

Apologia pro Marcel Lefebvre (*Apologia for Marcel Lefebvre*)

by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, 1979

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How often during these last ten years have I not had occasion to respond to questions concerning the weighty problems of the New Mass and the Pope. In answering them I have ever been careful to breathe with the spirit of the Church, conforming myself to her Faith as expressed in her theological principles, and to her pastoral prudence as expressed in moral theology and in the long experiences of her history.

I think I can say that my own views have not changed over the years and that they are, happily, those of the great majority of priests and faithful attached to the indefectible Tradition of the Church.

It should be clear that the few lines which follow are not an exhaustive study of these problems, The purpose, rather is to clarify our conclusions to such an extent that no one may be mistaken regarding the official position of the Society of St, Pius X.

It must be understood immediately that we do not hold to the absurd idea that if the New Mass is valid, we are then free to assist at it. The Church has always forbidden the faithful to assist at the Masses of heretics and schismatics, even when they are valid. It is clear that no one can assist at sacrilegious Masses or at Masses which endanger our faith.

Now, it is easy to show that the New Mass, as it was formulated by the officially authorized Conciliar Liturgical Commission considered together with the accompanying explanation of Mgr. Bugnini, manifests an inexplicable rapprochement with the theology and liturgy of the Protestants. The following fundamental dogmas of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass are not clearly represented and are even contradicted:

- that the priest is the essential minister of the Rite;

- that in the Mass there is a true sacrifice, a sacrificial action;
- that the Victim or Host is Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, present under the species of bread and wine, with His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity;
- that this Sacrifice is a propitiatory one;
- that the Sacrifice and the Sacrament are effected by the words of the Consecration alone, and not also by those which either precede or follow them.

It is sufficient to enumerate a few of the novelties in the New Mass to be convinced of the rapprochement with the Protestants;

- the altar replaced by a table without an altar stone;
- Mass celebrated facing the people, concelebrated, in a loud voice, and in the vernacular;
- the Mass divided into two distinct parts: Liturgy of the Word, and Liturgy of the Eucharist;
- the cheapening of the sacred vessels, the use of leavened bread, distribution of Holy Communion in the hand, and by the laity, and even by women;
- the Blessed Sacrament hidden in corners;
- the Epistle read by women;
- Holy Communion brought to the sick by laity.

All these innovations are authorized. One can fairly say without exaggeration that most of these Masses are sacrilegious acts which pervert the Faith by diminishing it. The de-sacralization is such that these Masses risk the loss of their supernatural character, their *mysterium fidei*; they would then be no more than acts of natural religion. These New Masses are not only incapable of fulfilling our Sunday obligation, but are such that we must apply to them the canonical rules which the Church customarily applies to communicatio in sacris with Orthodox Churches and Protestant sects.

Must one conclude further that all these Masses are invalid? As long as the essential conditions for validity are present (matter, form, intention, and a validly ordained priest), I do not see how one can affirm this.

The prayers at the Offertory, the Canon, and the Priest's Communion which surround the words of Consecration are necessary, not to the validity of the Sacrifice and the Sacrament, but rather to their integrity. When the imprisoned Cardinal Mindszenty, desiring to nourish himself with the Body and Blood of Our Lord, and to escape the gaze of his captors, pronounced solely the words of Consecration over a little bread and wine, he most certainly accomplished the Sacrifice and the Sacrament.

It is clear, however, that fewer and fewer Masses are valid these days, as the faith of priests is destroyed and they possess no longer the intention to do what the Church does – an intention which the Church cannot change. The current formation of those who are called seminarians today does not prepare them to celebrate Mass validly. The propitiatory Sacrifice of the Mass is no longer considered the essential work of the priest. Nothing is sadder or more disappointing

than to read the sermons or teachings of the Conciliar bishops on the subject of vocations, or on the occasion of a priestly ordination. They no longer know what a priest is.

Nevertheless, in order to judge the subjective fault of those who celebrate the New Mass as of those who attend it, we must apply the rules of the discernment of spirits given us in moral and pastoral theology. We (the priests of the Society) must always act as doctors of the soul and not as judge and hangmen. Those who are tempted by this latter course are animated by a bitter spirit and not true zeal for souls. I hope that our young priests will be inspired by the words of St. Pius X in his first encyclical, and by the numerous texts on this subject to be found in such works as *The Soul of the Apostolate* by Dom Chautard, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* by Garrigou-Lagrange, and *Christ the Ideal of the Monk* by Dom Marmion.

Let us now pass to a second but no less important subject: does the Church have a true Pope or an impostor on the Throne of St. Peter? Happy are those who have lived and died without having to pose such a question! One must indeed recognize that the pontificate of Paul VI posed, and continues to pose, a serious problem of conscience for the faithful. Without reference to his culpability for the terrible demolition of the Church which took place under his pontificate, one cannot but realize that he hastened the causes of that decline in every domain. One can fairly ask oneself how it was possible that a successor of Peter can, in so little time, have caused more damage to the Church than the French Revolution.

Some precise facts, such as the signatures which he gave to Article VII in the Instruction concerning the New Mass, and to the Declaration on Religious Liberty, are indeed scandalous and have led certain traditionalists to affirm that Paul VI was heretical and thus no longer Pope. They argue further that, chosen by a heretical Pope, the great majority of the cardinals are not cardinals at all and thus lacked the authority to elect another Pope. Pope John Paul I and Pope John Paul II were thus, they say, illegitimately elected. They continue that it is inadmissible to pray for a pope who is not Pope or to have any "conversations" (like mine of November 1978) with one who has no right to the Chair of Peter.

As with the question of the invalidity of the *Novus Ordo*, those who affirm that there is no Pope over-simplify the problem. The reality is more complex. If one begins to study the question of whether or not a Pope can be heretical, one quickly discovers that the problem is not as simple as one might have thought. The very objective study of Xaverio de Silverira on this subject demonstrates that a good number of theologians teach that the Pope can be heretical as a private doctor or theologian but not as a teacher of the Universal Church. One must then examine in what measure Pope Paul VI willed to engage in infallibility in the diverse cases where he signed texts close to heresy if not formally heretical.

But we can say that in the two cases cited above, as in many another, Paul VI acted much more the Liberal than as a man attached to heresy. For when one informed him of the danger that he ran in approving certain conciliar texts, he would proceed to render the text contradictory by adding a formula contrary in meaning to affirmations already in the text, or by drafting an equivocal formula. Now, equivocation is the very mark of the Liberal, who is inconsistent by nature.

The Liberalism of Paul VI, recognized by his friend, Cardinal Daniélou, is thus sufficient to explain the disasters of his pontificate. Pope Pius IX, in particular, spoke often of the Liberal Catholic, whom he considered a destroyer of the Church. The Liberal Catholic is a two-sided

being, living in a world of continual self-contradiction. While he would like to remain Catholic, he is possessed by a thirst to appease the world. He affirms his faith weakly, fearing to appear too dogmatic, and as a result, his actions are similar to those of the enemies of the Catholic Faith.

Can a Pope be Liberal and remain Pope? The Church has always severely reprimanded Liberal Catholics, but she has not always excommunicated them. Here, too, we must continue in the spirit of the Church. We must refuse Liberalism from whatever source it comes because the Church has always condemned it. She has done so because it is contrary, in the social realm especially, to the Kingship of Our Lord.

Does not the exclusion of the cardinals of over eighty years of ages, and the secret meetings which preceded and prepared the last two Conclaves, render them invalid? Invalid: no, that is saying too much. Doubtful at the time: perhaps. But in any case, the subsequent unanimous acceptance of the election by the Cardinals and the Roman clergy suffices to validate it. That is the teaching of the theologians.

The visibility of the Church is too necessary to its existence for it to be possible that God would allow that visibility to disappear for decades. The reasoning of those who deny that we have a Pope puts the Church in an inextricable situation. Who will tell us who the future Pope is to be? How, as there are no Cardinals, is he to be chosen? This spirit is a schismatical one for at least the majority of those who attach themselves to certainly schismatical sects like Palmar de Troya, the Eglise Latine de Toulouse, and others.

Our Fraternity absolutely refuses to enter into such reasonings.

We wish to remain attached to Rome and to the Successor of Peter, while refusing his Liberalism through fidelity to his predecessors. We are not afraid to speak to him, respectfully but firmly, as did St. Paul with St. Peter.

And so, far from refusing to pray for the Pope, we redouble our prayers and supplications that the Holy Ghost will grant him light and strength in his affirmations and defense of the Faith.

Thus, I have never refused to go to Rome at his request or that of his representatives. The Truth must be affirmed at Rome above all other places. It is of God, and He will assure its ultimate triumph.

Consequently, the Society of St. Pius X, its priests, brothers, sisters, and oblates, cannot tolerate among its members those who refuse to pray for the Pope or affirm that the *Novus Ordo Missae* is per se invalid. Certainly, we suffer from this continual incoherence which consists in praising all the Liberal orientations of Vatican II and at the same time straining to mitigate its effects. But all of this must incite us to prayer and to the firm maintenance of Tradition rather than to the affirmation that the Pope is not the Pope.

In conclusion, we must have that missionary spirit which is the true spirit of the Church. We must do everything to bring about the reign of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the words of our Holy Patron, St. Pius X: *Instaurare omnia in Christo*. We must restore all things in Christ, and we must submit to all, as did Our Lord in His Passion for the salvation of souls and the triumph of Truth. "In hoc natus sum," said Our Lord to Pilate, "ut testimonium perhibeam veritati."

“I was born to give witness to the Truth.”