

## Keeping the Mass, IV

wanted to do something together on social ills, to let me know. That was four years ago. They haven't called. I really wanted to work with them, because they are I believe, *good men*. There is no question in my mind that they believe in the divinity of Christ, and want the good of society.

Where does the Ecumenical Movement stand these days? Pope St. John XXIII clarified the concept of ecumenism in his encyclical *Ad Cathedram Petri* in 1959, he made it crystal clear that ecumenism was the effort to return to the unity of the Catholic Church.

But in only a decade later this was a dead letter, as Fr. John McKenzie, S.J. was selected to write the article on ecumenism for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. In it he said, "The Roman Catholic Church has officially abandoned its 'one true church' position." In saying this, he is simply expressing what most Catholics have been led to believe, and what most theologians have been teaching.

H.J.A. Sire, in his book *Phoenix from the Ashes*, has this to say about the modern Ecumenical Movement.

Before Christ began His teaching mission, He was subjected to three great temptations, which had regard not to sin but to three essential errors that He might commit in attracting mankind to His truth. There were no witnesses to His encounter in the desert, but Our Lord told His disciples of it, to warn them against falling into those false methods. The devil came to Him and first of all suggested that Christ should win over followers by offering them the material things they craved; but He replied that men must be persuaded not by bread but by the truth of his divine doctrine. Then the devil urged that Christ should overwhelm

disbelief with great miracles that would leave beholders no choice but to accept Him; but Christ replied that it is not for men to put God to the test, to make their belief dependent on divine proofs. Finally came an astonishing bid for submission: "And the devil led Him into a high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time; And he said to Him: To Thee will I give all this power, and the glory of them; for to me they are delivered, and to whom I will, I will give them." He was offering to surrender all opposition to Christ then and for all time; and in return he wanted no more than a token: "If thou wilt adore before me, all shall be thine." The reward offered was incalculable; the price was no more than a gesture. But Christ replied that no good, however immense, can justify the turning away of the worship that is owed to God alone. Since the Second Vatican Council we have seen the Catholic Church fall into each one of the errors against which its Founder warned it: clamouring for stones to be turned into bread to feed the poor, flinging itself from the house of prayer so that the world might admire its basement in the gutter, and associating itself with false worship in the hope that mankind should be won over by its humility and breadth of spirit.

Yet with Sire's grim assessment of the movement, I think we can say that the movement is dead in the tracks. When I was in seminary, there was hardly a class that did not make appeal to ecumenism. But now, I hardly hear of it. Instead, one hears of evangelization. A step up, in my opinion.

What happened after the Civil War regarding ecumenism? The answer is, Catholics remained faithful Catholics and Protestants remained faithful Protestants or converted to the Catholic Faith, or vice-versa. Our ancestors remained faithful because amongst other things, the Church offered them all the things necessary for conviction:

1. Unmistakably beautiful, authentic Catholic liturgy, prompting even that absolute curmudgeon H. L. Mencken to remark that "One Solemn High Mass was worth a thousand Protestant sermons."

2. Moral truth. Giving the faithful and the world clear teaching on what is right and what is wrong was, and is, a great tool for evangelization. And we didn't just teach what was right and wrong, we *corrected* those Catholics who were in the wrong. We meant what we said.

3. Clear doctrine. Even those who deserted from such an instruction were seldom able to despise or forget it. In his tale of a Catholic malefactor recovered for his Catholic Faith, G. K. Chesterton has Father Brown say, "I caught him, with an unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world, and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread."

Now what about the modern ecumenical movement as pursued by a majority of the Catholic hierarchy? I think that it is a prime example of how the post-conciliar Church has ruined a legitimate cause. Regarding ecumenism, I think it can be shown that the hierarchy of the Church has done everything that it should not have done and failed to do everything that it should have done. What it should have done is to have looked beyond Western habits of thought and rediscovered elements that belong to the East, such as may be found in the Orthodox

churches, like a greater reliance upon the Fathers of the Church, and an insistence upon beauty and majesty in the liturgy. What it did was to focus on rapprochement with Protestant churches; but since these churches have no sacramentally valid hierarchies, nor any means to determine doctrine, there is no possibility of ecclesial union with them. None.

Now there is no need to accept the modernist dichotomy that either one abandons Catholic doctrine on what constitutes a church or one is committed to unconditional bigotry and exclusivism. Rather, since the West is becoming increasingly anti-Christian, practical cooperation in defense of basic Christian principles can and should be pursued. So the ultimate purpose is not diplomatic, but evangelical, concerned with presenting our Lord to the world. What we need is not to sit down and talk but stand up and fight; to fight alongside of Protestants who for example, realize that abortion is a travesty.

Easier said than done. I joined briefly the East Littleton Pastors Association, which exists for any Christian pastor who lives here. The Mormons were not accepted, as the Association does not regard them as Christian. The pastors mostly wanted to pray. Okay, fine, to an extent. But their notion of prayer was especially that of revival. "Lord, we just ask you to revive Littleton! Let your Spirit transform our city into a New Jerusalem!" But Catholics don't pray for revival. We establish institutions to accomplish evangelization, such as good schools, or chaplaincy to the police department. What I wanted was to join forces to fight the gangs or drug legalization and abuse, or evil institutions such as Planned Parenthood.

After attending the meetings several times, I drifted away, but let them know if they