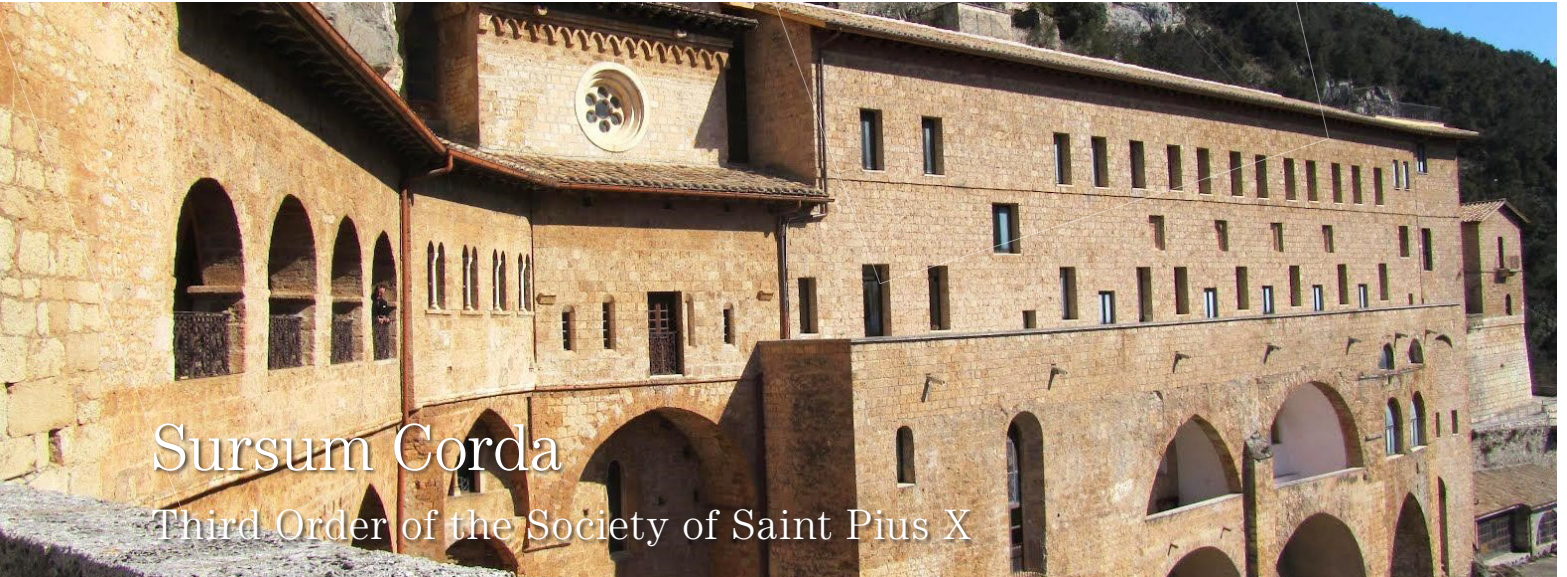




# SSPX



Sursum Corda

Third Order of the Society of Saint Pius X

Number 3 - Autumn 2013 ❖❖

## Canon Law on Third Orders

There are often inquiries about the Third Order of the Society of St. Pius X. At times, explanations seem vague or insufficient, as if the whole context or background is missing. This issue of *Sursum Corda* is to expound on the question of third orders according to Canon Law, thus providing the background and entire context to the definition of a third order.

If a definition were to be given—a third order is an association of laity who are members in a religious order. It is in this light that Tertiaries are part of the family and truly members of any religious order. As such, they possess an additional means of sanctification through the order; they are instructed in the spiritual life by the specific character and spirit of the order; and they partake in the spiritual treasures of the order.

Why does a young man join a monastery? If one considers the ultimate reason, it is to follow the call of God. The more proximate reason is to follow a certain rule of life. The monk has the objective to live in a certain manner, to be subject to a certain formation and practices, indeed a whole life. He hopes to partake in a program of sanctification, that program laid down by the order he joins. As the order has a certain character and means of sanctification, the monastery is for him a school in sanctity.

What of faithful who do not live in a monastery? Can they take something of that way of life, something of that spirit and road to sanctification, and apply it to themselves? Can they engage in some of the same practices so as to reach sanctity? This is a third order.

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# Letter from the Chaplain

Dear Third Order Members,

Unfortunately this issue is a little delayed. Being stationed at a boarding school is not necessarily the most compatible assignment. Nevertheless, we manage.

Find within this issue an explanation of third orders according to the laws of the Church. The article does have some conclusions which many may be surprised at. It is clear the actions of our Founder were inspired by zeal for the salvation of souls. Having established various organizations and associations as a missionary bishop, he understood well these organizations were beneficial for the faithful. He also knew his motives and principles of acting were certainly in line with the spirit and mind of the Church.

It is good for members to think with the mind of the Church—*sentire cum Ecclesia*. It is this mind which every Catholic must learn and conform to. The laws of the Church show this mind and therefore show the spirit of Christ. This animating spirit seeks above all the salvation of souls. The laws exist for the salvation of souls. This is why every future priest studies Canon Law; to learn the spirit of the Church, to work within the jurisprudence of the Church, to know the way the Church behaves.

It is for this reason laws are not to be treated lightly; they are not made to be broken as the saying goes. While most laws do not foresee every contingency, to determine from personal judgment that a law is to be set aside is tantamount to casting Christ aside. It is the liberal who seeks emancipation from the laws; it is the liberal who continually excuses his behavior in the name of epikeia. (For those who interject at this moment—'this is the example given by Archbishop Lefebvre'—it is most certainly not!)

Many believe the SSPX is above the laws simply because there is a crisis of Faith. With those seeking our demise sitting in the seat of the legislator, it becomes an easy solution to dismiss the laws, somehow treading out the storm. This is even easier to conclude as the laws themselves are used as a truncheon to beat us out of existence.

In all this crisis of the Faith, we observe the admirable virtue and balance of Archbishop Lefebvre to preserve at all costs the letter of the law while retaining the spirit of the Church. To step outside the laws was completely unthinkable for him, for it was the same to step outside the

Church. When the only option was to consecrate bishops, he did not use this as any kind of license to do as he wished. He rather provided the bare essentials. For the members of the Society to understand his actions as rebellious and revolutionary and to rejoice therein would have afflicted greatly this man of the Church. He understood the gravity of the situation; he did not rejoice in it but rather agonized over the dilemma. Love for the Church and respect for Her laws is certainly the legacy of Archbishop Lefebvre.

This issue therefore considers canon law and third orders. The purpose is to engender a love for the Church and the sense that we belong to something bigger than ourselves. In this time of crisis, to see clearly and steer the straight course, we should rely on the prudence of the Church rather than our own prudence. This was always said by the Archbishop—to do what the Church has always done.

On a practical note, a woman's retreat is scheduled for August 18-22 at Lindenwood Retreat Center in Donaldson, Indiana. This facility is owned by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. It is a large facility in a beautiful setting. We will not be permitted to use the very beautiful Ancilla Domini Chapel, nevertheless, we are permitted to set up a chapel in one of the conference rooms. Details for this women's retreat are provided on the back page. I hope this adventure is a success. Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, and Western Pennsylvania are all within driving distance.

Please find within this issue an incorrect addresses list. If you know someone on the list, please help me resolve the issue by obtaining their address or phone number. I appreciate your help in this matter.

And finally, read through the Questions and Answers of Fr. Peter Scott regarding television. I think this is important as he mentions specifically the Third Order.

In Christ,



Fr. Adam Purdy



Continued from p. 1

The Code of Canon Law speaks volumes concerning the salvation of souls, as well as the means to provide for that sanctification. These laws concern all the members of the Church including the laity. There are sections of the law concerning the laity, what are their rights, what associations they may belong to, how these groups are formed, etc. Third orders are therefore regulated by the laws of the Church.

Concerning the laity, the Code of Canon Law states: *The laity has the right to receive from the clergy the spiritual goods and especially the necessary means of salvation, according to the rules of ecclesiastical discipline. (Canon 682)*

The law speaks of the right of the laity. As Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of the priesthood, and indeed the Church as a hierarchical society, certain things are due in justice to the members of that society. This right of the laity corresponds to the duty of the clergy. If the laity has the right to receive from the clergy, the clergy in turn have an obligation to provide. This right of the laity is conferred partly by the divine law (in reference to the necessary means of salvation), and partly by ecclesiastical law (as regards the sacramentals, sacraments not necessary by divine precept, etc.)

## Associations of Faithful in General

Third orders come under that section in the Law referred to as Associations. Every Third Order is an Association of Laity. The Church understands these associations to be beneficial to the laity as a means of sanctification.

The Code states: *The faithful deserve praise when they join associations which have been erected, or at least recommended, by the Church. They should beware of associations which are secret, condemned, seditious or suspected, and of those which strive to withdraw themselves from the legitimate authority of the Church. (Canon 684)*

The general principle is simple: it is good for laity to be engaged in good associations. The reason is provided in the following canon: *Associations distinct from the religious organizations and societies spoken of in Canons 487-681 may be erected by the Church either to promote a more perfect Christian life among her members, or for the undertaking of works of piety and charity, or for the advancement*

*of the public cult. (Canon 685)*

## Erection of an Association

*No society is recognized in the Church unless it has been either erected by the competent ecclesiastical authority, or at least approved by it. The right to erect or approve associations is vested in the Roman Pontiff, and also in the local Ordinary except in the case of those associations the erection of which is by Apostolic privilege reserved to others. Even though it can be proved that a papal privilege was required for the validity of the erection, unless it is stated otherwise in the privilege: however, the consent of the Ordinary granted for the erection of a religious house applies also the erection in that same house—or in the church attached to it—of an association which is not constituted after the nature of an organic body and is proper to the respective religious organization. (Canon 686.1-3)*

This canon explains why it was so important for Archbishop Lefebvre to receive approval in founding the Society of St. Pius X. In fact, the Archbishop showed off the document of approbation to the seminarians with a great enthusiasm and excitement. He said on the occasion, ‘you see, we have the approval of the Church’. Archbishop Lefebvre was a man animated with love for the Church. He knew the importance of the adhering to the laws of the Church. He knew that in completing the requirements of the law, his work would certainly be blessed by God.

## Admission and Expulsion of Members

*To participate in the rights, privileges, indulgences and other spiritual favors of an association, it is necessary and suffices that a person be validly received into the association according to the proper statutes of the association, and that he has not been legally deprived of membership. (Canon 692)* It is further necessary that a member perform the pious works legitimately prescribed in the statutes, as declared by the Committee for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code. (Jan. 4, 1946)

The necessity of direction and accountability is thus established. Certainly seminarians, aside from their studies, receive spiritual direction to discern

their vocation. Moreover, the rector and professors have an obligation to make sure those unfit do not progress. Applying the same principle to the Third Order, aspirants must follow the Rule and Statutes. They must also be deemed worthy by a director. This is the reason for a recommendation from a priest. Moreover, profession should not be made without the blessing of a director/confessor.

*Non-Catholics, members of a condemned sect, persons publicly known to be under ecclesiastical censure, and in general any public sinners, cannot be validly received into an association. (Canon 693.1)*

Herein lies the reason of ineligibility for those convicted of public crimes/sentenced to incarceration for as long as that penalty persists. Canon 542:5 refers to a similar restriction stating novitiate is invalid for candidates subject to penalty for crimes which they have been or may be accused of. Such restrictions are to preserve the good reputation of the order as well as those existing members. This is not a judgment as to one's state of soul, but rather a judgment of externals public to all.

*The same person may be enrolled in several associations, subject to the law of Canon 705, which states that nobody can belong at the same time to two Third Orders. Absent persons shall not be enrolled in associations which are constituted after the manner of an organic body; those present cannot be received except with their knowledge and of their own will. (Canon 693.2-3)*

The last words of this canon also indicate something of procedure. In order to make profession in a Third Order, and provided the candidate has completed the required postulancy, a request for admission must be made in writing to the superior. Engagement into a religious order cannot happen without the affirmation of the order. There is no 'self-profession' of members, but all must be in accordance with the statutes of the order. This request is to be made in writing to the Chaplain who has been delegated by the superior to manage the affairs of the Third Order. The letter is to request profession, provide one's motives for seeking profession, state that this request comes with the blessing of a director/confessor, and that is made by one's own free will.<sup>1</sup>

*No legitimately enrolled member of a society shall be dismissed from the association except for a good reason and in accordance with the statutes. Catholics, who have fallen into one of the categories mention in Canon 693.1, shall after previous*

*admonition and with the observance of the proper statutes be deprived of membership. (Canon 696)*

It happens at times that Third Order members wish to be dismissed for various reasons. The most common good reasons are: Failure in the obligations or an inability to keep the Rule or a desire to transfer to another Third Order.

## Particular Associations of the Faithful

*There are three distinct kinds of associations of the faithful in the Church: Third Order Seculars, Confraternities, and Pious Unions. (Canon 700) The order of precedence (just for giggles—my note) is as follows: 1. Third Orders: 2. Archconfraternities: 3. Confraternities: 4. Primary Pious Unions: 5. Other Pious Unions.*

## Secular Third Orders

*Secular tertiaries are those persons who strive to attain Christian perfection in the world under the guidance and according to the spirit of some Order, in a manner compatible with the secular life and according to the rules approved for them by the Apostolic See. If a Third order secular is divided into several associations, each legitimately established branch is called a Sodality of Tertiaries. (Canon 702)*

Third Orders are so called by reason of the analogy which they have with religious orders. Their end is the Christian perfection of the tertiaries, and they have rules approved by the Holy See (a novitiate, profession and requirements for valid enrollment, etc.), just as religious orders. Tertiaries are under the direction of the Regular Superiors, and not that of the local Ordinaries.

Traces of a Third Order are found as early as the eleventh century in the Secular Oblates of St. Benedict. St. Francis of Assisi, however, is regarded as the real founder of the third order. He perfected it, wrote a rule for it, and personally (through his Order) spread it among the laity throughout the world. There is evidence that he founded the first sodality of his Third Order as early as 1221, and that it spread rapidly thereafter. This movement was to satisfy the desire of countless numbers of the laity who desired to embrace his form of the religious life without,



however, disrupting families or abandoning family responsibility. St. Dominic and his Order did the same, as well as the other Orders. It is the old religious orders that have third orders.

*No religious organization can add to itself a Third Order, but the privilege granted to some Orders remains. (Canon 703)*

It may be noted at this moment that the Society of St. Pius X is defined as a *Society of Common Life without Vows*. It is a clerical institute and not a religious order. As such, its members are not religious. Only religious orders (and the old ones!) have Third Orders, and no religious congregation, still less a clerical institute, can just make up its own Third Order.

This having been said, the Archbishop provided a structure which allowed the faithful to participate more fully in the life and spirit of the Society. He called it Third Order for practical purposes, and with the intention of offering an alternative to those who in conscience could not enter or continue in *Novus*

*Ordo* Third Orders. Once again, in an extraordinary situation the Archbishop took the point of view of the salvation of the souls, fostering and blessing every initiative in this direction.

We do not therefore attempt to accommodate such an extraordinary situation within the frame of canonical normality. The situation in the Church is not normal. In the meantime, we persevere in what Archbishop Lefebvre established, knowing well it is in line with the spirit of the Church, with the salvation of souls as its impetus. We wait and expect the moment in which Rome will provide a canonical framework for this large association of faithful which has been called 'Third Order'.

*Persons who have taken either perpetual or temporary vows in some religious organization cannot at the same time belong to any Third Order, even though they had been received into the Third Order before they embraced religious life. When such a person is freed from the vows and returns to the world, the former membership revives. (Canon 704)*

*Without an Apostolic indult, no sodality of tertiaries can receive tertiaries from another Third Order, if they intend to remain in the former Third Order. Individual tertiaries may for a just reason transfer from one Third Order to another, and also from one sodality to another of the same Third Order. (Canon 705)*

Such a transfer from one third order to another is only possible with dismissal from the first and acceptance by the second. This dismissal is requested from the Chaplain. Once obtained, the letter of dismissal is to be presented to the receiving superior.

I hope such an article provides fruit for thought and clears up any lack of clarity for members and aspirants alike.

<sup>1</sup> I understand this has not been a requirement in the past; it is from this point forward necessary for profession.

# Is it a Sin For a Traditional Catholic Family to Have a Television in the Home?

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I do not believe that the question is asked in the correct way, which would be: Is it the will of God for a traditional Catholic family to have a television in the home? I think that simply by rephrasing the question, the answer becomes much more obvious. Nevertheless, let us answer the question as posed.

It is manifestly obvious that in itself the television is but an electronic gadget, and the fact of owning such a gadget is neither morally good nor morally evil. It is indifferent. The morality comes from the end for which the television exists in the home, and from the associated circumstances that inseparably accompany the existence of such a gadget in the home.

It is equally obvious, and every traditional Catholic will admit it, that the regular watching of television for children is an occasion of sin, and this not just because of the obvious sins of impurity, but especially of materialism, concupiscence of the eyes, the loss of the Faith and the perversion of the mind by the parading of the false ideals of subjectivism and liberalism continually before the eyes of the young. He who exposes himself deliberately to a proximate occasion of sin commits a sin, and it will be a mortal sin if the proximate occasion to which he exposes himself is of a mortal sin. How much more serious is the culpability of those parents who expose their defenseless children to the perversions presented as ideals by the world of television!

However, there are many traditional Catholics who admit the above principles, but who still feel that they can keep a television in their home. After all, they are intelligent people, and they are perfectly capable of

controlling the use of television to only good, approved shows, and it enables them to watch videos which are entirely within their control. Why would this not be licit, they maintain.

Such an abstract consideration of the use of television fails to consider an essential circumstance that substantially modifies the morality of the use of television. It is profoundly addictive, for it panders to our desire for visual self-satisfaction and to our inborn laziness. Any person who claims that he can control its inroads into his own life, let alone his family's life, is sadly deceiving himself. He denies the ugly reality of the wounds of original sin, that we all have to live with. Furthermore, television, in the practical use to which man puts it, necessarily provokes the capital vice of sloth. For it preoccupies man with transitory, visual, material things, paralyzes his ability to think and to elevate his soul to spiritual things, and prevents him from rejoicing in the things of God, in divine truth, and in heavenly aspirations. This is precisely how St. Thomas Aquinas defines the capital sin of sloth. By promoting sloth, television destroys recollection, the interior life of prayer, and union with God. How rare indeed is that situation in which, in practice, it is not at least an imperfection or venial sin for a traditional Catholic man to allow a television to remain in his home!

Some folks object to this radical conclusion by stating that they only use their television for watching videos, and especially religious videos, and that there is no sin at all in watching such videos. This is all perfectly true, and there may indeed be some families in which there is such strict discipline that



there is no temptation to use this means other than for such edifying videos, and in which such audiovisual means are kept so carefully under control that there is no danger of provoking sloth. In such circumstances there is manifestly no sin at all, but we all know how infrequent and fragile such a situation is.

Furthermore, a family that is truly God-centered, a family that strives to maintain an interior life, a family that desires to distance itself from the world, is going to have a horror for this terribly effective instrument for the perversion of modern society. It will realize that the television is a destroyer of all family life, of shared activities of all kinds, as well as of the supernatural life. It will see that the little benefit to be gained by an occasional video is far outweighed by the grave danger of placing such an occasion of worldliness in their midst, and will reject it outright.

It is precisely for this reason that the television is forbidden in religious communities, which furthermore have the discipline that could potentially prevent its abuse. Archbishop Lefebvre was a great example in this regard. After he fought against the introduction of the television into the Holy Ghost Fathers during the 1960's, he had the wisdom to include this very categorical prescription in the Statutes of the Society of St. Pius X:

*They shall take care to break with the habits of the world, which has become a slave to radio, television, vacations and costly leisure. Hence, there shall be no television set in our communities.... Our true television is the Tabernacle, where dwells He Who puts us in communication with all spiritual and temporal realities. (VI, 7)*

Note that the Archbishop does not just forbid television in our houses, but also gives the reason why. If such a rule is good enough for the spiritual family of the Society, why would it not be good enough for traditional Catholic families, in which there is much greater danger of abuse?

Our holy founder had likewise the same wisdom when it came to writing the rule of the Third Order of the Society of St. Pius X. Not only did he list "to abstain from television" amongst the personal obligations of Third Order members. He also listed it again under the obligations of the married, when he described how their home should be, and when he lists television as one of two examples of things that can harm the souls of children. Here is the full obligation:

To make of the family home a sanctuary consecrated to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary where evening prayers are recited in the family and, if possible,

the Rosary. Liturgical life should be paramount on Sundays and feast days. Avoid everything that could harm the souls of children; television, unclean magazines.

Surely this means that televisions should not even be present in the home, in the same way that a Catholic man would detest the thought of having unclean magazines somewhere hidden in his home.

It is this aspect of the rule of the Society's Third Order that has most discouraged the faithful from joining. They consider that it is too difficult, too radical, too different from the ways of the world. They consider that it would be much easier to join one of the other older Third Orders, which do not have this in their rule, such as the Carmelite, Franciscan or Dominican.<sup>1</sup>

They seriously deceive themselves, for if the exclusion of television is not a part of these Third Order rules, it is not that it is any less important for these Third Orders than it is for the Third Order of the Society of St. Pius X, but simply that the television did not exist when the rules were written. Any person who is serious about his own and his family's spiritual life, and who desires to join a Third Order, will have a great desire to rid himself of the television, and will consider that the little gain of being able to watch videos is nothing compared to the grave danger of having such an instrument of perversion in the midst of his family.

This elimination of the television from the homes of Third Order members is in fact an illustration of the great value of the Society's Third Order. Not only is it adapted to the real times in which we are presently living, but in addition it unites the laity to the priests in their daily Masses, spiritual life, and sacrifices, so that they can share in the special grace of the Society to fight for the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and contribute their own merits to this combat. May there be many generous families willing to rid their homes of the television, grave impediment to their spiritual life as it is, in order to live the supernatural life of grace more profoundly.

<sup>1</sup> This is a misunderstanding of the spirit of these Third Orders. These also forbid *worldly outings and amusements* in their Rule. If their respective Rules had been updated for modern problems (which the traditional Dominican Fathers of Avrillé did), they too would have forbidden television in the homes of their Tertiaries.



## Third Order Retreat for Women

**Location:** Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center in Donaldson, IN

**Dates:** August 18 - 22

**Rates:**

Single occupancy - \$380 (Includes bedroom, meals, and percentage of conference room costs)

Double occupancy - \$293 (Double occupancy is possible but subject to approval by retreat master)

All meals are included. Certain special diets can be accommodated—must be requested in advance.

**Driving distances:** Ft. Wayne, IN: Chicago, IL - 1 hour, 30 min; Grand Rapids, MI; Greenwood, IN - 2 hours, 30 min; Dayton, OH; Milwaukee, WI - 3 hours, 30 min; Walton, KY; Columbus, OH; Louisville, KY; Madison, WI - 4 hours; Armada, MI; Bay City, MI; Cleveland, OH - 4 hours, 30 min

**Application:** Write or e-mail for application form:

Fr. Adam Purdy

Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of God Priory

2656 Warners Road,

Warners, NY 13164

frpurdy@ssp.net

**As deposits are needed for the venue, please include payment with application.**