

ARCHBISHOP MARCEL LEFEBVRE: A LIVING SAINT

A Guest Editorial by
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In times of crisis God often has raised up leaders—human instruments with special graces of faith and courage—to lead us back to Jesus Christ. These leaders were not always popes. Many were taken from the ranks of lesser orders, and some from the laity. Heroes such as St. Athanasius, St. Dominic, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Ignatius and St. Thomas More have provided the inspiration for the defeat of heresy and restoration of true Catholicism. Many saints were persecuted by bishops and, in some cases, by the Supreme Pontiff himself.



We were astounded by the unfairness in assessing the decision by this distinguished prelate to consecrate bishops. This unfairness was expected in Liberal circles, but the sarcasm and condemnation made by the pseudo-conservatives was totally unexpected. They will have to answer to God.

We assumed that Conservatives everywhere would rally around the Archbishop, especially since they have been all properly shocked at the terrible decline of the Faith permitted and/or promoted by the "establishment." In the last ten years we have witnessed only an acceleration of the decline. Are things worse now than, say, ten years ago? Definitely worse, *much* worse! So many aborted babies, lost adolescents, broken marriages, and phenomenal collapse on all levels of faith and morals.

Spiritual death is more critical than physical death. Everyone knows that. Yet, if our nation was invaded by an enemy that resulted in millions of physical lives being lost, would we not rally behind a gifted military leader to repel the enemy and save the lives of our children?

With the countless irreverent liturgies and invalid Masses, along with the virtual disappearance of Confession, there has been a drastic reduction in the graces of salvation. Sanctifying grace is absolutely necessary for salvation. There is no other way to avoid eternal damnation. Incorporation into the very life of Christ is a *sine qua non* for spiritual life of the soul.

Lectures, books, cassette tapes, workshops, committees (Renew, Sex Ed, *New Creation* Catechisms), anniversary parties, and fund-raising galas... none of these confer sanctifying grace—only valid Sacraments can do this.

At the rate we are going, in ten years, there will be virtually no Faith, and few valid Sacraments. Doesn't this bother conservatives? Do they not see their children and grandchildren losing their salvation?

It seems to us that a gifted holy instrument of God has been given to us: Archbishop Lefebvre.

The priests of the Society of St. Pius X, the Society founded by Archbishop Lefebvre, are validly ordained, offer valid Masses, and confer valid Sacraments. And besides validity, these Masses universally emanate reverence, fear of the Lord, love our of Crucified Savior, and doctrinal integrity.

Can you say that about your local diocese? Or local parish church or school? Does your pastor use valid matter for Mass? Does he look upon the Mass primarily as the re-enactment of Christ's sacrificial death on Calvary (this was infallibly defined by the Council of Trent)? Does your pastor, when he approaches the "table," possess the proper intention? *

If the celebrant does not believe in transubstantiation, then there is no valid sacrifice. Otherwise, if the maxim "*ecclesia supplet*" is applied, then every Lutheran and Presbyterian minister (if he has valid orders) would be offering up valid Masses.

It is a fact that the bishops both of Ontario, Canada, and Boston, Massachusetts, have admitted that *one-half* of their priests *do not believe in transubstantiation!* Therefore, one-half of the Masses in Ontario and Boston are invalid. No sanctifying grace is given; souls are deprived of the means to salvation. Doesn't this bother "conservatives" and "pseudo-conservatives"? Don't they care about saving souls?

The First Law of the Church: Save Souls

Q. For what reason did Archbishop Lefebvre consecrate bishops, without the expressed permission of the Vatican?

A. For the perpetuation of valid Orders, valid Masses, valid Sacraments—for the salvation of souls.

Q. Is it true that he broke Church law?

A. No. Canon law, now and always, permits an automatic exemption from any Church law if there is present a proportionately serious reason.

Q. In the Archbishop's judgment, what is the proportionately serious reason?

A. It is obvious to everyone: *the grave crisis in the Church!*



Q. Are there other Church laws subject to a similar exemption?

A. Every Catholic has used these exemptions many times in their lives. For example, there is a grave Church law which obliges us to attend Mass on Sunday. This law binds under mortal sin. Yet, if one has a proportionately serious reason, (i.e., sickness) the law does not bind. He is automatically excused.

Q. If a man with a fever and temperature of '103 stays home on Sunday, is he breaking the law?

A. Of course not. The law does not bind him in that particular case.

Q. Did the Archbishop have a serious enough reason to be excused from the Canon Law?

A. Definitely! Is not the Faith disappearing? Are not millions of souls already lost? The *first law* of the Church is always the salvation of souls.

Q. Is the Archbishop excommunicated?

A. If he is automatically excused from the law then he is surely *not* excommunicated.

Q. Are there other automatic excommunications in Church law?

A. Yes. The most commonly incurred excommunication comes from the killing of an unborn child. Canon 1398: "Anyone who actually procures an abortion is automatically excommunicated."

Q. Strange! I have never heard my parish priest mention that.

A. Now you are getting the idea. Incidentally, a recently published report concluded that American Catholic mothers abort more of their conceived children than any other religious group! You can see the unfairness and selectivism of many American bishops. Hatred for Archbishop Lefebvre and for doctrinal integrity is as plain as day.

The Pope and the Archbishop

Q. Does Archbishop Lefebvre reject the papacy?

A. On the contrary, Archbishop Lefebvre upholds the papacy more than any other bishop in the United States. We say this without fear of contradiction. Can you make sure that his subjects teach authentic doctrine and morals as promulgated by *all* the popes and councils (from St. Peter to the present pontiff)? Name one! The American bishops *pretend* to obey the Pope, but disobey papal directives on a daily basis. Altar girls are prohibited; so are ministers

for Communion (except in emergency situations), general absolution, sex ed in schools, heresy, denial of Faith and morals—these are all forbidden by the Pope. Every American bishop permits these things to go on week after week, year after year, in his parishes, schools and seminaries. These bishops are directly at fault and fully culpable. When these bishops try to hang the label "disobedient to the Pope" on a traditional bishop, it is so hypocritical as to make the Devil himself laugh! On the other hand, Archbishop Lefebvre, and the Society of St. Pius X, takes great pains to see that every priest in every chapel, school and seminary, upholds *every* revealed doctrine, *every de fide* pronouncement from *every* pope and *every* council. *No American bishop can make that claim!*



By Urs Ketter, AP

Q. Has Archbishop Lefebvre rejected the present Pope?

A. Never! He loves the Pope and the papacy. His heart weeps when he sees the present Pontiff make unwise administrative decisions and disarrange previous Church practices. For example, by speaking from the pulpits of various Protestant churches and synagogues, most non-Catholics (and Catholics) conclude that *one religion is as good as another*. This is called religious indifference—an error soundly condemned by the Magisterium.

Q. Does he support this Pope?

A. In the St. Pius X seminaries there is always a portrait of the present Pope, and the practice of daily prayers for him is mandated in every institution.

Q. Why do we pray for the Pope? Is there something wrong? Does he need prayers?

A. Catholics have always prayed for the Pope because he is tempted to sin like every other human being. St. Peter himself needed prayers, having evidenced his three-fold denial of Christ on the night of Our Savior's passion.

Q. Besides the Pope needing our prayers, is there something wrong in the Vatican?

A. One would be naïve not to see that the Church is ravaged from within by heretical teachers who have corrupted a whole generation of young people. Yet few are excommunicated or suspended from the priestly office. Father Curran, Father McNulty, Father Matthew Fox, Archbishop Weakland... and hundreds of other heretics are all in good standing with Rome. And whom does the Vatican censure? The saintly, moral, orthodox Archbishop Lefebvre. Something very strange is going on.

Q. What, precisely, is wrong in the Vatican?

A. There are many theories:

- 1) The Pope does not know what is the present state of the Church;
- 2) The Pope's secretaries and aides screen all his mail and keep him conveniently ignorant. The bishops feed him falsely optimistic reports;

- 3) A strongly Masonic element among the Vatican bureaucracy;
 - 4) The Pope is a virtual prisoner of this bureaucracy, which renders him relatively helpless;
 - 5) The Pope is too busy... in visiting foreign countries and receiving world dignitaries... to pay close attention to the heretical clergymen and bishops;
 - 6) The administrative work of the Pope, in effect, is done by Vatican officials. The Pope simply puts his signature, without close scrutiny, on the appointment of bishops and other such matters;
 - 7) The Pope is afraid of an American schism; **
- 8) The Pope has been influenced by Modernist pressures, but he is doing his best.

Q. What opinion do most conservative priests have?

A. We simply do not know. But we cannot help but conclude that *something* is wrong.

Q. We, as Roman Catholics, love and respect the Holy Father, do we not?

A. Of course we do! He is indeed the Vicar of Christ on earth, and Successor of St. Peter, and St. Pius X and Pope Liberius, and Pope Honorius, and Pope Callistus. Some of these men were saints, others less than that. But, in every case, they were human beings, with grave responsibilities, who need prayers.

Did not Christ say to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not..." (Luke 22,31)

And again: "And [Jesus] turning, said to Peter: Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me... because thou savourest not the things of God but the things that are of men" (Matthew 16,23).

Negotiations between Archbishop Lefebvre and the Vatican

The main negotiating team was headed by Cardinal Ratzinger. Neither Cardinal Gagnon nor the Pope himself were clearly visible during the long months of talks.



The Seminary at Ecône

Archbishop Lefebvre requested papal permission to consecrate three bishops taken from among the ranks of the Society of St. Pius X. This is not an unreasonable request. Three bishops constitutes the minimum number required to labor within a religious society which functions on five continents! The Archbishop himself, an octogenarian, has shown miraculous stamina but any reasonable man could see that he needs at least three auxiliaries. (Recently, Archbishop McCarrick of Newark, who already maintains five auxiliaries requested from Rome two additional ones! The Vatican

promptly replied to his request, bringing the total up to eight bishops. *Eight* bishops to service an area only 1/5 the state of New Jersey, the third smallest in the nation!)

Q. Why did not Roman officials comply with Archbishop Lefebvre's extremely modest and reasonable request?

A. Because they fear a traditional restoration of Catholicism. The Roman negotiators delayed, and talked, and put off, endlessly. Ultimately, the best the Vatican could offer was this: *Only one* bishop may be appointed, at the discretion of Rome. And this appointment would be chosen from *outside* the Society. [***](#)

Q. Is not this offer by Rome a little unfair?

A. *Very* unfair! Every bishop wants "his own men"—men whom he knows and have proven to be loyal—to be his assistants (i.e., auxiliaries). Archbishop McCarrick nominated two priests from his own diocese, and his wish received immediate fulfillment. Why has not Archbishop Lefebvre given equal consideration?

Endless Negotiations

To continue the scenario—the talks continued... Archbishop Lefebvre signs a document which indicates that the negotiations will be shortly concluded. What kind of a document? It was a typical European-style protocol: *romanía* † at its best. This type of document is signed by European diplomats by the bushelfull. These documents are not binding unconditionally, but American newspapers, unfamiliar with the nuances of *romanía*, incorrectly reported that a final agreement had been signed. †† Readers should recall that American bishops have signed, in their lifetime, the Oath Against Modernism. Yet, most of them casually disregard this sacred document, and no one utters a word of criticism. (Here is your basic Liberal double-standard in action!)

Soon the news reached America that Rome had set up a date for the consecration of Archbishop Lefebvre's bishop—August 15th, since it ended the Marian Year—seemed like a good possibility. But, keep in mind, this date was not "firmed up," nothing definite was arrived at. August 15, 1988, was merely a projection and a possibility.

The next bit of news from Rome sounded promising: one priest *from the Society* would be chosen to be consecrated. Alleluia! Traditional Catholics, while remaining cautious, began to rejoice over this breakthrough.

The Big Question

Q. Why did Archbishop Lefebvre break off negotiations? After all, a projected date was offered and permission granted to consecrate one bishop, taken from the ranks of the Society of St. Pius X. Did the Archbishop reverse himself for no good reason, and go back on signed agreements?

A. 1) The Vatican negotiators privately informed the Archbishop that they would need *at least* six months more to conduct a proper search into the qualifications of the bishop-to-be. This was done *privately* so that written documents could not be used as evidence against the negotiating team.

2) A special five-man commission was to be set up to control this bishop. He could function *only* with the commission's *fiat*.

The courageous, saintly Archbishop Lefebvre knew, in his heart of hearts, that Rome was stalling again... for the umpteenth time. Why all the delay? Why create a commission which undoubtedly would be top-heavy with Liberals... maybe not at first... but when the Archbishop dies...? Archbishop Lefebvre concluded, after prayer and spiritual direction, that Rome had no intention of giving his Society of St. Pius X any *meaningful* permission to function properly in the vineyard of Our Lord. These latest conditions could only be construed as more examples of *romanitá*. The Vatican was *never* going to give permission to consecrate!



*Traditionalist French
Archbishop Marcel
Lefebvre presides at a
1984 confirmation in
Santiago, Chile*

How could this Archbishop come to this conclusion? Very simple. Did you ever experience a friend or relative who owed you money? And he continually told you that he "was going to pay you back," or that "it's in the mail." He *acted* humble and cooperative, and made half-hearted promises. You, the creditor, made telephone calls, wrote letters; at times you really thought you were making progress. And then one day you come to the stark realization: He is not going to pay me. He is merely putting me off until (he hopes) I tire out, forget, or drop dead... even though in justice I have a right to that money.

Decision Time

Archbishop Lefebvre concluded (and history will prove how right he was) that Rome was using textbook *romanitá*. Like basketball coach Dean Smith of North Carolina, the negotiating team was going into its "four-corner stall." Anyone who knows the inner workings of the Vatican is not in the least surprised.

To all the good people who judge that the Archbishop should have waited until August 15th, remember these facts:

- 1) No *specific* priest's name for the consecration was approved by Rome;
- 2) The proposed five-man commission could overturn the fifteen-year accomplishments of the Society of St. Pius X;
- 3) Archbishop May (of St. Louis) rushed over from America to participate in the final negotiations at a time when the Vatican seemed to be yielding. Archbishop May's message from the American bishops went like this: "We will not tolerate official Vatican approval of a traditional Catholic movement. If Archbishop Lefebvre is regularized, then our American churches will lose out. People and dollars will leave the *Novus Ordo* and return to the traditional

Mass." In effect, the American Church threatened Rome and implied that the Vatican would lose much revenue if the Archbishop received permission for his consecrations. Is it the proverbial "bottom line" again? We hope not.

It is indeed a sad situation, but there it is. If "conservatives" still judge that Archbishop Lefebvre acted unreasonably, or that somehow he opposes the papacy, or that he sinfully "disobeyed the Pope" or that we do not have grave crisis in the Church... then so be it. All of us will have to answer to God on Judgment Day. We will have to answer for the millions of souls lost forever while we wait around for something to happen.

From this corner, it seems that God has raised up a saintly leader whose only goal is to preserve the genuine Faith of Christ's Holy Church. Should we not benefit of our admiration and grant him the thanks?

*. Proper intention, i.e., belief in transubstantiation, and an act of the will to offer a true and proper sacrifice. The maxim *ecclesia supplet* applies only when there is an absence of actual intention. It does not apply in cases where the celebrants posit a contrary intention, i.e., to celebrate merely a meal or communion service.

**. Cardinal O'Connor says that many American bishops "hate the Pope" and Cardinal Gagnon has stated: "Most American bishops are in material schism."

***. Editor's Note: Their proposal remained far from being concrete. At first, they gave no date; then, giving a date, they rejected the three candidates proposed, asking for others.

†. *Romanità*: the Roman Method, often will impose on the petitioner unreasonable or impossible conditions. Thus, when the petitioner refuses to accept these conditions, he—rather than the negotiators—will appear to be at fault. It's an old trick, and it works!

††. Father Wickens is correct in pointing out that this document was not final: with no date, no candidate approved for consecration, it could not be a final document; it simply represented an important step forward, Rome acknowledging in principle the possibility of consecrations. Unfortunately, it remained "in theory only"!