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A Priest Fights for the Faith

An Interview with Fr. Paul A. Wickens

Conducted by Phyllis Graham

Once upon a time, in the State of New Jersey, there was a Catholic priest who had been ministering diligently in the same parish for twenty-eight years.

He was assigned chaplain to two busy hospitals, Orange Memorial and New Jersey Orthopedic Hospital, where he made his rounds regularly among the sick and the dying, hearing confessions, giving Communion, encouraging and comforting the ailing as only a priest can. He had other work to do as well and he did it cheerfully, as if he really liked doing it.

He prepared young couples for Marriage and always had a joke or two to help ease their nervousness. He was like that, thoughtful. Every now and then, non-Catholics would come to him for information about the Catholic Church and he was eager to instruct them in the Faith to which he had consecrated himself as a young man. The poor found him generous.

He was built very tall and strong, and the boys in the parish easily took to him as he coached them for hours and hours at basketball. They drew on his patience and drained him of his strength, but he didn't seem to mind.

The priest was intelligent, scholarly and knowledgeable about world events. One would think he couldn't have cared much to run the Bingo, but he did it nevertheless and didn't complain, because it was all part of parish work and he loved it.

One day, the bishop of the diocese threw him out. He denied Father use of the church for Mass, cut off his salary and refused him shelter in the rectory.

Now the priest had not denied Catholic doctrine, given public scandal or neglected his duties, and he still professed the Apostles' Creed. For months, there was no one to replace him. . . .

The priest was Father Paul A. Wickens and the above is not a fairy tale. It really happened. The following interview hopes to throw some light on why and how. It was taken the summer of 1985 at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary where Fr. Wickens had been invited to lecture to some forty seminarians, brothers and priests of the Society of St. Pius X.

Mrs. Graham: Fr. Wickens, in 1983 you received a lot of notoriety in the media because of a clash between you and your bishop, Archbishop Peter L. Gerety of Newark, New Jersey. You were charged with disobedience. What was that all about?

Fr. Wickens: First of all, let me clarify by saying that the initial charge was not disobedience. Also, the clash was not one of personalities; it was an ideological clash—a philosophical, theological one. You see, Archbishop Gerety is a dyed-in-the-wool modernist. . . .

Mrs. G.: Hold it a moment, Father, I daresay some people might not have a clear understanding of that term. Briefly, what is a modernist?

Fr. W.: Briefly, a modernist is one who attempts to change Catholic doctrine by pretending to update it.

Mrs. G.: For instance?

Fr. W.: For instance, first they update some peripheral things that are changeable, like church laws, using English in the Mass, an Offertory procession, etc. But the reason for their "updating" is not because the changes are necessary or better, but because by getting people used to change, they can little by little introduce a changed doctrine, a new morality. Now, doctrine and morality flow from God, Who is immutable and cannot change

and, therefore, the doctrines revealed by Christ to the world simply cannot change.

Mrs. G.: And isn't it true that as we started to accept each change in ritual that we were also accepting a certain lesson that went with it?

Fr. W.: Exactly. I'll give you an example: We didn't know that when they eliminated so many of the genuflections during the Mass, that their ultimate goal was to get rid of the belief that Christ is truly God!

Mrs. G.: Now, Father, when you say "their" ultimate goal, who are you talking about? After all, weren't these changes made by prelates within Holy Mother Church?

Fr. W.: Yes, but heresy is always within the Church. We have comparatively little to fear from those who are outside the Church. In the Church's history, we've had many such heresies, notably the Arian and Lutheran heresies, as well as the heresy of Henry VIII, to name just the major ones. The problem always starts with those within the Church. The heresy of Modernism has been lurking around since the turn of this century. Pope Pius X squelched it in 1907, but of course the Modernists keep passing on their pernicious propaganda that the Church should change, should change. . . .

Mrs. G.: And they mean change in prin-

ciple. . . .

Fr. W.: Yes, they mean that the Church should change its doctrine, which is impossible. Modernists existed mainly on the level of



A gifted speaker, Fr. Wickens here exhorts several hundred at a rally in New Jersey.

seminary professors and the so-called literati, just a small number of them, but they have been persistent. When the Second Vatican Council came along, they saw it as a chance to come out in the open, out of the closet, as it were, and many bishops who were formerly orthodox, once they started rubbing elbows and listening to the persuasive arguments of the Modernists, became Modernists themselves or were at least weakened in their Faith. Heresy has a way of spreading rapidly, like disease, especially if you're not in good spiritual shape.

Mrs. G.: So the term Modernism is not to be confused with true progress or improvement in carrying out the Church's mission, it is actually a heresy.

Fr. W.: Of course it's a heresy. It was named that by St. Pius X and condemned in a famous syllabus of errors called *Lamentabili*, followed by a very strong encyclical, *Pascendi Gregis*. Even after that—since Modernists do not die easily—the Pope had to come out and say that not only those who are outright Modernists but even those who would promote it, are ipso facto excommunicated.

Mrs. G.: How is it that so very many clerics were seduced into Modernism? They've studied theology, they are aware of Pope Pius X's condemnation of it, how is it they don't oppose it?

Fr. W.: You're asking the same question that was put to Pope Pius X. They asked him, why do people become Modernists? The Holy Father answered: Two reasons,

curiosity and pride. There are people who just have to know everything, even things that they don't need to know, they look into things even if it means exposing themselves to danger. Curiosity—you know what it did to the cat! And then. . . . pride. Once they become infected with wayward philosophies, they become proud that they are "in the know", they think they have some special enlightenment and they say, no one can tell me what to think, and they resist the Magisterium of the Church. The devil is behind it and he works very subtly. Another thing that Modernists do is they encourage you not to pray. . . .

They do it by scrapping traditional prayer—they'll say, it's not relevant, it's no longer in vogue, we have a new way. Traditional prayer focuses on God and clearly shows our dependence on Him, by petition, by thanksgiving, sorrow, praise, adoration. But the substitution they offer focuses on man, on self: How do I feel? What do I get out of it? This type of prayer requires no sacrifice, very little Faith and gratifies self. They'll say "Look, instead of the Rosary, the Divine Office, the Stations of the Cross, all that repetition, why don't we get together, hold hands and read from the Scriptures?" Now that's not wrong in itself, so Catholics get roped in. Once you stop praying to pay homage to God and you begin praying to gratify yourself, then you begin to lose grace and infection sets in and they've got you.

Mrs. G.: Was there a pressing need in the Church to call the Second Vatican Council?

Fr. W.: No. In the main, the Church was doing very well. The Second Vatican Council was not called to combat any problem in the Church. Pope John XXIII said it was to be just a pastoral council, a sort of big get-together where things can be talked over without any strict agenda. That's very different from a dogmatic council which is called to combat heresy.

A dogmatic council is called because of some very prevalent heresy in the Church. Vatican I, for example, was a dogmatic council, called to combat the attack on the Infallibility of the Pope, and it was necessary to define that particular doctrine clearly. The Council of Trent, in the late 1500's, was called because the Lutheran heresy had cast doubts on original sin, sanctifying grace, the power of the sacraments, belief in Purgatory. So that Council reaffirmed those doctrines. . . .

Mrs. G.: And Catholics were bound by the conclusions of such councils, right?

Fr. W.: Right, because they were dogmatic councils. Now a pastoral council, on the other hand, merely makes suggestions which the bishops bring back to their dioceses, practical ideas on ways to improve the teaching of

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Fr. Wickens Interview, Cont.

the Faith. The Second Vatican Council was a pastoral council, even Pope Paul VI said it was.

Mrs. G.: And suggestions are not mandatory.

Fr. W.: No, they aren't intended to be. The Vatican II documents were recommendations.

Mrs. G.: But how did it come about that these recommendations came out with the appearance of being mandatory?

Fr. W.: Because people were brought up—and properly so—that the wish of their superior was taken practically as a command. If you respect your parents, let's say, and you know that the snow on the sidewalk needs shovelling, even if they don't command you to do it, you would do it anyway, just to please them. Now, Catholic people were brought up with great respect for their bishop and priests. So, when they say they would like the Mass in English, Communion in the hand, etc., even though it wasn't actually commanded and even if the people didn't really like it, they felt it was more perfect in the eyes of God to do it than not to do it. You must understand how a lot of this mess came about. The average bishop was very busy administering his diocese. He just didn't have time to do everything himself so he left many decisions to others on his staff, his so-called experts in certain areas, like the liturgy. These experts started to be strongly influenced by the Modernists who were very busy at liturgical meetings spreading their ideas. So they would come back from, say, a big liturgical meeting in the mid-West and say to the bishop "All the liturgical leaders in the whole country agreed that the best thing to do is to have Communion in the hand." The bishop might have said, "Is that what they said?" "Yes, your Excellency." "Well... okay, fine, go ahead." He didn't have time to look into the ramifications of it, the experts had discussed it, so he just went along. Even the President of the United States can't make all agricultural decisions, for instance. He relies on some expert in his cabinet. And so, the bishop would get caught up, going

along with first this change, then that change, and so on.

Mrs. G.: We got sidetracked on Modernism, Father, but I think it was worth it. Could we please go back to your celebrated controversy with Archbishop Gerety?

Fr. W.: Okay, sure. I had been an ongoing critic of many of these Modernist changes in our diocese which I saw were very harmful. Some friends of mine had put together a newspaper called The New Jersey Catholic News...

Mrs. G.: Priest friends? lay friends?

Fr. W.: Lay friends. The purpose of the newsletter was to expose the harmful results of these Modernist changes, to alert people to them, to put pressure upon those in authority. The bishop suspected that I was linked with this paper. In the beginning he ignored it, but as the newsletter grew in circulation, in impact, he began to put pressure on me to stop its publication...

Mrs. G.: Could you have stopped it?

Fr. W.: Probably. But it would have been censorship in the worst sense of the word. We were printing the truth and we were in conformity with the teachings of the Holy Father.

Mrs. G.: What were the bishop's stated objections to you about the newsletter?

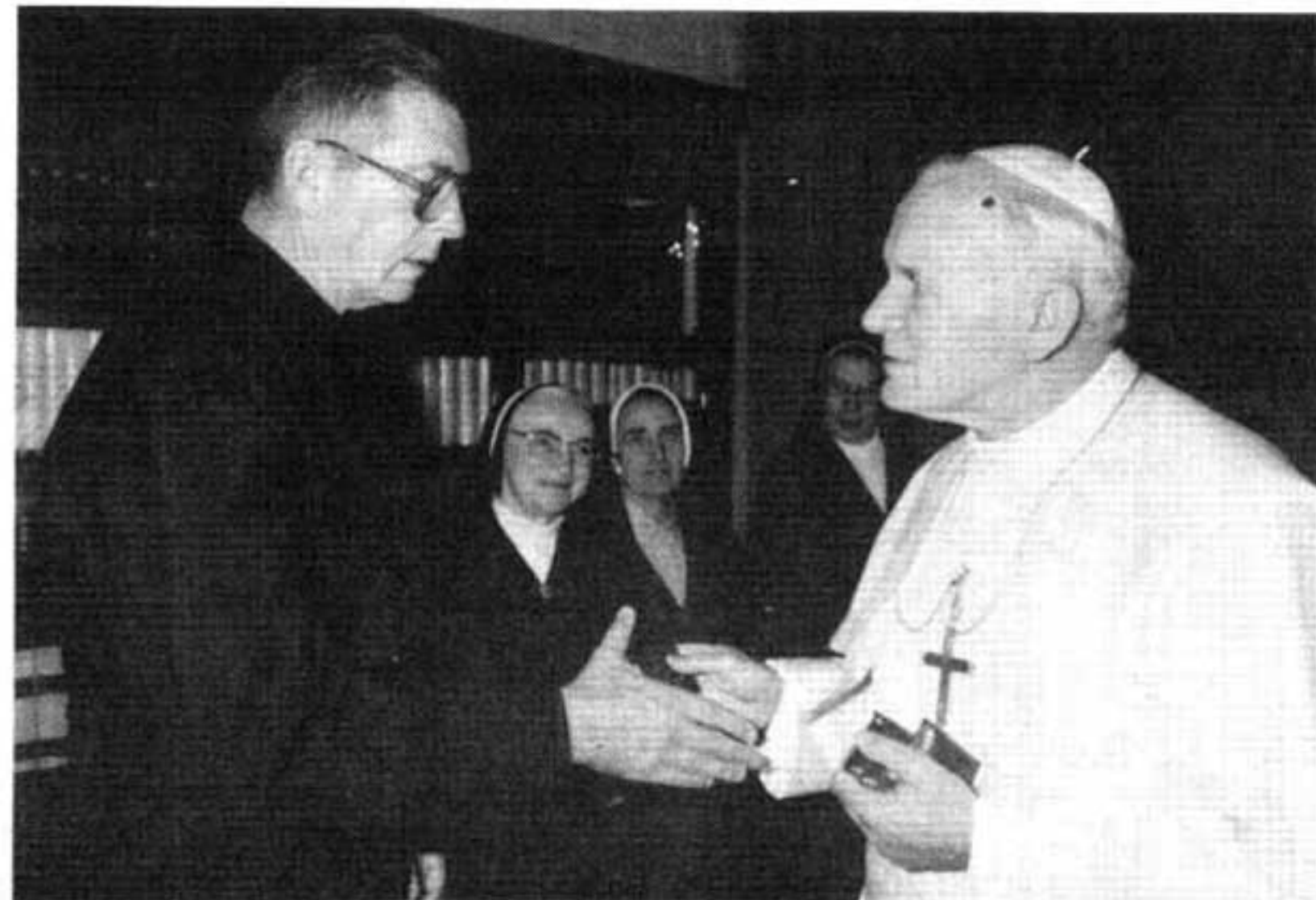
Fr. W.: He would just make vague accusations that we were destroying unity; that's a typical Modernist defense which they know appeals to people—unity. But he just wouldn't discuss any of the subjects we were writing about, like changes in the liturgy, abuses in the seminary, sex education...

Mrs. G.: What was the newsletter saying about sex education?

Fr. W.: We opposed the bishops' stand on sex education in the public schools. It was the bishops of New Jersey who promoted mandatory sex education in the public schools...

Mrs. G.: Wait a minute, Father. The Catholic bishops?

Fr. W.: Yes. They had paid lobbyists in the state legislature. Whenever a bill came in that would have restricted sex education in the



In a recent visit to Vatican City, Fr. Wickens told the Pope that the Church in America is in a severe decline and the faithful need a return to the Traditional Latin Mass.

public schools, the bishops of New Jersey would send in their lobbyists to fight it.

Mrs. G.: What would be their interest in promoting sex education in public schools?

Fr. W.: We have debated that over and over in our minds, and I've talked to a lot of good people about it, people like Fr. Vincent Miceli, Dr. William Marra, others. The only answer we can figure out is that the bishops, at least the leaders among them, such as Archbishop Gerety, had somehow lost the Catholic Faith. Nature doesn't like a void. Bishop Sheen points this out. If you lose the Faith, that space in your soul doesn't remain empty, something else comes rushing in, and what came in was Secular Humanism. And Secular Humanism, of course, pushes sex education, as well as any number of pro-Communist positions in the world today. That's why Archbishop Gerety supports the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, he's against help to the people who are trying to fight Communism, and so on; You'll find him supporting every pro-Communist position that's popu-

lar. This sex education position was more a political thing than anything else.

Mrs. G.: How do you know that the bishops' lobbyists were fighting for sex education?

Fr. W.: I confronted two of them on the floor of the New Jersey Assembly. I was there lobbying for a bill that would have stopped mandated sex education. Fighting for the other side were a group of feminists and the New Jersey Catholic Conference—that's made up of five diocesan bishops who paid lawyers to lobby on the floor of the Assembly to defeat the very bills that we were supporting! One of them, Ed Leadham, came screaming at me with a very red face, "You're dividing the Church!" I just said to him, "You've got it wrong; YOU are dividing the Church." Now these guys were appointed, delegated and salaried to do this by the bishops. The head of the State Board of Education announced to the media that the main reason we have sex education in New Jersey public schools is BECAUSE OF THE NEW JERSEY CATHOLIC BISHOPS WHO PUSHED FOR IT.

You see, prior to that, sex education was only optional for the individual school districts, but after that it was made mandatory for every school district in the state, from grades Kindergarten to 12. Two years later, Archbishop Gerety announced that sex education would begin in all the parochial schools!

Mrs. G.: When was that?

Fr. W.: That was in February of '83. We were able to get a copy of the mimeographed sheets that were to be given out at the teachers' workshops to orientate them on how to teach sex education, and in these sheets—which came out of the Diocese of Newark—they recommended certain pornographic material...

Mrs. G.: Such as?

Fr. W.: The Joy of Sex, by Alex Comfort, The Sensuous Woman, Planned Parenthood manuals, SIECUS material (which is Secular Humanist and pro-abortion)—this is for Catholic schools, remember—VD films, army films... there were a few decent books thrown in...

That's when we recommended that Catholic people boycott the collections; their children were about to be corrupted and it was the only way we could think of to stop it. Hit them in the pocketbook! We called a meeting with a couple of hundred people and held a press conference to get the word out.

Mrs. G.: What happened then?

Fr. W.: Well, the bishop figured, that's the last straw. He took off to the Virgin Islands for a two-week vacation (it was Lent, by the way) and sent me a letter transferring me to a faraway parish, effective within one week. I tried to appeal to him but I was told he

PRO-LIFE: A Different Victory for Motherhood

In June of 1980, one month after the birth of my second child, I decided I did not want any more children and I submitted to an operation for a tubal ligation. The following month I would be 21 years old. I had never taken much interest in religion and was not very well educated in my faith. And so, though I knew that taking the pill to avoid pregnancy was wrong, for some reason I thought that avoiding pregnancy by tubal ligation was all right. Therefore, it did not bother me at all to have it done.

Then, three years later, in 1983, I came back to the traditional Latin Mass. Through it, I started re-learning my religion and began to take a serious interest in it. I soon realized that *any kind* of artificial birth control is wrong. I knew that I had offended God in one of the worst ways that I could. I became extremely upset. Fortunately, this state of mind brought me to Confession, but although I knew I was forgiven, I still felt bad. I began to ask myself, should I correct the wrong I had done, since the operation can be reversed? I was very confused about this. I spoke to my mother and she advised against it. I talked to my priest and he told me that I was not under obligation. I settled for that for a while, during which time I had some peace about it.

Then one day, the question again came to my mind, should I correct the wrong

I've done? And again, the confusion returned. I decided to pray and ask God what He wanted me to do. On and off for a long time I prayed about it, alternating between thinking about it a lot to not thinking about it at all. I actually *tried* not to think about it, but it was no use, the thought would come back, and every time it did, so did the uncertainty about what to do.

One Sunday, after my family and I had arrived early at church, we noticed that a new priest was filling in for our regular priest who was in the hospital. We all went in to say hello and when we introduced ourselves, he looked at my children and then at me and asked, "Is there another one on the way?" I answered, simply, "No". Immediately, the confusion about the operation returned.

After Mass, I went to Confession and, since I had mentioned something about my children, the priest asked me if I was planning on having more children. I told him about the tubal ligation I had undergone and the terrible confusion I was in about it. As I explained the situation to him and listened to his remarks, I began to feel more and more strongly that I should have the reversal operation. The priest had not said that I must do it, but as I spoke to him and he to me, I sensed that Our Lord, using this priest as His instrument, was speaking to me, letting me know what I must do. I left the Con-

fessional touched in a very real way by God. I felt such a closeness and was filled with such joy and peace that I cried. I've never before had an experience like that! I left the church with total peace of mind knowing for sure—I can't explain why—that God wanted me to reverse my sterile condition.

When I did have the operation, soon after, it was with total peace of mind.

Eight weeks later, I learned that I was pregnant. Normally, after an operation like that, it takes a good six months to conceive. I was thrilled and still am. With this baby, I plan to deliver by natural childbirth. With my last two children, I had not wanted to feel the pain, so I had asked for a spinal.

I am so happy to be able to please God by doing things His way that I want to go through what was meant for me. What is a little suffering for Our Lord? Look at all He went through for us! Nothing in this world can make us happier than when we are doing God's will. It gives you courage against those who criticize your decision to do what is right. I try to keep remembering that God commanded "Be fruitful and multiply", and I know that He will not send me more than I can handle. I have never known such a joy as that which comes of doing only what God wants!

Fr. Wickens Interview, Cont.

couldn't be reached. Everyone knew that he was doing this, not for the good of the Church, but to punish me for telling the truth and exposing the harm that was being done. It was an obvious abuse of power.

Mrs. G.: **So you were accepting the transfer?**

Fr. W.: Well, I took a promise of obedience—not a *vow* but a promise—so I felt, you're transferring me? Okay, I won't say no, but just give me some time, give me at least 30 days. But I couldn't reach the bishop because he was in the Virgin Islands for two weeks and the transfer was to be in one week. I called the Auxiliary Bishop and asked for an extension of time. He said, no way, you're being punished. So then I knew.

I immediately wrote a letter of appeal to Rome and consulted with a canon lawyer. He said that while I was under appeal I shouldn't move, that I was entitled by church law to maintain my residence while the appeal is pending. Two weeks later, the bishop came back and said, I don't recognize your appeal; if you're not out in one week, you'll be suspended. Frankly, on leaving the

chancery that day, I was exhilarated because I felt that the bishop—may God have mercy on him—has so far left the Faith that to be suspended by him would be a badge of honor.

Mrs. G.: **So you don't recognize the suspension?**

Fr. W.: No, because it isn't valid. In order to be valid there have to be specific and sufficient grounds and they have to be verified, there are certain procedures the bishop must follow, there must be a hearing to which I can bring witnesses and legal representation—I never had that. He just took the law into his own hands, but no man is above the law, and no bishop is above church law. The "suspension" was a cover-up on the bishop's part so that the heresy of Modernism would not be opposed in his diocese. As I said in the beginning, Archbishop Gerety is a Modernist. Obedience to authority is never unconditional. Even for a child who, by the Fourth Commandment of God, must obey his mother and father, even that obedience is not unconditional, so that if the father or mother tells the

child to steal, the child must refuse to obey. One must understand that there are definite parameters to any lawful authority. Even St. Thomas Aquinas said that in order for obedience to be binding, from human authority, a command must be in conformity with right reason. So, of course, this suspension is not valid, and anyway, it is still under consideration in Rome.

Mrs. G.: **Father, let's go back now to the bishop's announcement that sex education was going into all the parochial schools. I have a copy of the Summer 1983 issue of The New Jersey Catholic News, your newsletter, and I think every reader should send for this issue. (Address listed below) Then they would better understand why you've been fighting sex education so strenuously, even to the point of opposing your own bishop. . . .**

Fr. W.: Sex education in the classroom is always bad, always. It may be high-sounding on the surface, but with it you're opening the

door to harmful curiosity and experimentation. In any given classroom, you have all different levels of physical, emotional and spiritual development. Some children just aren't ready, they're naive and innocent; they may have been quite sheltered at home and what you're doing by talking about sex openly in the classroom is you're going right in and in ten minutes destroying all the good work, the protection of modesty that the parents have carefully constructed around that child for years. The only sex education that a child should receive at school is education in chastity and morality. Anything more must be done on a one-to-one basis.

Mrs. G.: **By whom?**

Fr. W.: The parents, of course. I realize that many parents are reluctant to give their children the facts of life, no question about it. That's why we've had classes in our parish to help parents to know what to say and how to approach the subject. Always, the principle is that you don't have to tell the child much. Just answer his questions simply and bring God into the picture, and the example of Blessed Mother and the saints, the need for Holy Communion, the Sacrament of Penance, the need to avoid the occasions of sin, the beauty of a soul that's unsullied and unstained—but very little biological detail is really needed.

Mrs. G.: **Judging from the excerpts mentioned in your Summer '83 newsletter, that is from the sex education textbooks being used, I would say the textbooks themselves are an occasion of sin!**

Fr. W.: Definitely. That's what I mean. And there's no clear, concrete moral guideline in any of the programs. They're strictly modernistic. Why don't the bishops try to take Playboy off the stands? Why haven't they tried to stop these "R" and "X"-rated movies? Why don't they preach modesty and chastity in the churches, and mortal sin and hell? No! All of a sudden, they're taking his moral pose and saying that they're trying to help the children's morality by giving them sex education. It's a big lie, and they tell it so often that after a while the people begin to believe it.

Mrs. G.: **What happened next in the sequence of events between you and Archbishop Gerety?**

Fr. W.: He came back from vacation and soon he released to the press that he was suspending me, which was a blessing because the press was then very interested and we got quite a lot of media coverage.

Mrs. G.: **At the time of your clash with the bishop, had you been using the Novus Ordo liturgy?**

Fr. W.: Yes. But I didn't allow any communion-in-the-hand, I didn't allow standing for communion. . . .

Mrs. G.: **Why not?**

Fr. W.: Because I felt it was disrespectful to Our Lord and I had taken a vow to always have respect for the Holy Eucharist. It was a matter of conscience. The bishop never criticized me for that—he wouldn't dare!—because he kept saying, follow your conscience. And I was following my conscience.

Mrs. G.: **At what point did you start saying the traditional Latin Mass, and why?**

Fr. W.: The day I was "suspended", the bishop said, you can't say Mass on my property anymore. So I said Mass privately every day and, right away, I began saying the traditional Latin Mass. I had been, little by little, *wanting* to say it, *wanting* to return to it, so it was a real blessing that the bishop provided me with the opportunity. I said it privately at first and then I began to say it publicly for a congregation in a very nice hall, in a men's club. The more I knew about what had really happened at the Second Vatican Council, about the origin of the New Mass, the more I read Archbishop Lefebvre, Michael Davies, I started to realize that the New Mass was not the will of God.

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Seminarians Tour U.S. History

It all started one day in Sacred Scripture class when we came across the verse "And Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man". Fr. Williamson, the professor, while explaining "charged" means here commanded, went off the subject for a moment and asked if we knew about the most famous charge in our American history, Pickett's Charge. About all I would have ventured to say was that it was in a war before World War I, and I don't know if the others knew much more, for only one person in the entire class raised his hand. It didn't bother me that the Rector knew more about our history than we did, but that an Englishman knew more about it! He announced then for the first time that he was going to arrange a trip to Virginia for us to learn more about U.S. History, since we seemed to lack sufficient knowledge to carry on an intelligent conversation in that subject. It wasn't just Pickett's Charge that led him to that conclusion, but also I remember a similar incident occurred when he asked us about General Douglas MacArthur's tactics in Korea, ignorance of which was far more forgivable. However, since a trip to Virginia was easier than a trip to the South Pacific, and since Virginia has much more to offer in American History, it was decided that we would go there by bus and van during the semester break of February 3-7.

The first historic site we stopped at was Ft. McHenry in Baltimore. I was not expecting much, but I was in for a nice surprise. We were to quickly find out how well kept our historic sites are, not only here, but at all the places we would stop. We did not have much time, as the park was soon closing, but we saw a film on the British bombardment of the fort in 1814, after which was played the singing of our national anthem, while the Stars and Stripes were raised over the fort once again.

We were well taken care of upon our arrival at St. Athanasius' chapel in Vienna, Virginia. Fr. Ronald Ringrose had organized the arrangements, and many good parishioners fed us and gave us a place to sleep in their homes. It worked out well, and we are very grateful for the kindness they showed us. Because of these arrangements, we were able to have Mass each morning and

breakfast at the chapel before touring our history.

To write about each site is not necessary, it suffices to say that we visited (besides Ft. McHenry) Mt. Vernon, Washington D.C., the Civil War battle-sites of Wilderness, Chancellorsville, Spotsylvania and on our last day Gettysburg, after which we stopped at Mother Seton's shrine in Emmitsburg and a shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes nearby.

The history of the U.S. Civil War was the primary lesson we were to be taught during this trip. At Gettysburg we watched a movie on the battle and a well-done electric light presentation, and we saw some of their many exhibits before being given an admirable two and a half-hour guided tour of the battlefield. We learned much here about General Pickett leading a gallant charge of 15,000 Confederate soldiers in a line a mile and a half long, a charge that was to end in terrible defeat, and that would decide the battle of Gettysburg. Here and at the other Civil War sites visited, we heard again and again stories of tremendous courage, duty and honor that made us proud to be compatriots of the same nation that produced such brave men. Whether North or South, East or West, we can judge it as a great honor that



Torn by shells from cannons positioned as above, General Pickett charged with 15,000 men across this same field 123 years ago at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.



Seminarians stand peacefully by a monument marking the spot of one of the bloodiest Civil War tussles, at Spotsylvania battlefield, Virginia.

Americans fought and died so valiantly for a cause they deemed right.

I for one learned a lot about the men who fought the Civil War and about the battles fought. At least that part of our history is no longer as blurry in my mind as before.

Ending the trip at the shrines of St. Elizabeth Seton and of Our Lady of Lourdes was fitting. It brought home again to us all that battles with rifles, cannons and swords are really insignificant when matched up with the war that each Christian fights on earth. For Job says, "The life of man upon earth is a warfare." And this warfare is not with men but "against principalities and powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places". And our gain is not an earthly or temporal gain, but an eternal crown that the just judge will render to us if only we fight the good fight and keep the faith. These men considered it the greatest glory to lose an arm or a leg, nay even their life in defense of their country (truly a noble cause). They nevertheless labored for a corruptible crown, but we for an incorruptible one, a crown of never fading glory. So then let us fight that we may obtain the prize.

—Rev. Mr. Daniel Cooper

Interview with Fr. Wickens, Continued.

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Mrs. G.: **Didn't the very name of Archbishop Lefebvre and the Society of St. Pius X have a bad connotation for you?**

Fr. W.: Yeah, sure.

Mrs. G.: **Then why did you read what they were publishing?**

Fr. W.: At first I didn't. Archbishop Lefebvre started the Society back in 1970 and the little that I'd heard about him was always that he was a schismatic. Unfortunately, we're often slow to look into things on our own, plus I really didn't have the time. I was busy working in the hospital, running Bingo, basketball teams, instructing converts. The Catholic papers kept calling him "the rebel Archbishop", so I figured he's a rebel. Then, through the newsletter, we got to know a lot of good people around the country who were fighting sex education, and a great many of them were either sympathetic to Archbishop Lefebvre or were going to the Masses conducted by his priests. Well, human nature is such that one person does influence another. . . .

It started to dawn on me that a very small handful of Modernists had actually conned the others at the Second Vatican Council. Eventually, it was a small elite that pushed the New Mass through. The people didn't want a new Mass, the priests didn't want it, just this persistent handful, and most of us were like sheep led to the slaughter, following out of obedience, out of a deep respect for the clergy.

Mrs. G.: **Weren't you ultimately evicted from the parish rectory?**

Fr. W.: Yes, I was. The bishop started eviction proceedings when I started saying the traditional Latin Mass. I was able to get a

wonderful lawyer, Bernard Kuttner, a man of the Jewish faith. He heard about my case and out of a spirit of altruism, offered to take my case pro bono. I would personally like to commend him for his God-like attitude and his reflection of Judeo-Christian ideals. The bishop brought all his heavyweights into court, well-paid diocesan lawyers, and though my lawyer was initially successful, predictably it was finally ruled that I had to leave by October 7, Feast of the Holy Rosary! I left the rectory with as much ceremony as possible and moved to the YMCA, a place for homeless men. It made for good publicity. . . .

Mrs. G.: **Father! you were "playing to the audience" . . .**

Fr. W.: (laughing) I was, I was! See what they make us do!

Mrs. G.: **Well, the whole thing is certainly ludicrous—a Catholic priest gets punished for Catholic behavior . . . Are you still living in the YMCA?**

Fr. W.: No. I live with my sister in Cranford, but I opened an office in Orange. There I do my writing, keep appointments, do counselling, and so on. The bishop had cut off my salary two years before, but good will offerings of the faithful have kept me going and so far I've been able to pay the rent, my phone, car expenses, etc. I just trust in the good Lord.

Mrs. G.: **You stated in one of your publications, that "Catholic people will always take care of their orthodox priests."**

Fr. W.: Yes, and they do. It may be only at the level of Bethlehem or Nazareth, but it will always be enough to get by. If worse came to worse, any one of several families would gladly take me in and give me room and board.

Mrs. G.: **Have you had contact with other priests who say the old Mass?**

Fr. W.: Oh yes. I've been doing some traveling around to visit them and they are always supportive, friendly and hospitable. Traditional priests love other priests and especially traditional ones. There are many, many of them—we estimate around 200 of them in

the United States alone.

Mrs. G.: **Do you think it's a growing number?**

Fr. W.: In my opinion, yes. People are getting wise to Modernism. At first they were just kind of . . . well . . . the bishop would say "Jump" and they would say "How high?" Now, they're saying, wait a minute, is my bishop in union with Rome? does he go along with the Magisterium? and they're finding out that many of our bishops are not; in fact, they are destroying the Faith and people see it mostly in their children. Those who still have the Faith are beginning to realize that staying with the Novus Ordo is almost like taking poison gradually. Bit by bit, it works on you; even where the New Mass is still valid, there are so many Protestant things added to it that it gradually erodes your Catholic Faith.

Mrs. G.: **In a statement to the press published on October 11, 1984, you said: "I am supposed to obey my bishop PROVIDED he is in union with the Pope . . ." Now, the Pope says the New Mass and you say the old Mass; how are you in communion with him if you do not use the same liturgy?**

Fr. W.: The Pope does not mandate that we put aside the old Mass. If the Pope wanted only the New Mass said, he would mandate it, but he hasn't. In the last 400 years, there have been only two canonized popes: one of them condemned Modernism—Pope Pius X; and one codified the traditional Mass "IN PERPETUITY"—Pope Pius V. In the Papal Bull, Quo Primum, Pius V says that every priest is entitled to say this Mass and that this (entitlement) cannot be done

away with. So here you have two pope saints and both of them have to do with this present struggle in the Church. Now, the present

Pope—and I don't mean this disrespectfully—the present Pope is, I think, unwise to continue saying the Novus Ordo. I believe he's been very misinformed about it, he's surrounded by cardinals and bishops who want it and who feed him a line that it's going very well, that the people needed a kind of revival of Catholicism, and so on. Remember, he too, like any busy administrator, has to rely on his committees (the Sacred Congregations) and too, don't forget, he stepped into this role as Pope and the Novus Ordo was already in. But I believe our Holy Father is beginning to wake up and he's starting to realize that the Novus Ordo was a big mistake, that the church is collapsing all over the place. I'll give you an example, Catholic Canada, before the Second Vatican Council, had 95% of the people going to Mass, and now it's something like 25%. French Canada is a dying race! with only 1.7 children per family where it used to be 5, 6 and 7. In 1969, after Humanae Vitae came out, the Canadian bishops publicly disagreed with the church's position on birth control—it undermined the faith of millions.

Mrs. G.: **So many confused Catholics solve their dilemma over whether or not to attend the traditional Latin Mass, by saying to themselves, I'm safe if I stick with the Pope.**

Fr. W.: But they must remember this, that the Pope, who is the Vicar of Christ on earth, ONLY has the guarantee of Infallibility when he speaks solemnly as head of the Church. Of course, he deserves our respect and obedience even beyond that, but the fact that the Pope says the Novus Ordo Mass doesn't mean that we are bound to follow that particular exam-

ple when it so plainly tends to weaken our Catholic Faith. The Pope is human and in need of our prayers. It's the traditional Cath-



Fr. Wickens has always been a hardworking parish priest, visiting hospitals, coaching sports, and fighting Modernism!

olics who are the ones promoting respect for him—we always remember to pray for our Holy Father, that the Holy Ghost will guide him and we will continue to do that. With our persevering prayers and through the prayers of the Holy Father himself, little by little, he will come around, I feel sure of that.

Mrs. G.: **Do you see a light at the end of the tunnel?**

Fr. W.: There's plenty of reason to hope, yes; not crazy, wild hope, but a cautious hope. Grace works slowly and the wheels of the Church turn slowly. I think our Holy Father is starting to realize that those around him have been giving him false information

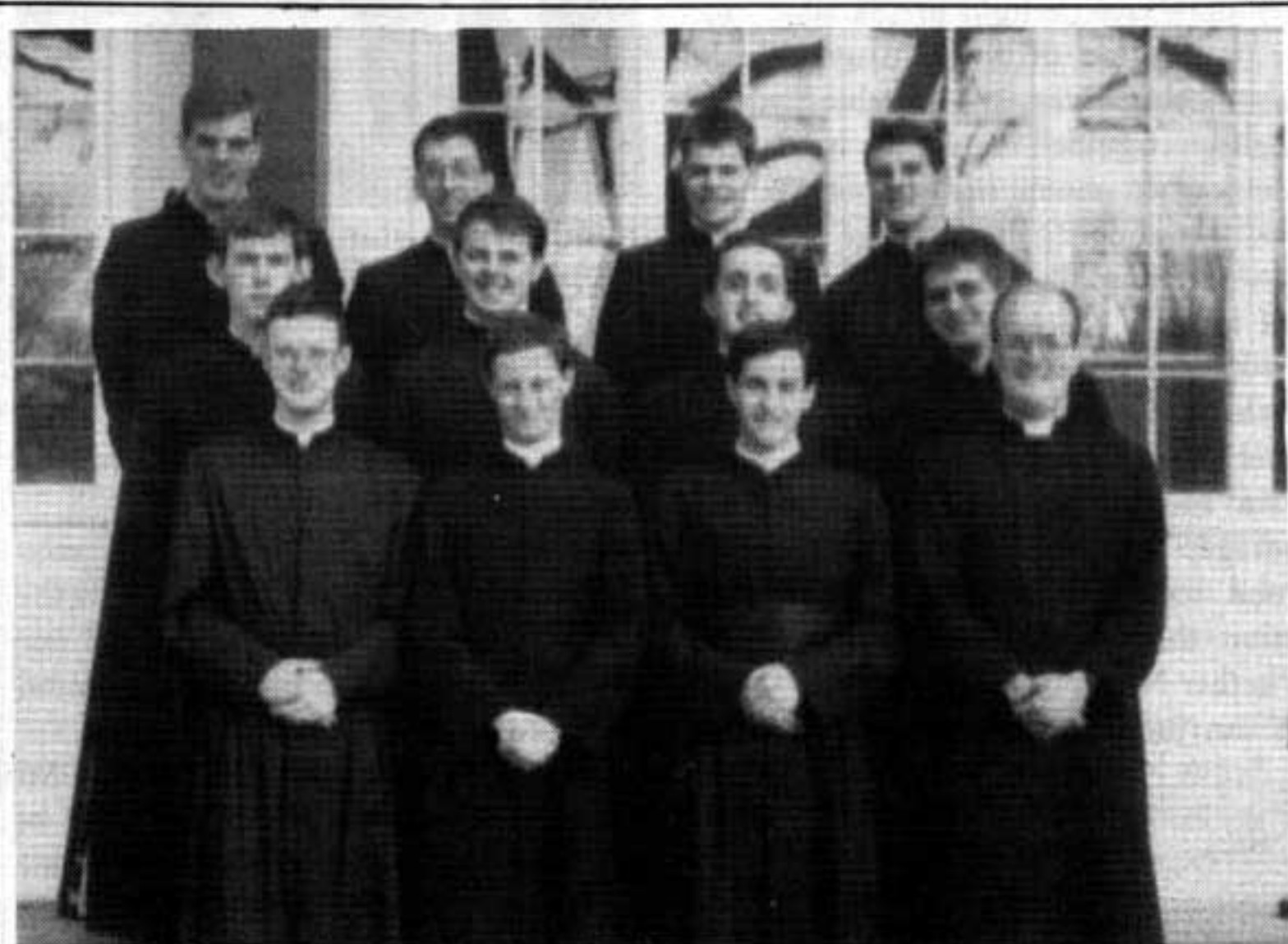
and bad advice. We're trying to get him to re-examine the situation, to look at it objectively and we're praying for him to do that. But we are certainly not obliged to say the New Mass just because he says it himself. If someone we love does something, we don't necessarily have to do it too, just because he does it—it's not a sign of disrespect—if your Dad likes vanilla, you don't have to eat vanilla to show respect for him, it's okay for you to eat chocolate. That's not a perfect analogy, but I think it makes the point. The main thing to remember is that the Pope does not forbid the traditional Latin Mass.

Mrs. G.: **Thank you very much for your time, Father Wickens. In conclusion, do you have any parting words for any priest out there who might also have a yen to return to Tradition but fears the repercussions?**

Fr. W.: No matter what sacrifices we have to make, we must support the teachings of Christ. We took a vow to do that. We have to "hold fast" as Our Lord said, we have to cling to what the Magisterium has always taught. Don't worry about being taken care of. Our Lord said, look at the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, they don't labor yet they are splendidly taken care of by God, and God will take care of us too, oh ye of little faith. Even about Himself, He said the foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. So Our Lord was homeless, deliberately homeless, to give us priests an example. He also told the apostles to go out and don't even carry a purse, don't worry about bringing extra shoes or a staff—God will provide it all for you. . . . And He does. . . . And He has for me.

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On February 2, 1986, 12 new seminarians received the cassock. They are (L-R) Front Row: James McGregor, Shane Johnson, Kevin Robinson, all from Sydney, Australia, and Edward MacDonald of Rochester, Michigan. Second Row: Joseph Buehler, Boise, Idaho; Thomas Hughes, Stavanger, Norway; Luis Infante, Gijon, Spain; Karl Pikus, St. Cloud, Minnesota. Third Row: James P. Dolan, Redding, California; Timothy McDonnell, Manitowoc, Wisconsin; Jason Huvar, Victoria, Texas; and Daniel Fullerton of Potsdam, New York.

7TH ANNUAL SUMMERCAMP

THE SEMINARIANS ARE AGAIN CONDUCTING A TWO WEEK SUMMERCAMP IN MUNSONVILLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE. THE CAMP RUNS FROM JUNE 28—JULY 12 AND IS FOR BOYS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 9 AND 15 INCLUSIVE. BESIDES ALL THE TEAM SPORTS, CAMPOUTS, AND SWIMMING AT THIS BEAUTIFUL LAKE-FRONT CAMPSITE, THE BOYS WILL RECEIVE THE BONUS OF DAILY MASS, ROSARY AND CATECHISM, ALL OF WHICH WILL INSURE HIS HEALTH OF SOUL AS WELL AS BODY. THE FEE FOR THE ENTIRE TWO WEEK CAMP IS \$130, OR ACCORDING TO ONE'S MEANS. FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION AND APPLICATIONS, PLEASE WRITE TO REV. MR. DANIEL COOPER AT THE SEMINARY'S ADDRESS.