

The Useful Lesson from the Recent Trial

On Saturday, October 13, 2012, on the occasion of the "Tradition Days" in Villepreux (France), Bishop Alfonso de Galarreta gave this conference, in which he analyzes the state of the relations of the Society of Saint Pius X with Rome.



Dear confreres, dear religious, very dear faithful, dear friends,

My intention is to speak to you about the qualities of the spiritual, Christian, Catholic militia, about the conditions that the combat for the faith must assume, and obviously to tell you a few words about the situation of the Society vis-à-vis Rome.

The Book of Job says: "*Militia est vita hominis super terram et sicut dies mercenarii dies ejus*" (Job 7:1). Man's life on earth is a time of military service, and his days are like those of a mercenary. This is Scripture, the Book of Job, that offers this very interesting image.

If the life of every man on earth is a combat, then much more so the life of the Catholic, of the Christian who is baptized and confirmed and therefore engaged in this combat for Christ the King. And I would say that if the life of every Christian is a combat, then the life of a Christian today is *par excellence* a struggle, a combat, a time of service.

In this sentence we find a statement of the necessity of combat; it is necessary, it is our human condition, and that is not something new; always and everywhere people have had to fight. There is a combat in life, but above all a combat in order to win eternity, which implies many things.

This is why a combative spirit is necessary. What is required on the part of a soldier? Certainly, that he be capable of struggling, of fighting, that he be courageous and valiant.

This very short text refers to Providence, because both a soldier and a mercenary are at the service of a master, and therefore we battle for God, we fight for Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our Head, He is our Master, but He is also the Lord of history, and His Providence governs all particular circumstances.

Saint John of the Cross says that everything is Providence, in the sense that everything that happens to us is sent to us in an altogether conscious and deliberate way by Providence.

A supernatural view of the combat of faith

A soldier, then, and a mercenary struggle and fight for a victory, and if life here below is a combat, that means that the victory is not on this earth. If our whole life is a combat, that means that our victory is in Eternity.

I think that we have to keep this supernatural, Faith-filled view of combat. We struggle in this life on earth for an eternal crown. But that does not mean that you are to be demobilized, because a Christian, a Catholic knows that this combat is waged in this life, that it is very real, that one must fight. But knowing that the definitive victory is found in Eternity, we do not really need, so to speak, to have victory in this life, if God does not want it, since our victory, ultimately, is to win Eternity both for us and for those dear to us.

Moreover this short verse from Job shows us other aspects of this combat, for example: it is laborious—laborious in the etymological sense of the word. The combat for the Faith, the supernatural, spiritual combat, involves sufferings and trials, contradictions, and even defeats in this life.

Saint Teresa of Avila has one very beautiful passage in which she says that what is demanded of the Christian is not to win but to struggle, or rather she shows that fighting for the Faith is already the Christian's victory.

And one author said: Indeed, God does not require victory of us, but He requires that we not be vanquished. This reflection is quite interesting; you see how you can apply all this very well to the crisis in the Church today.

God does not ask us to conquer; He is the one who gives the victory, if He wills, when He wills, as He wills. That costs Him absolutely nothing. But what He demands of us is to defend the good that we have and not to be conquered.

The teaching of Cardinal Pie

There is a passage by Cardinal Pie that I would like to read to you; it is filled with Faith and instruction, and it is admirably well expressed. "The wise man of Idumea said: 'The life of man on earth is a combat' (Job 7:1), and this truth is no less applicable to societies than to individuals. Being composed of two essentially distinct substances, every son of Adam carries within him, like Isaac's wife, two men who contradict and fight one another (Genesis 25:22). These two men, or, if you prefer, these two natures have contrary tendencies and inclinations. Drawn by the law of the senses, the earthly man is in a perpetual uprising against the heavenly man, who is ruled by the law of the spirit (Galatians 5:17). This is a deep-seated antagonism, which could end here below only by the shameful defection of the spirit, surrendering its arms to the flesh and placing itself at the latter's discretion." [1]

So therefore the only way of attaining peace in this combat, or of practicing pacifism, is victory over the flesh, and if we do not want that peace, we are obliged to fight until our death; because the triumph is in the next world. That is indeed what Cardinal Pie means to tell us:

"Let us say it, therefore, my Brethren: man's life on earth, the life of virtue, the life of duty, is the noble coalition, the holy crusade of all the faculties of our soul, supported by the aid of grace, its ally, against all the united forces of the flesh, the world and hell: *Militia est vita hominis super terram.*"

This is a combat for us, but it is also a social, public combat. "Now if you come to consider these same rival elements, these same antagonistic forces, no longer in

we discover that we are all human beings. We have the same limitations as the rest, I mean radically, ever since original sin: ignorance, malice, weakness. That is indeed, practically speaking, the cause of all the difficulty of what happened during the past school year: the difficulties and the trials among us, which are moreover the most difficult and the most painful trials. That is why we must not take them lightly, much less resolve them carelessly. It is like a little family conflict: it must be resolved with a lot of tact, a lot of charity, a lot of prudence, a lot of shrewdness, but it certainly must be resolved!

A short historical account of our relations with Rome

I want to tell you what I think, since in this crisis we hear a lot of different opinions, conflicting voices, and maybe there is still some fall-out, and so I said to myself that you should know my thoughts at least. I will therefore rapidly review a few facts in order to explain myself: a short historical account, starting with the end of the Rosary Crusade, our prayer campaign with the goal of offering twelve million rosaries, a campaign that ended of Pentecost of this year. After the end of this crusade we received three responses from Rome, one right after the other. At that moment the Society's proposal (for a doctrinal declaration), which had been submitted in April, was there in Rome, and it was after Pentecost that we received a first response from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In this response, the Roman authorities clearly told us that they rejected, that they did not accept our proposal, and they made several corrections that amounted to telling us: it is necessary to accept the Second Vatican Council, it is necessary to accept the liceity of the New Mass, it is necessary to accept the living Magisterium, in other words, those authorities that are the authentic interpreters of Tradition, and therefore they say what is Tradition and what is not Tradition; it is necessary to accept the new Code of Canon Law, etc. That was their response.

Then, and I think that this was a Providential response, there was the appointment of Archbishop Müller. They appointed him head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and also as President of the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission—the one that has charge of all the groups affiliated with *Ecclesia Dei* and that is in contact with the Society of Saint Pius X. Well! This bishop who was appointed to head that dicastery and the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission—besides the fact that he has called into question several truths of the Faith—is today the guardian of the Faith. This is, let us say, an old acquaintance of the Society, since he was Bishop of Regensburg, the diocese where our seminary in Zaitzkofen is located, and since we had already had difficulties, confrontations with him. Three years ago he had threatened to excommunicate the bishop who was going to perform the ordinations in Zaitzkofen, and I happened to be the one on that occasion. Thus he threatened me with excommunication as well as the deacons who were going to receive priestly ordination, the new priests. Then he backed down, but this is someone who does not respect us, who does not like us, that's clear, and he already said that the bishops of the Society have only one thing to do: send their resignations from the episcopate to the Holy Father and go shut

that you already know. What I can tell you is that Divine Providence helped us during the Chapter clearly and perceptibly.

It went very well, I tell you quite frankly; we were able to speak calmly, freely, openly; we were able to address the crucial problems, even though we had to omit other questions that had been on the initial agenda. We took all the time necessary to debate and we compared points of view, as is fitting among members of the same congregation, of the same army. That causes no problem; the Society is not a girls' school, right? Then if from time to time there are debates among us, one should not make a big thing out of it either. Read Cardinal Pie when he supports public debate with the bishops, in France, in the nineteenth century. He justifies them, he explains why, he says that it is a combat, and so there you have it! That is to say, one should not make a tragedy out of it either. The tragedy would be to abandon the Faith, but it is normal that there are debates on questions of prudential judgment about one thing or another. There are different aspects, there are temperaments, there are situations.... It is extremely complicated, and one cannot draw a sword to cut the Gordian knot by saying: "There, I resolve the question in one fell swoop." No! The Chapter took place, as I told you, and I think that we really drew some useful lessons from the trials that we have had, even though it is not perfect, which is another aspect to keep in mind. In our life, everything happens in imperfect circumstances; read the history of the Church! We must not demand a perfection that is not of this world, but we must have our eyes fixed on the essentials, on what counts; afterward you can let a lot of things slide. Don't you do that in your family life? Yes, you do that. Otherwise nothing stands in this world, in this life, and even among us.

Some people worry: "Oh, yes, but...!" It is necessary to see the complexity of the problem, of the situation. And don't forget that there is also the part played by the passions. They exist even among us. All this is to say that in my opinion we must not carp about these questions. We have to see whether the essentials are there or not.

As I see it, we have truly overcome the crisis, we got through it, and in the way that we were supposed to, especially in the practical measures, thanks to the debates that allowed us to clarify some points face to face, to weigh the arguments well, under all their aspects, to sort through them, to arrive at a more perfect insight and clarity about the situation, which is the good thing about trials if you learn from them. Based on these extremely important and productive discussions, we have established some conditions that could allow us to envisage hypothetically a canonical normalization. In this regard, if you really reflect on it, what was accomplished amounted to taking the whole doctrinal and liturgical question so as to make of it a practical condition.

The conditions for a possible canonical normalization

Now certainly, as I said to you, it is not perfect, and we ourselves saw rather quickly afterward that the distinction between *sine qua non* conditions and desirable conditions was not very accurate, nor ... desirable. In fact, as far as we are concerned, among the conditions that we indicated as desirable, there are some

that would continue to be more or less modernist. We re-ordain, if necessary, we re-confirm, and then [as for] marriages, we obviously do not accept some new causes for nullity.

Then, still within the sine qua non conditions: the guarantee of at least one bishop. You see, I told you that this is not perfect, for we all agree in the Society about the fact that we have to demand several auxiliary bishops, a prelature. We all agree, there is no problem. That was not the problem before and it is not a problem now. Therefore one should not nitpick about that.

On the other hand, we did define what was a problem, because in fact that was not clearly defined on our side, and also because there was a mixed message on Rome's part.

It was also decided in this Chapter that if ever the General House attained something valuable and interesting with these conditions, there would be a deliberative Chapter, which means that its decision is necessarily binding (on the members of the Society). When there is a consultative Chapter, the authority asks for advice but then decides freely. A deliberative Chapter means that the decision made by the absolute majority—one half of the votes plus one, which seemed reasonable to us—that decision will be followed by the Society.

As the recent Chapter proved, on the day when we were able to speak face to face, as it should be, we overcame the problem of the misunderstandings that we had experienced. It is evident that a deliberative Chapter is a very wise and sufficient measure for possibly approving what will have been obtained from Rome. For it is almost impossible that with the majority the Superior of the Society... *[starting the sentence over:]*—after a frank discussion, an in-depth analysis of all the aspects, of all the ins and outs—it is unthinkable that the majority could be wrong in a prudential matter.

In this life there is no absolute guarantee, because no individual—starting with oneself—has every possible guarantee as to what he will do tomorrow. And so a Chapter is broadly adequate to break the deadlock in which we found ourselves, for if you carefully examine it, our last Chapter set exactly the same conditions as Rome did, but in reverse: they require this of us, and we demand the contrary. Obviously the possibility of an agreement becomes more distant, but most importantly the risk of a bad agreement is, in my opinion, definitively removed. “Definitively” means not forever, but for this time.

We also avoided a division among us, and that is no mean feat. Nevertheless it was necessary to think about it and to understand that we were going to divide all of us, in the Society, in the [affiliated religious] Congregations, in the families, and since we are rather formidable in combat, we would have torn each other apart vehemently and persistently, as you can imagine! That was indeed the reality. But thanks to that understanding among us, thanks to this decision, even though it is imperfect, we overcame a division that would have been a form of dishonor for what we are defending, for the true Faith, for our combat, for those who preceded us, Archbishop Lefebvre and Bishop de Castro Mayer.

and we are of course going to ask for it.

The Necessity and Usefulness of Trials

I obviously had many more things to say; I think I have told you the most interesting things. Just a thought to end with, concerning the necessity and usefulness of trials; it is a Catholic and traditional teaching, contained in Holy Scripture, when the angel says to Tobias: “Because you are pleasing to God, it was necessary that you undergo a trial,” (Tobias 12:13) for much good comes of trials.

And St. Augustine says that the worst thing that can happen, the worst misfortune, is that of those who draw no lesson, no profit from their misfortunes; so the most miserable man in the world is the one who draws no lesson from his misfortune, nor the good that could come of it, and so his trial is worse than before. Be careful! If a trial is useful, that means that we must seek its utility and harvest its fruits.

Now we always tend to draw lessons for others from their calamities, sufferings and trials: “See! I was right, you sure got a heavy blow there.” But there are many lessons in a trial, and we might say that it is all our own weaknesses and defects that are revealed through trials. So each one must draw from them a lesson for oneself, in order to correct oneself and avoid committing the same error again, for often, even when we are defending a good cause, we do it very poorly. There are lessons of humility to be learned, and it is just as well, for that reminds us to be vigilant. Maybe we are sleeping, maybe we are not passing on well enough to future generations the spirit of the combat, maybe we must depend more on God, maybe we must have more patience, fortitude, hope in the combat. It all goes together: fortitude, courage, and patience. The virtue of fortitude has two acts: *sustinere et aggredi*. This means that we must suffer, undergo, endure, but also undertake and attack – not aggress; *aggredi* does not mean to aggress, it means to attack and undertake.

Magnanimity is also a part of the virtue of fortitude. And patience, says St. Paul, engenders hope, patience in the combat, in trials. Let us pay attention to hope today, for we can fall by lack of Faith, by lack of charity, but also by lack of hope. We become pessimistic or defeatist, and that is a form of surrender. When we no longer have hope, we are no longer committed, and we are conquered.

Trials are also a means of merit, of expiation, and often they are a vaccination. Indeed, maybe we had just the flu today, but it will spare us catching pneumonia tomorrow. And I think that is the case. Often trials are a preparation for other combats, to make us more lucid, more decisive, more vigilant for what is to come. Who knows?

I wanted to say this because if we do not draw fruits from trials, we turn down the wrong path. For God sends us these trials precisely in order to keep us on the right path, and He makes re-examine everything in order to see where we were beginning to weaken or to deviate a little, sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right, and often downwards.

In this crisis, one of the teachings that could still be brought to light even better is the goal of trials, which is precisely to show us where the excesses and defects are, for

X to Archbishop Lefebvre, and if we continue the line, we have the path we must follow laid out. Exactly. Be it on the doctrinal level, the level of the Faith, the level of holiness of life – yet another chapter on which we could continue for a long time! - the level of prayer, of the confession of the faith, of fortitude, of prudence.

They are exemplary; we must take them as models to follow. And the path is, so to speak, laid out.

Let us ask the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, especially today, Saturday, October 13, the anniversary of the miracle of the sun in Fatima, to give us the grace to persevere in the true Faith, in the true combat for the Faith, but also in the true spirit of the Church, and to make us every day more faithful to grace, to God and to the demands for holiness of our day and age.

May Our Lady give us the grace to be worthy successors and worthy sons of these great champions of the Catholic Faith!

The spoken style has been reserved in order to preserve the character of this conference. The title and subtitles are inserted by the editor. (DICI Oct. 20, 2012)
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[1] Eulogy on Saint Louis, King of France, preached by Cardinal Pie in the Cathedral of Blois on Sunday, August 29, 1847, and in the Cathedral of Versailles on Sunday, August, 27, 1848.

[2] Bishop Parisis of Langres, Pastoral Instruction on the divine authority in the Church, 1846.



OUR LADY OF VICTORIES CHURCH,
consecrated on March 1, 1997
by H.E. Bishop Fellay,
is a mission church of the
Society of St. Pius X

The SOCIETY OF ST. PIUS X
is an official congregation
of Roman Catholic priests
and celebrates *exclusively* the

TRADITIONAL LATIN TRIDENTINE MASS, the Mass
canonized for all time by order of the Council of
Trent through the Papal Bull *Quo Primum*
by Pope St. Pius V in 1570.



Our Lady of Victories Church

2 Cannon Rd., cor. Betty-Go Belmonte St.
Brgy. Mariana, New Manila, Quezon City
Tel.: 725-5926 / Fax: 7250725