

# Faith confronted with Christ on the cross and the Church in crisis



*Sermon by Bishop Bernard Fellay, Superior General of the Society of Saint Pius X, in the Church of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet on November 11, 2012.*

Dear Father Superior of the District, dear Fathers, and dearly beloved faithful in Christ,

We have just heard in the Gospel the parable of the tares [weeds]; this reality of the tares is quite mysterious. Our Lord is the one who teaches us this parable and tells us that the Kingdom of God—when He speaks about the Kingdom of God, this means first and foremost the Church—can be compared to a field whose master is God. He does nothing but good on that field; He plants only good seed. This is what God does by His grace, His goodness. Then we can extend this mystery much farther than the Church, to the entire world. God Himself is also the Master of this world, and here suddenly, in the midst of this beneficent, benevolent action—we know that God is the master of all—the tares appear, the weeds, evil (cf. Mt 13:24-30).

Astonishment among the Angels, astonishment of these workers in the field: “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field?” The Master’s response: “An enemy has done this.” This answer, as it is phrased here, could lead us to suppose that the Good Lord can do nothing about it. We understand correctly that the Good Lord was not the one who did it.... Yes, but He is still the Master! The mystery is even greater. God permits it. He could have prevented these weeds but He permits this enemy, the Devil, to plant these weeds. He permits it that we ourselves—because He made us with free will—can fall and do evil. He does not want it; He wants only the good seed. But as we see in our history—the history of the Church—evil, suffering, the tares spread throughout the world, a scandal for so many, many people. But the scandal goes still further. Now these Angels, the strong, powerful ministers of God, who want only what is Good, volunteer to pull up these weeds by the roots.... To have done with this evil! And the Master says: “No, we must let the weeds be”!

This sums up the mystery that we encounter in the Church, which henceforth must be called militant. It is necessary to fight; there will be a battle outside, and even inside. And it will last to the very end. However, the Master indeed is the one—

you heard it in the Epistle—who tells us that above everything there is love—and love is union—which will be the very sign of the Church's authenticity. And Saint Paul tells us also this terrible truth, which likewise runs along the lines of this parable about the tares: “Oportet haereses esse” (1 Cor 11:19). There must be divisions. Which seems contradictory. And Our Lord explains to His Angels that removing these weeds would cause more harm than good. And therefore it is necessary to let them be. This absolutely does not mean that God suddenly is no longer the Master of all things. Oh, no! He proclaims this mastery by saying that at the time of the harvest a distinction will be made. At that moment the weeds will be separated from the good wheat and burned. Those who do evil, who think that they are doing it with impunity because they see no immediate punishment: let them beware! God remains God. The day will come when He will manifest His sovereignty. God is not mocked. Sacred Scripture itself tells us that. But note, there is this mystery of the Good Lord who permits it here below, because of sin, because of the consequences of sin, that we should have to fight.

And this mystery has affected us a little more closely in recent months. We have seen even within our dear Society to some extent confusion, weeds, tares, trouble. God permitted it, as He permits it in the Church, as He permits is, we may say, in all society. This is the great mystery of the loving God. Our Lord likewise said to His Apostles: “If a branch bears no fruit, the vinedresser cuts it off.” And He continues, saying, “but even those that bear good fruit will be pruned... so that they may bear more fruit” (cf. Jn 15:1-2). What a great mystery, this proclamation of sufferings which, in God’s plan, is necessary and which we understand so poorly. Every time we do good, every time we try to accomplish good or succeed in our effort to do good, we automatically expect from the Good Lord a benevolent glance, a blessing, something that does us good. And when the Good Lord responds with a blow, we no longer understand. And yet, this is not a bad blow—it is a blow, yes. To prune a branch does not benefit it, but it is pruned so that it might bear more fruit.... What a great mystery!

### **What lessons should be derive from our internal sufferings and the contradictions observed in Rome?**

I would like to address very, very briefly the last few months, which have caused quite a lot of sufferings, so as to derive several lessons from them; and also in order to be able to find our way again, if necessary. You know that these troubled times—I am speaking of course about our relations with Rome, and about what led to reactions in our Society, and one of their painful consequences, the loss of one of our bishops—are not inconsequential! I am anxious to explain and to confirm here that the problem of our relations with Rome is not the cause of that departure. It was the occasion for it, the result of a problem that has existed for a much, much

longer time. A problem of internal discipline within the Society, which finally manifested itself in a sort of open rebellion against authority, under a false pretext, let us say.

Let us try to explain a little more. What happened during all those months? Where was the cause of all these troubles to be found? I think that there were many causes, but the basis is a contradiction in Rome. A contradiction that we have observed and have already been explaining since the year 2009 at least. A contradiction that is manifested—specifically with regard to us—in decisions and declarations of the authority itself, that is, of the Holy See, that emanate however from different persons working for the Holy See, different persons who say contrasting and even contradictory things. And it does seem to us that in Rome the people who are there have different positions, even in relation to the crisis and then in relation to us. On the other hand, we see very well that there is a fragmentation in the exercise of authority in Rome. Hence a difficulty, which has existed already for several months, for several years, in knowing what is really intended by the head, in other words, by the Holy Father, the Supreme Pontiff: in principle what is called the Holy See. The Vatican is his hand. We make no distinction between the Holy See and the Pope. When we say Rome, we mean this whole thing, this authority in the Church. That is how it ought to be. But in reality we have observed on more than one occasion that there are, so to speak, sabotages of the authority, particularly when decisions have been made in favor of Tradition. One of the most obvious is the one that occurred on the subject of the Mass. This time this opposition was not only in Rome but almost everywhere in the dioceses. This sabotage originated from bishops who prevented the priests and the faithful from having access to the Mass of all ages. In this climate, we had some doctrinal discussions that seemed to fizzle out at the end. By certifying that we disagree.

After these discussions—and for us this was a cause for great astonishment and surprise—the Holy See nevertheless proposes a canonical resolution. At the same time, on the one hand, through the official channel of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission, we are given documents to sign or to discuss, and on the other hand we receive through persons who work in those same places, in Ecclesia Dei, or through a cardinal, a message different from the official line. More or less like this: “The Pope will recognize the Society as he did in the case of the excommunications, without demanding anything in return from the Society.” Such a situation cannot fail to pose major problems, because this message does not say the same thing as the document that has been received. These same persons will acknowledge this: “These documents that are being proposed to you do not correspond to what the Pope wants.” And for months this doublespeak would go on. To the official messages—since they ask us to accept what we did not accept in the discussions—our response is no. We cannot. But while we are getting

these official responses, the benevolent messages continue, and it is impossible to call their source into question. And the source is at the highest level. I quote for you some of these sentences: “Let the Society know that resolving the problems of the Society is at the heart of my concerns,” or even “is a priority of my pontificate.” These things are said with the intention of resolving the problem.

As for the intermediaries, we hear other statements of this sort: “There are enemies in Rome who are sabotaging all the Pope’s initiatives in favor of a restoration.” Or others like this: “Let Bishop Fellay not worry; after the recognition he will be able to continue to attack all those points as before.” Or even more forcefully: “The Pope is above the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. If the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith makes a decision against the Society, the Pope will intervene to rescind that decision.”

Can we totally ignore this second line? It was absolutely necessary to verify it, to verify its authenticity, its veracity. But it was strictly impossible to say it, to communicate it. For to speak about it would have complicated matters further. At last—we might say since May—things began to become clearer. In June, finally, we arrived at clarity. Why? Because I managed, you might say, to combine these two channels. By letter I wrote to the Pope telling him this: “For a moment, given that you know our opposition to the Council and since you nevertheless want to recognize us, I had concluded that you were ready to set aside or to postpone these problems with the Council. Among other things, that means ‘demoting the Council’, making it subject to opinions, to discussions—since there was talk about possible or even legitimate discussions. Therefore I thought as follows: Since you are making this gesture toward us, despite the problem, this means that you consider it more important to declare the Society Catholic than to uphold the Council at any cost. Since I see that finally you yourself seem to be imposing the Council, I must conclude that I was wrong. Please, then, tell us truly what you want.”

And I received a letter, a written response dated June 30. This letter of June 30 shows that he, the Pope, was indeed the one who intervened to oblige us to accept the council, to reintroduce into the document everything that I had removed from it and that we could not subscribe to. It was all put back in. And he continues, saying that in order to reach a juridical recognition, there are three conditions, three things that the Society must accept:

Accept that “the Magisterium is the judge of the apostolic Tradition,” in other words that it is indeed the Magisterium that tells us what belongs to Tradition. That is de fide, an article of faith. Obviously, in this context, the Pope is utilizing it so as to oblige us to accept the innovations.

And above all, we are asked to accept that “the Council is an integral part of this Tradition.” That means that the Council would be “Tradition”, would be traditional. For forty years now we have been saying the contrary, not just for fun but, in keeping with that hallowed expression that we find so many, many times on the lips of our revered founder: “We are obliged to note”—the facts demonstrate it to us—that this council is an agreed-upon decision to do something new. And this is not a matter of just any innovation, a superficial novelty, but rather a profound innovation that is in opposition to, in contradiction with what the Church had taught; indeed, the Church had even condemned it. It was not just for fun that we have been in this battle for so many, many years, against these innovations, these conciliar reforms that are demolishing the Church and making it a ruin. And here’s what they tell us: the condition is to agree that “the council is an integral part of Tradition”....

Finally one other condition,, which concerns the Mass this time. We must accept the validity of the new Mass, but not only its validity. We would have to accept also its liceity. We speak about validity when we ask, “does the thing exist?” A Mass that is celebrated validly means that Our Lord is there. We are not looking then at the circumstances in which this Mass is said. Thus a black Mass could be valid. It is horrible, it is a terrible sacrilege, but, alas, there are priests who celebrate what is called a black Mass. This Mass is valid. In citing this shocking example, you understand of course that that is not permitted, that is not licit because it is bad. “Licit” means permitted because it is good. We, however, we have observed the ravages caused by this new Mass, we have noted how it was made, for what purpose it was made, for the sake of ecumenism. And we see the results, the loss of the faith, the empty churches, and we say: it is bad. This is how I replied to Rome. Usually we do not even speak about liceity, we simply say about this Mass that it is bad. That is enough.

### **We have reached roadblock, but we will continue our fight.**

My dear Brothers, this is the situation. And this is why it is obvious that since June—we announced it at the ordination ceremony—matters have reached a roadblock. It is a return to ground zero. We are at exactly the same point as Archbishop Lefebvre in the years 1975, 1974. And yet, we continue our fight. We do not abandon the idea of winning the Church back some time, of conquering the Church again for Tradition. Tradition is HER treasure, the Church’s treasure. Well, then, we will continue, while waiting for the happy day... it will come, but when? We know nothing about it. Certainly we will see. That is the Good Lord’s secret. The day will come when the cockle [weeds] will be uprooted, this evil that makes the Church suffer. The crisis that we are going through is probably the most horrible that the Church has ever endured. A crisis in which we see bishops, cardinals even, who no longer lead souls to Heaven, who bless the roads to hell.

Who no longer warn souls about the dangers that they encounter here on earth. Who no longer remember the goal of their existence... the goal is God, it is going to Heaven. And who forget that there are not thirty-six ways of going there. It is the path of repentance, the path of renunciation. Not everything is allowed. We have the Good Lord's Commandments. And if someone does not want to observe them, he is preparing for hell. How many times do we hear these words from the lips of a bishop? How many bishops probably have never pronounced them? We know modern seminarians who arrived at the end of their seminary training and told us: "We never heard anyone say that at the seminary"! And yet this is the direct consequence of sin.

Our life on earth is a trial. We must show the Good Lord that we choose Him and that we therefore renounce our own loves, the love of earthly things, that we prefer Him. We must not be discouraged by these tares, these weeds. That can be one reaction when faced with this evil that is everywhere, that invades everything, more and more. This could be one reaction, but it would be an all-too-human reaction. In today's Collect, the Church tells us that She relies only on grace for everything that we need, throughout our battle. Trying to rely on one's own strength can easily lead to discouragement. Our strength is what we say every day: "*Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.*" Our help, and therefore our strength, is in the Name of the Lord. The Good Lord is the only one we must count on. And we know very well that although the Good Lord permits trials, He never allows us to undergo a trial without giving us sufficient grace to triumph. These words must be taken as they are: they are true. "We know that in everything God works for good" (Rom 8:28): everything, and, of course, especially trials.

And therefore, if we have trials, we should not let it discourage us. Let us redouble our prayers. Let us turn and look to the Good Lord. Let us make some efforts, some sacrifices, and let us count on His grace. The Church has always told us that there is one look and one thought that are the solution to all problems. They will give us that strength, that courage, whatever our state in life may be. What she means is to look at Jesus crucified, on the Crucifix, at Jesus who is dying on the Cross for us, for love of us. He could very well have let us fall. He is God, infinitely above His creatures who have offended Him so ungratefully. What does He do? Instead of leaving things that way, He comes to repair them. He became man, in an ineffable self-humiliation. In His Passion He takes our sins upon Himself, He bears them, He pays instead of us. He takes upon Himself the chastisement that we merited by our sins.

This is the love that Jesus has for us. And should we have any doubt about the fact that He wants to assist us, that He wants to help us? Let us gather our thoughts. Let us reaffirm our faith. And even if He hides, if He intensifies the trial, it makes no

difference: He is the absolute Master of all things. He is capable of saving us all in the current situation of the Church as well as in the best of times. And this mystery goes so far, my dear Brothers, that this power, this force of sanctity, of sanctification, still dwells today in this Church that we see on earth. If we have faith, it is in this Church; if we receive the grace of Baptism down to the last of the Sacraments, it is within and through this Church. This Church which is not an idea, which is real, which is before us, which we call the Roman Catholic Church, the Church with her Pope, with her bishops, who can also have moments of weakness—I almost said “be weak”—that makes no difference: the Good Lord does not allow His Church to fall. But it is up to us not to let ourselves be troubled and not to say, “Since the Good Lord is helping, all is well!” It certainly is not!

You see, this is the problem that we have with Rome in our discussions. We tell them: there is a problem and this problem manifestly comes from the Council and its aftermath. And they reply: “That is impossible. No, there are no problems. There cannot be any problems, because the Church enjoys the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Church can do nothing bad. That is not possible. And therefore the Council must be good, by necessity. And therefore, what you say is not valid. There are some abuses here and there, but that does not matter. The new Mass was made by the Church. The Church is assisted. It is necessarily good, and you do not have the right to say that it is bad.” That is what we are faced with. And we respond: “We accept the faith, down to the least iota, and also faith in the Church, in her privileges, in the assistance of the Holy Spirit. However, and this is quite true also, we accept the reality. We are far from denying the reality. And we know very well that there is no contradiction between the two. Of course someday there will be an explanation, even though there is none today.”

This is the mystery of the Cross. When Jesus is on the Cross, the Faith obliges us to profess that He is God, that He is All-Powerful, that He is eternal and immortal. He cannot die; He cannot suffer. God is infinitely perfect. It is impossible for God to suffer. And Jesus on the Cross is God. The Faith tells us this. And we are obliged to accept it, totally, without in any way diminishing it. But at the same time human experience tells us that this same Jesus suffers and even that He dies. At the foot of the Cross, the only ones who stand in the truth are those who maintain both, even if that seems contradictory. And we see throughout the history of the Church this same problem; the great majority would cling to what human knowledge tells us and conclude: “Therefore he is not God. He really died. He died and was buried. It’s over.” This is the line taken by the enemies of the Church, by the atheists and heretics, and by the modernists who hide in the Church and let you think that they have the faith whereas they do not. They will cleverly distinguish between a Christ in History, who is the real Christ and they will say that he died and never rose, and a so-called Christ of Faith, the one in whom the Church is said to oblige us to believe

and, for His sake, invented the resurrection. That is absolutely false. It is not right. He truly is risen. And just think that other heretics, on the contrary, insisted on saying: "But yes, He is God. Therefore that death, those sufferings were only appearances. He did not really die." This error has also occurred, but less widely. Today, in relation to the Church, it is the same problem. In order to remain in the truth, one must keep these two sets of given facts: the facts of the Faith and also the facts noted by reason. This council tried to harmonize itself with the world. It brought the world into the Church, and so now we have disaster. And all these reforms that were made on the basis of the Council, were made by the authorities for this purpose. Today, they talk to us about continuity, but where is it? In Assisi? In the kissing of the Qur'an? In the suppression of the Catholic States? Where is that continuity? And therefore we continue quite simply, quite simply, my dear Brothers, without changing anything, until the moment when the Good Lord is willing, as He does.... That does not mean that we must remain inactive. Every day we have this duty to win souls. And we know very well that the solution will come from the Good Lord and we can even say through the Blessed Virgin. We can say this, it is something quite obvious in our times, indicated by these beautiful, magnificent apparitions, Our Lady of La Salette, Our Lady of Fatima, which herald this painful, terrible era. *Rome will become the seat of the Antichrist, Rome will lose the faith...* that is what was said at La Salette. The Church will be eclipsed. These are not trivial sayings. One truly has the impression that this is what we are experiencing now.

We must not panic. It is terrifying, yes, but we must therefore take refuge all the more in the Blessed Virgin, close to Her Immaculate Heart. This is the message of Fatima: God wants to give to the world this devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was not in vain! Let us ask in all our prayers, at every Mass, this grace of fidelity, so as not to let go of anything, whatever the cost. And that the Good Lord may protect and guide us to Heaven. Amen.

*In order to preserve the character of this sermon, the oral style was retained.*

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