

LETTER TO FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS, #74
Spring 2009

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Ave Maria!

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

When we launched a new Rosary crusade during our pilgrimage to Lourdes last October, we were certainly not expecting such a quick answer from Heaven to our petition! Indeed, as happened with our first petition, which our good Mother in heaven answered so effectively through the intermediary of the Vicar of Christ and his *motu proprio* on the traditional Mass, the Blessed Virgin was pleased to grant us a second grace even quicker: during the same visit to Rome in the month of January when I presented the bouquet of 1,703,000 rosaries for the Sovereign Pontiff's intentions, I received from the hands of Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos the decree remitting the "excommunications."

We had asked for that back in 2001 as a sign of the Vatican's good will towards the traditional movement. For ever since the Council anything that is or aspires to be traditional in the holy Church has been subjected to continual bullying and even exclusion. This treatment has obviously partially, and even totally, destroyed our confidence in the Roman authorities. So long as this trust is not partially re-established, I said then, our relations will be minimal. Trust is not only a good sentiment, it is the fruit that results naturally when we recognize in these authorities pastors who have the good of what we call Tradition at heart. And our preliminary requests were formulated with this in mind. In point of fact, our position and our attitude toward the Holy See cannot be understood unless the perception of the state of crisis in which the Church finds itself is taken into account. It is not a question of a superficial event or a personal outlook. It is a question of a reality that exists independently of our perception, is acknowledged from time to time by these same authorities, and is verified time and time again by the events. This crisis displays complex and changeable aspects, which are at times profound and sometimes circumstantial, nonetheless we all suffer from it.

The faithful are especially afflicted by the ceremonies of the new liturgy—alas! quite often scandalous—, by ordinary preaching which takes moral stances in complete opposition with the Church's centuries-old teaching and the example of the saints. Parents have very often had the profound sorrow to see their children lose the faith after having been confided to institutions of Catholic education, or to deplore their nearly total ignorance of Catholic doctrine for want of serious catechetical instruction. An incalculable number of religious have shown a loss of the evangelical spirit, especially that of renunciation, poverty, and sacrifice, after the revision of their constitutions and their post-conciliar re-education, which had as an almost immediate consequence such a drop in vocations that several orders and congregations have been closing their convents one after another when they have not simply disappeared altogether. The situation of many dioceses is equally dramatic.

All of this forms a coherent whole and has not happened by chance, but came in the wake of a council which meant to reform and bring the Church up to date. We are accused either of seeing a crisis where none exists or of falsely attributing to the Council the undeniably disastrous and extremely serious results everyone can see, or else of taking advantage of the situation to justify a wrong attitude of rebellion or independence.

Yet whether we take the writings of the Fathers of the Church, or of the Magisterium, or the liturgy, or theology through the ages, we find a unity to which we adhere with our whole heart. And this doctrinal unity is flagrantly contradicted, offended, and lessened in practice by current lines of conduct. We did not invent a rupture; it unfortunately exists, and one has only to see how some episcopates treat us even after the withdrawal of the excommunications to ascertain how deeply the moderns reject everything that savors of Tradition, to such a degree that it is impossible not to call this rejection a rupture with the past.

Truly, we were as surprised by the violence of the reaction of the progressivists and of the Left in general toward us as we were by the publication of the decree of January 21. It is true that they found a golden opportunity in the unfortunate words of Bishop Williamson, which enabled them by an unjust amalgamation to ill-use our Society, considered as a scapegoat. In fact, we were instrumentalized in a much more important battle: that of the Church, which rightly bears the name militant, against the wicked spirits in the high places, as St. Paul says. And, we do not hesitate to inscribe our own short history into the great history of the Church, the history of this titanic wrestling for the salvation of souls announced in Genesis and described so strikingly in St. John's Apocalypse. This contest often remains on the spiritual plane, but from time to time it descends from the level of spirits and souls to the corporeal plane and becomes visible, as in times of open persecutions.

In what has happened over the last few months, we must discern a more intense period in this battle. It is quite clear that the one who is ultimately being targeted is the Vicar of Christ in his effort to begin a certain restoration in the Church. People fear to see the head of the Church drawing nearer our movement; they are afraid of losing what was gained by Vatican II, and they are doing their best to neutralize this. What does the pope really think? Where does he stand? The Jews and the progressivists demand of him to choose between Vatican II and us..., so much so that to reassure them the Secretariat of State found nothing better than to set as a necessary condition of our canonical existence that we fully accept what we consider the principal source of the current problems and to which we have always been opposed... Nevertheless, they, like us, are bound by the anti-modernist oath and all of the Church's condemnations. And so we do not agree to discuss Vatican II except in light of these solemn declarations (profession of faith, the anti-modernist oath) made before God and the Church. And if they seem incompatible, then obviously the novelties are wrong. We are relying upon the announced doctrinal discussions to bring about as much light as possible about these issues.

Taking advantage of the new situation after the decree on the excommunication, which did not change the Society's canonical status, many bishops have tried to make us square the circle by requiring us to obey Canon Law to the letter in every particular as if our situation were perfectly in order, while at the same time they were denying our canonical existence. A German bishop has already announced that before the end of the year the Society would once again be outside the Church... What a rosy future to look forward to! The only viable solution, which is also what we had asked for, is an intermediary situation, which is perforce incomplete and canonically imperfect, but would be accepted as such without our being constantly accused of disobedience or rebellion, without our being subjected to untenable prohibitions. For, all things considered, the abnormal state of the Church, which we call a state of necessity, is proven yet again by the attitude and speech of certain bishops with respect to the pope and Tradition.

How things will unfold, we have not the least idea. We maintain our proposal to accept our present imperfect situation as temporary while beginning at last the announced doctrinal discussions in the hope that they will bear good fruit.

But on this difficult path, and confronted with such violent opposition, we ask you, dear faithful, once again to have recourse to prayer. It seems to us that the time has come to launch a broad offensive, deeply anchored in the message of Our Lady of Fatima, to which she promised a happy outcome since she announced that in the end her Immaculate Heart will triumph. We ask her for this triumph by the means she herself requested: the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart by the Supreme Pastor and all the bishops of the Catholic world, and the propagation of the devotion to her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart. That is why, to this end, we desire to offer her between now and March 25, 2010, a bouquet of 12 million [five-decade] rosaries as a crown of as many stars round her person, accompanied by an equivalently important number of daily sacrifices, which we will take good care to look for first of all in the faithful accomplishment of our duty of state, and with the promise to propagate devotion to her Immaculate Heart. She herself presented this as the purpose of her apparitions at Fatima. We are deeply convinced that if we carefully carry out what she asks of us, we shall obtain very much more than all we could ever dare to hope, and especially that our salvation shall be ensured if we profit from the graces she has promised us.

Consequently, we also ask from our priests a particular effort to facilitate this devotion for the faithful by emphasizing not only the Communion of reparation on the first Saturdays of the month, but by encouraging the faithful to live in close intimacy with our Lady through the consecration to her Immaculate Heart. It would also be good to make better known and to delve into the spirituality of the great herald of the Immaculata, Fr. Maximilian Kolbe.

Our Society was consecrated to the Immaculate Heart twenty-five years ago. We wish to renew this happy initiative of Fr. Schmidberger by putting into it all our soul and fostering this spirit in our hearts. It stands to reason that we have no intention of commanding Divine Providence what to do, but we have learned from the examples of saints and Holy Scripture itself that great desires can hasten quite strikingly the designs of the good Lord. Thus we make bold to lay this intention before the Immaculate Heart of Mary, asking her to take you all under her maternal protection. May God bless you abundantly!

On the Feast of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ,

+ Bernard Fellay
Winona, Easter 2009