

The Superior General's Letter to Friends and Benefactors.

March 2013

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

It has been quite a long time now that this letter has kept you waiting, and it is with joy, in this Easter season, that we would like to take our bearings and to present a few reflections on the situation of the Church.

Introduction

As you know, the Society found itself in a delicate position during most of the year 2012, following the final approach of Benedict XVI in attempting to normalize our situation. The difficulties resulted, on the one hand, from requirements that accompanied the Roman proposal—to which we could not and still cannot subscribe—and, on the other hand, from a lack of clarity on the part of the Holy See that did not allow us to know precisely the will of the Holy Father or what he was ready to concede to us. The trouble caused by these uncertainties vanished as of June 13, 2012, with a clear confirmation, on the 30th of the same month, by a letter from Benedict XVI himself clearly and unambiguously spelling out the conditions that were being imposed on us for a canonical normalization.

These conditions are of a doctrinal nature; they entail the total acceptance of the Second Vatican Council and of the Mass of Paul VI. And so, as Abp. Augustine Di Noia, Vice President of the Ecclesia Dei Commission, wrote in a letter addressed to the members of the Society of Saint Pius X at the end of last year, on the doctrinal level we are still at the point where we started out in the 1970's. Unfortunately we can only agree with this observation by the Roman authorities and acknowledge the current relevance of the analysis by Abp. Marcel Lefebvre, founder of our Society, which was unwavering in the decades following the Council, until his death. His very accurate insight, which is at the same time theological and practical, is still valid today, fifty years after the start of the Council.

We would like to recall this analysis, which the Society of Saint Pius X has always made its own and which remains the guiding principle of its doctrinal position and of its activity: while recognizing that the crisis that is jolting the Church has external causes also, the Council itself has been the chief agent in her self-destruction.

1. Letter to Cardinal Ottaviani in 1966

At the conclusion of the Council, in a letter to Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani dated December 20, 1966, Abp. Lefebvre explained the havoc caused by the Council throughout the Church. I cited it already in the Letter to Friends and Benefactors no. 68, dated September 29, 2005. It is useful to reread several excerpts from it today.

"Whereas the Council was preparing to be a shining cloud [i.e. to proclaim the truth clearly] in today's world, if it had only used the prepared schemas that contained a solemn profession of sure doctrine with regard to modern problems, one can and unfortunately must affirm:

"that, [almost universally], when the Council innovated, it shook the certitude of the truths taught by the authentic Magisterium of the Church as belonging definitively to the treasure of Tradition.

"Whether it be the transmission of the bishops' jurisdiction, the two sources of Revelation, the inspiration of Scripture, the necessity of grace for justification, the necessity of Catholic baptism, the life of grace among

heretics, schismatics and pagans, the ends of marriage, religious liberty, the last things, etc.: on all these fundamental points, the traditional doctrine was clear and unanimously taught in Catholic universities. Now, numerous Conciliar documents on these truths henceforth allow doubts.

"The consequences have been rapidly drawn and applied to the life of the Church:

“- Doubts about the necessity of the Church and the sacraments lead to the disappearance of priestly vocations.

“- Doubts about the necessity and the nature of the ‘conversion’ of every soul lead to the disappearance of religious vocations, the ruin of traditional spirituality in the novitiates, and the futility of the missions.

“- Doubts about the legitimacy of authority and the duty of obedience provoked by the exaltation of human dignity, the autonomy of conscience, and of freedom shake all societies starting with the Church, religious societies, the dioceses, civil society, and the family.

“The normal result of pride is the burgeoning of the concupiscence of the eyes and of the flesh. Perhaps one of the most frightful observations to be made about our epoch is to note to what a level of moral degradation most Catholic publications have descended. They speak without the least reticence about sexuality, birth control by any means, the legitimacy of divorce, about co-education, dating, dances as a necessary part of Christian education, about priestly celibacy, etc.

“- Doubts about the necessity of grace in order to be saved provoke the undervaluing of baptism and its postponement, and the abandonment of the sacrament of penance. Moreover, this especially involves an attitude of priests and not of the faithful. The same goes for the Real Presence: it is the priests who act as if they no longer believed by hiding the Sacred Host, by suppressing all marks of respect towards the Blessed Sacrament and all the ceremonies in Its honor.

“- Doubts about the necessity of the Church as the unique source of salvation and about the Catholic Church as the only true religion originating in the Declarations on Ecumenism and Religious Liberty, destroy the authority of the Church’s Magisterium. Indeed, Rome is no longer the unique and necessary “Magistra Veritatis” [“Instructress of Truth”].

“Compelled by the facts, it is necessary to conclude that the Council has favored, inconceivably, the diffusion of liberal errors. Faith, morals, and ecclesiastical discipline have been shaken to their foundations according to the predictions of all the popes.

“The destruction of the Church is rapidly advancing. By an exaggerated authority given to the episcopal conferences, the Sovereign Pontiff has rendered himself ineffectual. In a single year how many painful examples of this have we witnessed! Still, the Successor of Peter, and he alone, can save the Church.

“Let the Holy Father surround himself with vigorous defenders of the Faith; let him appoint them in the important dioceses. Let him deign, by important documents, to proclaim truth, pursue error without fear of contradictions, without fear of schisms, without fear of questioning the pastoral guidelines of the Council.

“May the Holy Father deign: to encourage the bishops to uphold faith and morals, each in his respective diocese, as befits every good pastor; to support the courageous bishops, encouraging them to reform their seminaries and to restore studies according to St. Thomas; to encourage the general superiors to uphold in the novitiates and communities the fundamental principles of Christian asceticism, especially

obedience; to encourage the development of Catholic schools, a doctrinally sound Catholic press, associations of Catholic families; and, finally, to reprimand the instigators of errors and reduce them to silence. The Wednesday allocutions cannot replace encyclical letters, mandates, and letters to bishops.

"Undoubtedly, it is bold of me to express myself in this way! But it is from a burning love that I write these lines, love of God's glory, love of Jesus, love of Mary, love of the Church and of the Successor of Peter, Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ."

2. Declaration of 1974

On November 21, 1974, after the apostolic visitation of the seminary in Ecône, Abp. Lefebvre deemed it necessary to summarize his position in the famous declaration that would result, several months later in the unjust canonical suppression of the Society of Saint Pius X, which our founder and his successors have always considered null and void. This document, which is of capital importance, opened with this profession of faith, which is that of all the members of the Society:

"We hold firmly with all our heart and with all our mind to Catholic Rome, Guardian of the Catholic Faith and of the traditions necessary to the maintenance of this faith, to the eternal Rome, [school] mistress of wisdom and truth.

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

"Indeed, all these reforms have contributed and continue to contribute to the destruction of the Church, to the ruin of the priesthood, to the abolition of the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacraments, to the disappearance of the religious life, and to a naturalistic and Teilhardian education in the universities, in the seminaries, in catechetics: an education deriving from liberalism and Protestantism which had been condemned many times by the solemn Magisterium of the Church."

And this declaration concluded with these lines:

"The only attitude of fidelity to the Church and to Catholic doctrine appropriate for our salvation is a categorical refusal to accept this reform.

"That is why, without any rebellion, bitterness, or resentment, we pursue our work of priestly formation under the guidance of the never-changing Magisterium, convinced as we are that we cannot possibly render a greater service to the Holy Catholic Church, to the Supreme Pontiff, and to future generations."

3. Episcopal Manifesto of 1983

In 1983, recalling the meaning of the fight for Tradition, Abp. Lefebvre sent an Episcopal Manifesto, co-signed by Bp. Antonio de Castro Mayer, to John Paul II, in which he denounced, once again, the havoc caused by the post-conciliar reforms and the disastrous spirit that spread everywhere. He underscored, in particular, the following points on the subject of false ecumenism, collegiality, religious liberty, papal power and the new Mass.

1) False Ecumenism

"This ecumenism is likewise contrary to the teachings of Pius XI in the Encyclical *Mortalium animos*. Concerning this point it is timely to expose and reject a certain false opinion which is at the origin of this problem and of this complex movement by the means of which non-Catholics strive to bring about a union of Christian churches. Those who adhere to this opinion constantly cite these words of Christ: 'That they all may be one . . . and there shall be one fold and one shepherd' (Jn. 17:21 and 10:16), and they claim that by these words Christ expresses a desire or a prayer which has never been realized. In fact, they claim that the unity of faith and of government, which is one of the marks of the true Church of Christ, until now has never existed in practice and today does not exist.

"This ecumenism condemned by Catholic morality and law, now goes so far as to permit the reception of the Sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist and Extreme Unction from 'non-Catholic ministers' (canon 844, CIC 1983), and encourages 'ecumenical hospitality' by authorizing Catholic ministers to give the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist to non-Catholics...."

2) Collegiality

"The doctrine, already insinuated by the document *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican Council II, is taken up again explicitly by the new Code of Canon Law (can. 336). According to this doctrine, the College of Bishops united with the Pope, also possesses supreme authority in the Church, in a habitual and constant manner.

"This doctrine of a *twofold supreme authority* is contrary to the teaching and practice of the Magisterium of the Church, especially in Vatican Council I (Denz. Sch. 3055), and in the Encyclical of Leo XIII, *Satis cognitum*. The Pope alone has this supreme authority which he can communicate, in the measure which he judges expedient and in extraordinary circumstances.

"This grave error brings with it the democratic orientation of the Church, with the power residing in the 'People of God' as it is defined in the new Code. This Jansenist error is condemned by the Bull *Auctorem Fidei* of Pius VI (Denz. Sch. 2602)...."

3) Religious liberty

"The Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* of Vatican Council II affirms the existence of a false natural human right in religious matters, contrary to the papal teachings which repudiate such a blasphemy.

"Thus Pius IX in his Encyclical *Quanta cura* and in the Syllabus, Leo XIII in his Encyclicals *Libertas praestantissimum* and *Immortale Dei*, Pius XII in his allocution *Ci Riesce* to the Italian Catholic jurists, deny that reason and revelation provide any basis for a right of this sort. "Vatican II believes and professes, universally, that 'The Truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own Truth.' This is formally opposed to the teaching of Pius VI against the Jansenists of the Council of Pistoia (Denz. Sch. 2604).

The Second Vatican Council thus absurdly ends up affirming the right not to adhere to, and not to follow the Truth, in order to oblige civil governments to cease discriminating for religious motives, thus establishing a juridical equality between false religions and the true one....

"The consequences of the recognition by the Council of this false human right destroy the foundations of the social reign of Our Lord. They undermine the authority and power of the Church in its mission to cause Our Lord to reign in souls and in hearts, for the Church must combat the satanic forces which subjugate souls. The missionary spirit will be accused of exaggerated proselytism.

"The neutrality of States in religious matters is injurious for Our Lord and His Church, in the case of a State with a Catholic majority."

4) *Papal power*

"Certainly the authority of the Pope in the Church is a supreme authority, but it cannot be absolute and unlimited, since it is subordinate to Divine Authority, which is expressed in Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the definitions already promulgated by the ecclesiastical Magisterium (Denz. Sch. 3116).

"The authority of the Pope is subordinate to and limited by the end for which this authority was given to him. This end is clearly defined by Pope Pius IX in the Constitution *Pastor aeternus* of Vatican Council I (Denz. Sch. 3070). It would be an intolerable abuse of power to modify the constitution of the Church and to claim to appeal to human rights against the Divine Right, as in religious liberty, as in the Eucharistic hospitality that is authorized in the new Canon Law, as in the assertion of two supreme authorities in the Church.

"It is clear that in these cases and in other similar cases, it is the duty for each member of the clergy and every faithful Catholic to resist and to refuse obedience. Blind obedience is a misunderstanding and no one is exempt from responsibility for having obeyed man rather than God (Denz. Sch. 3115). This resistance must be public if the evil is public and an object of scandal to souls (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 33, a. 4).

"These statements are elementary principles of morality. They regulate the relations of subjects with all legitimate authorities.

"Moreover this resistance is corroborated by the fact that henceforth those who hold firmly to Tradition and the Catholic Faith are penalized; those who profess doctrines which are heterodox, or who commit veritable sacrileges are in no way troubled. That is the logic of an abuse of authority."

5) *The new Mass*

"Contrary to the teaching of the Council of Trent in Session XXII, contrary to the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pius XII, the role of the faithful in the participation of the Mass has been exaggerated, and the role of the priest, now become a simple presider, has been diminished. The importance of the Liturgy of the Word has been exaggerated, and the importance of the propitiatory Sacrifice has been diminished. The meal of the community has been exalted and the Mass has been laicized, to the detriment of the respect and the faith in the Real Presence by transubstantiation.

"By the suppression of the sacred language, the rites have been infinitely multiplied. They have been profaned by worldly and pagan additions. False translations have been propagated to the detriment of the true faith and the true piety of the faithful."

In 1986, Abp. Lefebvre vehemently protested the interreligious meeting at Assisi, which was an unprecedented scandal in the Catholic Church, and above all a violation of the first of the Ten Commandments: "You shall adore the one God alone," in which the Vicar of Christ publicly invited the representatives of all religions to call upon their false gods. Our founder later said that he regarded that event, which was intolerable to anyone with a Catholic heart, as one of the signs that he had asked for from Heaven so as to be able to go ahead and consecrate bishops.

4. Letter of Fr Schmidberger in 1991

In the Letter to Friends and Benefactors no. 40 dated February 2, 1991, Fr. Franz Schmidberger, the second Superior General of the Society of Saint Pius X, took up the question in its entirety and restated the Catholic

position in a short compendium of contemporary errors against the faith. And we asked several confreres to summarize in a sort of *vademecum* [manual] all of these points in various works that have been published since, including the remarkable *The Catechism of the Crisis in the Church* by Fr. Matthias Gaudron (Angelus Press).

5. Today in 2013 we continue the same fight with the same principles

Today, along the same lines, we can only repeat what Abp. Lefebvre and Fr. Schmidberger in turn declared. All the errors that they denounced, we denounce. We beg Heaven and the authorities of the Church, in particular the new Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis, Vicar of Christ, Successor of Peter, not to allow souls to perish because they no longer learn sound doctrine, the revealed deposit of the faith, without which no one can be saved, no one can please God.

What good is it to devote oneself to serving people if one hides from them what is essential, the purpose and the meaning of their life, and the seriousness of sin that turns them away from it? Works of charity done for the poor, the needy, the infirm, and the sick have always been a true concern for the Church, and we must not excuse ourselves from it, but if it becomes merely man-centered philanthropy, then the Church is no longer carrying out her mission, she is no longer leading souls to God, which can really be done only by supernatural means: faith, hope, charity and grace. And therefore by denouncing anything that is opposed to them: errors against faith and morality. Because if people sin, for want of that denunciation, they are damned for eternity. The Church's reason for being is to save them and to help them avoid the misfortune of their eternal perdition.

Now obviously that could not possibly please the world, which then turns against the Church, often violently, as history shows us. Here we are then, at Easter 2013, and the situation in the Church remains almost unchanged. The words of Abp. Lefebvre take on a prophetic tone. It has all come to pass, and it all continues for the greater misfortune of souls who no longer hear from their pastors the message of salvation.

Without becoming upset over the duration of this terrible crisis or over the number of prelates and bishops who pursue the self-destruction of the Church, as Paul VI acknowledged, we continue, to the extent of our abilities, to proclaim that the Church can change neither her dogmas nor her morality. For no one can meddle with these venerable institutions without provoking a genuine disaster. Although some accidental modifications pertaining to the external form must be made—as it happens in all human institutions—in no case can they be made contrary to the principles that have guided the Church in all the preceding centuries.

6. Consecration to St Joseph

The consecration to Saint Joseph, which the General Chapter decided on in July 2012, is taking place right at this decisive moment. Why Saint Joseph? Because he is the Patron of the Catholic Church. He continues to carry out for the Mystical Body the role that God the Father had entrusted to him with regard to His Divine Son. Since Christ is the Head of the Church, Head of the Mystical Body, it follows that he who was in charge of protecting the Messiah, the Son of God made man, now finds his mission extended to the entire Mystical Body.

Just as his role was very discreet and for the most part hidden—while being perfectly effective—so too this role of protector—which is quite effective with regard to the Church also—is carried out today with great discretion. Only over the course of the centuries was devotion to Saint Joseph manifested more and more clearly. One of the greatest saints, one of the most discreet. Following Pius IX, who declared him Patron of the entire Church, following Leo XIII who confirmed this role and introduced the magnificent *Prayer to Saint*

Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church—which we recite every day in the Society—and following Saint Pius X, who had a very special devotion to Saint Joseph, whose name he bore, we want to adopt as our own, in this tragic moment in the history of the Church, this devotion and his patronage.

Conclusion

Dear Friends and Benefactors of the Society of Saint Pius X, I bless you with all my heart, while expressing my gratitude to you for your prayers and your generosity for the benefit of the work of restoring the Church that Abp. Lefebvre undertook. Moreover I ask Saint Joseph to obtain for you the divine graces that your families need in order to remain faithful to Catholic Tradition.

+ Bernard Fellay

Note: subtitles are from Fr. Couture