

The dismay of practicing Catholics regarding the policies, practices and teaching of the Holy See; of episcopal conferences; of various laymen and priests and religious orders is not found only in the traditionalist milieu – it is even stronger sometimes within the spheres of the *Novus Ordo Missae*. When your priests hear confessions at other parishes, we must regularly deal with great frustration and even anguish over the policies of the Holy Father and those whom he has chosen to assist him.

It would be a mistake to attribute the cause of this anguish entirely upon the internet and its Catholic blogs, any more than to blame it on various Catholic efforts of journalism. It is a fact that the Holy See, the episcopal conferences and so on, have made errors in judgment; a fact which the Holy See itself has acknowledged. I cannot see any answer to these developments, nor any real way to proceed in an earthly sense to address and rectify these, except one. More on that later.

Let me give an example of this present crisis. You have heard me say often that the contemplative life lived faithfully is essential to the health of the Universal Church. The Church has said so constantly in her history. As St. John Mary Vianney said, "If the monks are excellent, the priests will be good. If the monks are good, the priests will be fair. If the monks are fair, the priests will be an abomination." As the patron saint of parish priests, he knew what he was talking about.

But the Holy See has taken a very tough position on contemplative life – a reform really – in a document called *Cor Orans* (The Praying Heart), which has to do with women's contemplative life. It was issued by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, sometimes just called the Congregation for Religious. Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, a Brazilian prelate who is the prefect of that congregation, issued a statement not long ago as to what this reform would look like. "Do not distance yourself from the great lines of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, those that are distancing themselves from the Council to make another path are killing themselves – sooner or later they will die. They will not have sense. They will be outside the Church. We need to build, using the Gospel and the Council as a departure point."

If that is not clear enough, he went on to say that because modern people's needs are fundamentally different from what they were in the past, there was no reason to stick too closely to what the founders and foundresses of the great orders wanted. He mentioned St. Augustine, St. John Cassian, St. Benedict, St. Bruno, St. Dominic, Sts. Francis and Clare, Sts. Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. "The contexts in which they lived have changed. And the Council reminds us that consecrated life must be Christian discipleship – we remember the founders yes – but we must be open to the culture of the present moment. So we must not be closed to new things. God is not static; He speaks in every time to men and women with the true language of that time."

Practically speaking this means that the formation of two years postulancy and three years novitiate will be changed to nine years. But St. Teresa of Avila designed the novitiate to give the maximum strain and difficulty a novice could take which was no more than five years. Furthermore the intention of the Cardinal is to create federations, in which a priest who is appointed to be a "religious assistant," will monitor each monastery with unprecedented powers to insure that the Council or the Cardinal's interpretation and the Holy Father's interpretation of Vatican II are being followed correctly. To insure this, the sisters will be required to participate in "ongoing formation," which seems to mean going in groups away from their monasteries to take courses together, given by experts chosen by the entirely new federation, as opposed to the autonomy established by St. Teresa.

Does this mean the end of Carmelite life? Not necessarily, but it is the end of the reform of St. Teresa of Avila for now. For there are at present no options, there are no choices and there is no recourse. All the appeals to the Holy Father have been met with silence. So I've asked several Carmelite prioresses what they might do about this, and the answer is simply, "We are praying for a miracle."

What does this mean for us in this parish? It is clear by now that the protection of the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei that we in the Fraternity of St. Peter have relied upon for so long, may come to an end, since the Commission no longer exists as of yesterday.

I say these dire things that each of us may prepare for what may be a very difficult path to come. This is going to be rough, or so I think. I also think that as your pastor we must prepare for the worst. That's the bad news.

But, there is a way to do this – a way tried and true to the Church – which we in the Fraternity have been doing since 1988, and which the *Foederatio Internationalis Una Voce* (The International Federation of One Voice) has been doing since 1965. That's the good news. Thus starts a series of sermons which I shall call "Staying the Course."

To understand what this course has been, we need to go back some years to the modern liturgical movement as it was called, which really began in the 1920's. Rumbblings of it were happening earlier, but WWI stopped it for a time. It was gaining much strength when WWII delayed things, but by the 40's it had gained a lot of steam.

By the 50's, it was clear to any who cared to look, what was coming. Here is part of a letter to the editor written to the British newspaper the *Daily Telegraph*, in October of 1952. "Sir, as a comparatively recent convert and eager to share my happiness with my co-religionists, I have frequently asked both myself and them what are the chief stumbling blocks to their conversion. Never once have I heard it said that the use of Latin in the liturgy is among them. Whilst I would be very much in favour of some sacraments being administered in the vernacular, it would surely be disastrous if such intrusions were allowed to creep into the Holy Sacrifice. Let us, for pity's sake, keep the language and the liturgy as we know them."

There you have it – by 1952 the layman in the pew – even a recent convert could see the storm clouds gathering and knew that the reformers of the liturgy were planning to get rid of Latin, and the Mass as the faithful knew it. And the laity with many priests began to organize some resistance.

But resistance was extraordinarily difficult to accomplish. The mere suggestion of fighting on behalf of Latin in the liturgy was immediately labeled as practically schismatic, or at least disrespectful of the pope and the authority of the pope, and later, even against God the Holy Ghost. As Pope St. John Paul II was to write later, "The Spirit of God is at work today in the Church, that Christ, through the Spirit, was with the Council Fathers, that the Council contains, in its teaching, that which the Spirit speaks to the Church, and that it expresses this in full harmony with Tradition and in accordance with what is required by the signs of the times."

It seemed like all would be lost regarding worship according to the rite of St. Gregory the Great. And it was for a time. But it is now back? And how did we get it back? By a kind of miracle. The Carmelites are correct in praying for one.