

People may well come to us who have got...

After the lifting of the excommunication we can expect to see new faces looking into our churches; there will be the curious, there will be the honestly confused, there will be the timid, those who had suspected that tradition was right but feared the censures. How are we to receive these people? There can be only one answer: it must be with charity. And what is charity? Father James Peek in his sermon on January 25 gives us a guideline.

Sermon Delivered by Rev. Fr. James Peek on January 25, 2009

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

Today we are celebrating the Mass of the Conversion of St. Paul. It is the year of St. Paul from his feast day of June 2008 till his feast day in June of this year. But rather than speak about St. Paul you will understand that an event has supervened; has come in and caught our attention in the course of the past few days. I am speaking of course about an action of Benedict XVI which we might also call an action of the Blessed Virgin, for it is already an answer to the crusade of prayers – of rosaries – [offered] only the last couple of months [so] that the excommunication of our bishops be indeed lifted. And concerning this, I'd like to just insist upon one thought that we heard Bishop Fellay express when he said that "this gesture would benefit the whole Church." It is a mercy for the whole Church; it is a grace for the whole Church. Yes, not so much for us whom we might call 'dyed in the wool' traditionalists. Not so much for us who understand quite simply that the Faith cannot change, what was true is true because it is the word of a God who is essentially immutable. The practices of that faith whether it be in morals, the observance of the commandments, or the means of sanctification, the old mass and the sacraments (are immutable). They were holy and they are holy because they come from a God All Holy. They do not change. And we have known and do know that the bishops in general and the Bishop of Rome in particular have power from Our Lord Jesus Christ to build

up His Church; they do not have power to destroy it. This is the language of St. Paul concerning his own apostolic power, "We can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth". And again a little later he calls his power "one which the Lord hath given me unto edification and not unto destruction." As for apostolic power, so for the Petrine. He is the Vicar of Jesus Christ: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." His power is there to edify, to build up the Church of Jesus Christ, and we have based our resistance to modern Rome on Catholic Tradition: the Faith, the morals, the practice of the Faith as it always was. Men of the Church may decree against that but they cannot by their decrees make what is right wrong; nor what is wrong, right. So many novelties we have seen. What was not renewed? And in being renewed what was not deformed? What was not denied? This cannot be. "Though we or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema," says St. Paul himself.

"That is why," said Archbishop Lefebvre already in his declaration of 1974, "that is why we hold firmly to all that has been believed and practiced in the Faith: morals, liturgy, teaching of the catechism, formation of the priest, and institution of the Church by the Church of all time, to all these things as codified in those books which saw day before the modernist influence of the Council. This we shall do until such time as the true light of tradition dissipates the darkness obscuring the sky of Eternal Rome. By doing this with the grace of God and the help of the Blessed

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Virgin Mary, and that of St. Joseph and St. Pius X, we are assured of remaining faithful to the Roman Catholic Church and to all the successors of Peter and of being the faithful dispensers of the Mysteries of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

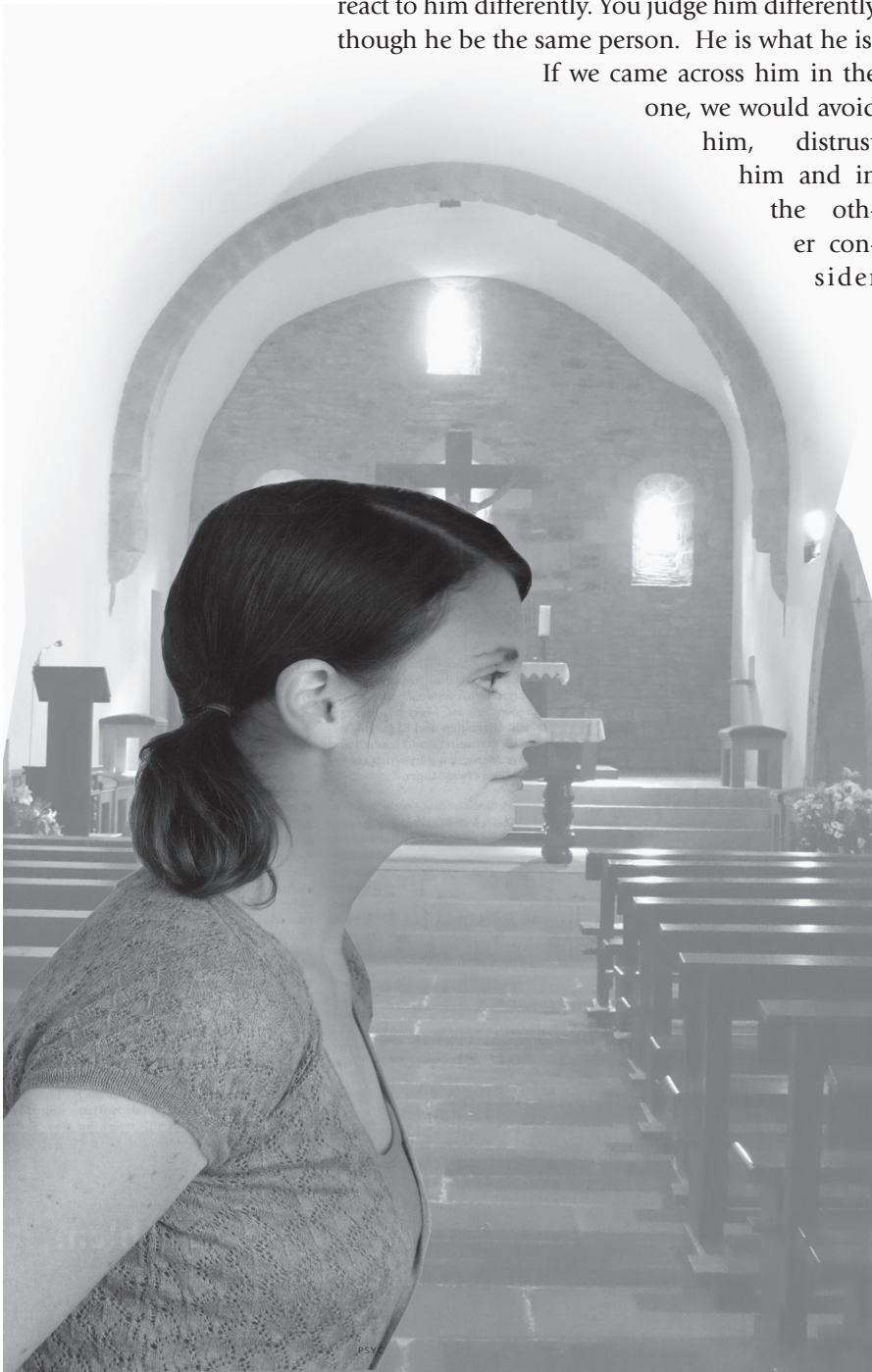
This decree is not so much for us, who have known all of that. But, as St. Paul points out, "There is not knowledge in everyone". So many have been blinded by appearances, and that is quite understandable. For example, if you come across a man wearing prison garb or you come across the same person in his Sunday best, you react to him differently. You judge him differently though he be the same person. He is what he is.

If we came across him in the one, we would avoid him, distrust him and in the other consider

him respectable and honest, whereas we are what we are before Almighty God; nothing more, nothing less. These decrees clothe realities. You may take a modern pope and clothe him with a beatification; you may take a very holy bishop, Marcel Lefebvre, and clothe him with an excommunication. It does not change them in themselves; they are what they are before Almighty God. But they certainly do change them in their appearance before men and our reaction to them is in function thereof. We are what we are before Almighty God of whom it is said by St. Paul, "All things are naked and open to His eyes."

But we go by appearances. So many could not see beyond officiality; "It came from Rome, period." And who can blame them? That is at bottom a Catholic reaction. And so they did not look there where true holiness and truth were to be found. It had been declared unlawful, it had been declared not Catholic, excommunicated. For them, more than for us, this is a grace, this is a mercy. By lifting the excommunications, now all of these souls have an obstacle removed, revealing to them now the right path to Truth, to holiness, to grace, to heaven, to God. They were blinded from looking down this way. It's true that we still have a long, long way to go till all in the Church believe with the Faith of their fathers; till all aspire to what is truly a Catholic life, one of holiness. It will not be attained until heaven; but we still have a long, long way to go even on earth. [Nevertheless,] that is the goal that people are heading towards, and now at least they can start heading in the right direction.

In practice, we can expect to see new faces looking into our churches; there will be the curious, there will be the honestly confused, there will be the timid, those who had suspected that tradition was right but feared the censures. How are we to receive these people? There can be only one answer: it must be with charity. And what is charity? That spirit of wanting to draw all to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to attract all to Our Lord Jesus Christ. To consider the soul across whose path one comes: what is his need? Just what can he receive? Of course, he needs much. If we have been long in tradition we may have forgotten, or not even known, just how needy they are, the souls out there: [they lack] the basics of the catechism, what distinguishes a Catholic life from an ordinary worldly life. We may be surprised at the ignorance, more or less culpable - perhaps not at all, perhaps very much.



They need much and the attitude of charity will be to give what can be received and in a manner that facilitates its reception. As St. Francis de Sales put it, "You will catch more flies," or it may have been bees – I forget, "with a teaspoon full of honey than a barrel full of vinegar." To adapt to the needs of the one in need. This was the attitude of St. Paul, "I gave you milk to drink, not meat; for you were not able as yet." "Whereas I was free, I made myself the servant of all that I may gain the more; to the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak; I became all things to all men that I might save all. I do all things for the Gospel's sake that I might be made a partaker thereof."

People may well come to us who have got horrendous ideas, amazing religious ignorance of fundamentals; manners in dress and speech that do not bespeak the Catholic. We are not to jump down their throats after the first "hello". Of Our Lord it was said, "The bruised reed He shall not break and smoking flax He shall not extinguish." Meaning that where there was a little bit of soundness; that Our Lord would build upon. We are to be encouraging and draw to Jesus Christ, not discouraging and chase away from Him. We are to be very patient too, for grace permeates souls slowly. God could do it otherwise; He did in the conversion of St. Paul: from a persecutor to an apostle – so to speak – in one day. But this is extraordinary, this is exceptional – why, that's why there's a feast in the Church about it! It is not the ordinary mode. We have to avoid bitter zeal. You're not going to attract with vinegar. "If you have bitter zeal," says St. James, "and there be contentions in your hearts; glory not. This is not wisdom descending from above - but earthly, sensual, devilish." The best causes can suffer from the way in which they are defended, and if we turn souls away from Jesus Christ, yes, we are doing the devil's work.

We are also to avoid heaping upon a newcomer more than he can take in. Not unknown are those chapels, I'm afraid I speak from experience, when there is a newcomer who turns up, he is jumped upon by those present - each with their own pet theory. The world of tradition is very rich. You get your "no pope" people; you get your "cherries and brandy" or "rosaries-turning-to-gold" people; you get your "water-baptism-only" people; you get your "natural remedy only" people; you get the "Jews-are-behind-it-all" people; and so on, and so forth. You know what traditionalists are like! This, too, is all very under-

standable. When the Head no longer gives a clear direction people look for enlightenment wither they will, wither they can, according to their own lights. Do not jump on the newcomer with all of these, what we might call "personal flavors" of tradition. They are usually presented with the zeal of a crusade, and the outcome? The newcomer is baffled; he is overwhelmed; he is turned off; he is turned away. Is this charity? What do they need? They need the very basics of a Catholic life.

When they come to one of our chapels they should be able to witness there, yes, respect for Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, a sense of the sacred, a spirit of true religion; they say, "Here, ah! People go to confession - and individually - and regularly." No it's these very basics they need. Do not cloud the issue with things that are secondary, personal, questionable; no matter how much you believe in them. For, the solidity of our stance comes from resting upon what is rock solid. And that is what they have to hear again or perhaps for maybe the first time. "We hold firmly to all that has been believed and practiced in the Faith: morals, liturgy, teaching of the catechism, formation of the priest, and institution of the Church by the Church of all time." These they have to receive; these may well be new to them and all they can take in. Should someone turn up wearing pants or no mantilla; you preach by example. Let's face it, it's better to leave admonitions to your priests. Let's face it. Father Faber points out, "The duty of fraternal correction is so difficult in practice that very rarely is it a duty at all." And if you cannot do it with kindness, do not do it at all. "Charity is patient; charity is kind." This lifting of the excommunication I say - or rather Bishop Fellay does - it's a grace for the whole Church. May what is a grace not be thwarted because of our attitude.

Let us turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She did and does all, so that her Son Jesus Christ be better known, be more loved. That's the Blessed Virgin Mary. May she grant us this same grace to have that spirit that Jesus be better known, be more loved. This is true charity; and true devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is another one of the very basics that perhaps Novus Ordo Catholics have lost and need to witness in our presence. Let us hold fast to what is sure, what is true, what is holy, what is Divine, what is Catholic.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.