

Priests for tomorrow

"Priests for tomorrow" is the text of a conference given by His Lordship Marcel Lefebvre at the Palais de la Mutualité at Paris on March 29, 1973. His Lordship was invited by the "Union des Intellectuels indépendants" and by the "Club de la Culture française".

Excerpts

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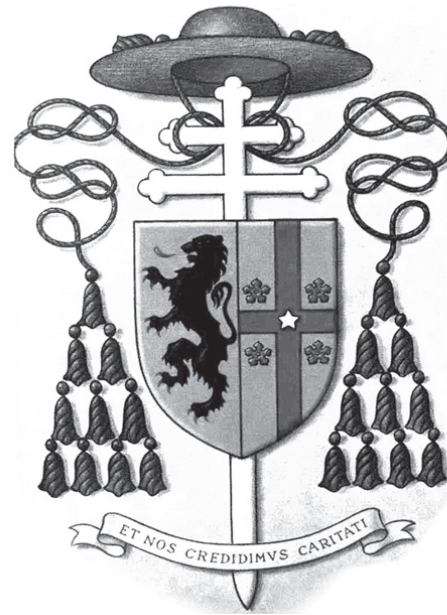
We therefore hope to form groups who will return to their countries, embark on apostolic work by agreement with the local bishops, and perhaps found houses of the Society in their different countries and thus restore a sound training to the young people anxious for it. They are to be found everywhere; it is wonderful! I assure you that you will be welcome at Econe if ever you come to Switzerland. Among those in our gathering here this evening there are several people who have been there already and who could bear witness to the right spirit in these young men, whatever their nationality. They are all admirably disposed to be good and true priests, to be apostles in their countries, not trouble-makers, not embittered, not commandos breathing strife. There is no question of setting up a seminary for commandos. It is a question of making priests who love their priesthood. And if you ask me the specific question: What is the general trend of the training you give them? I should like to answer you briefly, for I believe it very important to know what things a priest should know and what he should be to avoid falling into those errors which are all about us today, and which invade us from all sides.

We ask of our seminarians that they help the Church, that they love their Mother the Church. A priest exists for the Church, he is the Church's son, her beloved son. He must therefore love his

mother. But to love her he must know her. She must not be disfigured and distorted. Today the Catholic Church is being distorted! How is she being distorted? I will be brief (it is not my intention here to give you a long course of theology), but I think you have enough faith and enough knowledge of your faith to understand what I am about to say.

Unam, Sanctam

The Church is the only society founded by our Lord for our salvation. The Church is not a society merely useful for our salvation, but indispensable and necessary for our salvation. Without the Church we cannot be saved; we cannot reach heaven or attain eternal life save through the Church. You will say: "Then, Your Excellency, will no Protestant, no Moslem, no Buddhist, no Animist be saved?" I did not say that, but, do say, I affirm and reaffirm, since it is not I who speak, but the Church, which has always proclaimed and always believed it, that none, not even among the Moslems, not even among the Protestants, not even among the Animists, can be saved save through the grace of the Catholic Church, save through the grace of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is but one cross through which one may be saved, and this cross is given to the Catholic Church. It is not given to the others. This cross and this sacrifice of the cross are continued on our altars, and it is precisely this which is the heart of the Church, which is the



reason for the Church's very existence. All graces come to us through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Lord has but one mystic Bride, that is the holy Catholic Church. Without doubt souls are saved outside the Church visible, but you are well aware that there are three baptisms, the baptism of water, the baptism of blood and the baptism of desire.



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God knows all souls, and for that reason knows that in Protestant communions, in Moslem communions, in Buddhist communions, in all humanity, there are souls of good will. God knows the souls disposed to serve Him, disposed to do His holy will. By the very fact that they seek to do His holy will, they have the implicit baptism of desire-baptism, which is the means of joining the Church. These souls do not realize it, but they receive the grace of baptism through the Catholic Church; they cannot receive a grace outside the Catholic Church. One cannot be saved by Islam, by Buddhism or by Protestantism-one is not saved by error. There is no Buddhist Church in heaven, there is no Protestant Church in heaven, there is no Moslem Church in heaven; there is only one Church in heaven, the Catholic Church. God Himself founded it. These may seem hard sayings but they are the truth. It was not I who founded the Church, it was our Lord, it was the Son of God, it was He who created it. And we are obliged, we priests, to

tell the truth. One may be saved within Protestantism, within Buddhism, within any religion whatsoever, but one cannot be saved by that religion! The difference is enormous. One may be saved within these religions, not by these religions.

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Can you then see how important it is that seminarians should have a clear idea of what the Catholic Church is? The Catholic Church is the only ladder that reaches heaven. It is the only way. No name other than that of our Lord Jesus Christ can save us.

Sacrifice of the Mass

Another very important truth, capital for priests, is precisely what the sacrifice of the Mass is. Nothing is more important! One may not distort the sacrifice of the Mass without profoundly affecting the priesthood itself.

It is obviously clear that the liturgical reforms of our day tend – I say tend advisedly – to replace the idea and the reality of the sacrifice by the reality of a meal. Thus, one speaks of the celebration of the Eucharist, of the Eucharistic meal, of the Supper, but the term “sacrifice” is far less often used and is even disappearing from the wording of our catechisms, disappearing from the habitual language of preachers when mention is made of the sacrifice of the Mass. Now, this is a fundamental, capital, error. This is the Protestant error exactly. That is what the Protestants have done, and it is that which distinguishes them from Catholics. It was that which, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries made Catholics pass from Catholicism to Protestantism. They distorted the sacrifice of the Mass and made of it a meal, nothing but a meal. They immediately replaced the altar by a table, and made the president of the assembly turn to face the faithful. They did away with the crucifix – exactly what we, alas, are doing today, and it is serious, very serious, for the Mass is a sacrifice! If Protestants say it is blasphemy so to describe it, how do they explain it? Protestants say there is only one sacrifice, that of the cross, and it is through belief in the sacrifice of the cross that we draw into ourselves the merits of the cross, and that we cover our sins. Our sins are covered – for they do not believe in an inward renewal. No, they believe that the merits of our Lord “cover” our sins. The Catholic Church says no, no.

Source of all graces

True, the sacrifice of the Cross is the source of all graces, but this sacrifice of the cross continues on our altars, in reality, with the same priest and the same victim. It is the same sacrifice mystically realized through the separation of Body and Blood in the species of bread and wine, no longer in a bloody manner; but it is the same reality, exactly the same sacrifice carried out on the altar and performed specifically to apply the merits of the cross to the souls there present and to preserve this lasting and infinite source of grace, maintain it always and bring it down upon souls living in time and space! That is why the Church has always sought to increase the number of priests so that these sacrifices may multiply the graces of conversion while multiplying the graces of our own conversion. This is utterly different from the Protestant conception.

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Such is the great mystery of the Christian religion; all else is linked to that since there can be no true priesthood if there is no sacrifice.

Why does the priest receive a character distinguishing him from all others? It is because he has the power to bring down God Himself, the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, in the Holy Eucharist. Why must the priest remain celibate? Because he has power over God Himself. What other creature has power such as that? The priest himself can never conceive the sublimity, the greatness of his power. When one reflects that by the simple words of the Consecration he is able to make God obey his words! God obeys his words. He has promised that He will obey the priest's words! It is then meet, right, and just that the priest should be celibate, that the priest should be virgin as was the Virgin Mary also. It was needful that the Virgin Mary should be a virgin since she too had power over God; when she uttered her Fiat, God came down into her womb. Beings who have such a power over God should remain virgin.

Beauty of the priesthood

Such is the greatness of the priesthood. It is therein that all the beauty of the priesthood lies. All else is secondary, should I say, and follows by reason of this sacrifice of the Mass. This is likewise true of monks and nuns. It is not surprising that there are no more vocations of men and women to religious life. What is a religious man

The steps to the priesthood

The taking of the cassock:

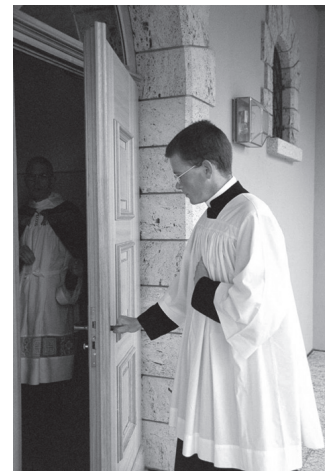
a young man, after prayer, reflection and counsel, decides to turn away from the things of the world. He clothes himself in a black cassock, a symbol of death to the world.



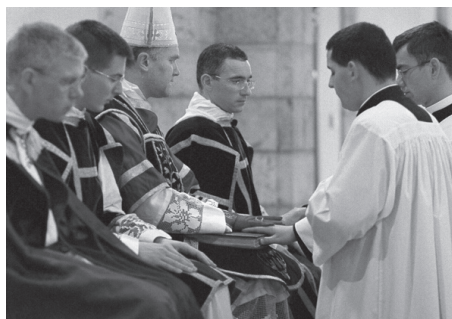
The tonsure:

The Church officially adopts the seminarian as its own child. The ceremony originates from an ancient Roman ceremony for the adoption of children. The hair is cut in the front, in the back, at the left and at the right of the head in the form of a cross.

The porter: The ostiary is the first of the four minor orders; it confers the duty to guard the house of God and all that is found therein. The seminarian touches the keys of the sacristy and of the church, rings the bell, and opens and closes the door of the church in a symbolic practice of his new office.



The lector: The lectorate is the second minor order; it is received immediately after the first. Kneeling in front of the bishop, the ordinand places his right hand on the lectionary, his thumb



touching the ledge. The lector has the privilege of singing the lessons of the Old Testament.

The exorcist: the third minor order is that of exorcist; it gives the power to expel demons. This power is very real, but it is not habitually used except for certain blessings (as for holy water) and during Baptism. Only the priest who has received explicit permission from his bishop may do the solemn exorcism of one possessed.

[continued p. 13]

or woman? A person who offers his or her life as a victim with the Victim who offers Himself on the altar. That is what a religious is, nothing else. It is that which is the foundation of all religious life. If there is no longer a victim on the altar, if there is no longer a sacrifice on the altar, there is no longer a reason for the existence of religious. And it is not astonishing that there are no more of them. It is very serious.

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You must understand that everything rests on this sacrifice of the Mass, which is the treasure bequeathed by our Lord dying on the Cross. He gave His treasure – His Body, His Soul, His Divinity. He gave it to the Catholic Church on the altar of sacrifice.

Why, then, have our altars been carried away? Why have they been replaced by a table? Why has the Mass been replaced just by a supper? If it is only a supper, Communion in the hand is natural. If there is now no Real Presence, if there is no sacrifice, it is natural to communicate standing, because in that case it is a remembrance merely. They break the bread of friendship, of the meal, of the common faith; faith, perhaps, in the spiritual presence of our Lord, as a remembrance of our Lord – all that is understandable! Only, one is no longer sure whether the Real Presence of our Lord is in question, the presence of our God Himself, of our Creator and our Redeemer, of Him who is our All, who is the very reason for our life on this earth. Then it is not natural that we should communicate standing as though we were His equal.

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Abuses? No, reality!

When we are answered: "Ah! but you are talking of abuses. Those are the people who do not keep the rule." To my regret, I must answer, Unhappily no. They are not abuses. Look at the little leaflet "Masses for Small Groups and for Particular Groups." It contains rules laid down by the Episcopate, which, consequently, leave the door open to all abuses. That must be so since, for these group masses, there need be only a reading from the Gospel and the recitation of one of the four Canons - and three more are added ad experimentum - for children! Not to mention that before long, one may legitimately make one's own Canon. As yet, however, we need still say one of the four Canons and one Gospel. All else

is open to the choice of the priest who "presides over the assembly." He may begin the Mass as he pleases, say the Offertory as he pleases, and "make up prayers" (that is the wording used). "Where prayers are concerned, it is permissible to choose from the missal those best suited to the group. If it seems necessary, the text of these prayers may be adapted to the purpose of the assembly and the chosen theme. In certain cases [and there will clearly always be "certain cases"] it may be appropriate to make up new prayers." On such an occasion I shall ask the Episcopal Conference to let me make my own texts, that is, to take them from Tradition!

Since it is a matter of legal experiments authorized by the episcopal decrees, I ask to make the experiment of Tradition. I cannot see any reason for refusal! That is why at the seminary we always say the Mass of St. Pius V. No doubt that is one of the reproaches made against us. We are told: "You should adopt the new Ordo, you are failing in obedience." I am obedient to the bishops' directives, I am in perfect obedience. Here, for instance, is another recommendation touching small groups: "One may envisage special groups with a pastoral intention or a specific pastoral goal - students, apprentices." We are students, we have students, we are therefore fully in order. We must not be led to absurd lengths! We are perfectly prepared to acknowledge all that must be acknowledged, but let no man say to us: "You have a right to devise any prayers save those of Tradition." That we will not accept.

Causes divisions

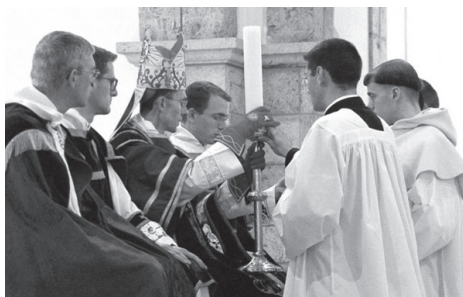
It is for these reasons that we are fully convinced that we are in no way disobedient to the hierarchy in not adopting the new Mass. I will go farther. I shall never say that the new Ordo Missae is heretical; I shall never say that it cannot be a sacrifice. I believe that many priests - above all those priests who have known the old Ordo - certainly have very good intentions in saying their Mass. Far be it from me to say that everything is wrong with the new Ordo. I do say, however, that this new Ordo opens the door to very many choices and divisions. It follows that if, today, I were to offer these choices to my seminarians, ten might opt for the first Canon, two others the second, another the third: the professors would want to order the liturgy in one

way or another. It would be the beginning of the end. We should all be divided, and it would only remain to me to lock the doors of the seminary. The seminary would go the way of all the others, for we cannot live divided; and, by its very nature, the new Ordo divides because it allows too great freedom of choice and makes too many things legal. It is only natural! Some people will want a table, some will want to face the congregation when saying Mass. Some will want to follow today's practice and say Mass with only one deacon, others with a deacon and subdeacon. There will be no end to it. Some will want concelebration, others will not. There would be no way out, and once division has been sown in all that is most great, most important, and most beautiful in the Church, all is lost. We, for our part, have chosen to keep what has been the bond of unity through all the ages and, we believe, can still preserve it for the future.

Catholic doctrine

Finally, I come to the third important truth that we teach our seminarians; we want to put the true catechism into their hands. We want to give them the true faith. We do not want these seminarians to be a prey to any doubts on the Truth which should be taught them. We do not want them to be forever engaged in research. Today, there is nothing but that. We are all engaged in search as though we had never been given the Credo, as if our Savior had not come to bring us the Truth. We should always remember this, for it is a truth taught by our Holy Church - the deposit of Revelation came to a close on the day when the last Apostle died. The deposit therefore existed. When our Holy Father Pope Pius XII defined the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, he said precisely that it was in the deposit of Revelation, that it already existed in all the texts revealed to us before the death of the last Apostle. A truth cannot be defined, neither the Immaculate Conception nor the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin nor, perhaps one day, her Mediation, without stating that it is to be found in the deposit of Revelation, hence before the death of the last of the Apostles. That is very important.

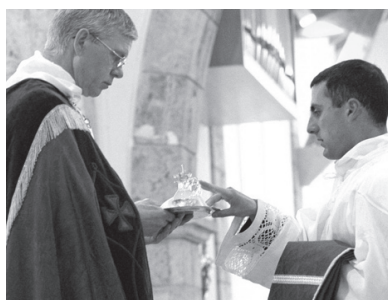
As a result, these truths cannot be changed. After the death of the last of the Apostles it was the part of the Church to transmit Tradition, to



During the ceremony of ordination to be an exorcist, the seminarian touches the ritual which the bishop presents to him.

The acolyte: the fourth and last of the minor orders is that of acolyte. The candidate receives a candlestick of which the candle is not lighted, with the following words of the bishop: "Receive". Then the bishop gives him an empty cruet and says to him: "Receive". In our times, due to the growing scarcity of ordained acolytes, men are authorized to serve at the altar.

The subdeacon: The subdiaconate is the first of the major orders. It is a decisive step in the life of the cleric who from then on takes upon himself the obligation to observe irrevocably perfect chastity and to recite the Divine Office. The subdeacon sings the epistle, presents the chalice and the paten to the deacon during the solemn Mass, pours the drop of water into the chalice, and purifies the altar linens. During the ceremony, the candidate prostrates himself at the singing of the Litany of the Saints and then goes forward a step to express his irrevocable engagement in the Holy Militia. When just ordained, he touches the chalice and the paten, and a pair of cruets containing the wine and the water. Afterwards, he is clothed with the insignia of his office: the amice (which symbolizes moderation in speaking), the maniple (which symbolizes good works), and the tunic (which symbolizes joy); and then he touches the epistolary presented by the bishop.



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The deacon: The diaconate is the second major order. The newly ordained may now sing the Gospel, preach, assist the priest during the solemn Mass, give the sacrament of Baptism, distribute Communion, and even officiate the ceremony of burial (except the Mass). The order is conferred with the imposition of hands followed by the words: "Pour out upon them Thy Holy Spirit, we beseech Thee, O Lord, who fortifies them through the seven gifts of grace for the faithful accomplishment" [continued p. 15]



transmit the deposit of faith, by searching out all the truths contained within it and by explaining them ever more clearly, more beautifully, more greatly, but never by adding a single dogma. After the death of the last Apostle all had been said. We have no right to speak today of the evolution of dogma, to say the dogma is constantly evolving. Not so. Dogma remains what it was after the death of the last of the Apostles, and it is the function of the pope, of bishops, and priests to transmit this deposit to all generations. That is it. Holy Church is herself Tradition.

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How was Revelation transmitted? There was Tradition, oral Tradition, through Titus, through Timothy, through all the bishops appointed by the Apostles. To them they handed on the Revelation that was later written in the Gospels. Truly, the Gospels were inspired. The same people tell us today: "You know that Tradition and the magisterium of the Church are too complicated. We must keep to the Gospels." It is these same people who ask: "What inspiration is there in the Gospel? Only those truths necessary for our salvation!" That is what they say.

At the Council there was a battle over the phrase "only the truths which are necessary for our salvation." It follows that all the miracles, all the stories of the childhood, all the accounts not "necessary for our salvation" are not inspired. Only the truths necessary for our salvation are inspired. That is entirely false. The whole of the Gospel is inspired, the whole Gospel was inspired by our Lord. The question is not simply one of infallibility. As you know, infallibility is simply a protection against error. The pope cannot, *ex cathedra*, proclaim an error, but this is no more than a protection against error. That is not what is meant by the inspiration of the Gospel. The mind and spirit of the writers of the Gospel were really under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Hence, everything written in the Gospel is the Word of God, "Verbum Dei – the Word of God."

No right to choose

That is a certainty. Today we have no right to choose and say: "Well, we will accept this part, we will not accept this other." But, I reiterate, even though the Gospel is inspired by God, it is Tradition that transmits the Gospel. It is by Tradition, by the magisterium of the Church, that

the Gospel came to us and has been transmitted to us throughout the centuries. And it is for Tradition and for the magisterium of the Church, which, if I may so express it, embody the Gospel, to explain to us the content of the Gospel and its meaning. If there is none to interpret the Gospel, many of us may attach wholly contrary meanings to the same words, and then we would fall into private judgment, freedom of inspiration, and all the Pentecostalism of today, which propels us into the realm of the arbitrary! All this, too, is very serious. Our seminarians must be brought to realize this fully and to learn the nature of the Church's magisterium and what it has always taught. All councils save this last have been dogmatic councils. Those dogmatic councils gave us the exact expression of Tradition, the exact terms of what the Apostles taught. That is unalterable. The decrees of the Council of Trent are unalterable because they are infallible. They were written and proclaimed as embodying the faith coming down to us by Tradition and this by an official act of the Church. Thus they are wholly free from error. We must believe them. But the last council, which was a pastoral council (as the popes themselves have repeatedly said), was averse from being dogmatic, and its various propositions may therefore be discussed. These propositions are not infallible because the popes would not invoke their infallibility. That is exceedingly important.

This is briefly what we wish to inculcate into our students: a love and understanding of their Church and a knowledge of what she means for them. They should learn to love also their sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments, and that evangelization which proceeds from the faith - the faith which they must communicate to others, a sure faith based on the Tradition and the magisterium of the Church. That is the training we seek to give our seminarians and the true sacerdotal upbringing we hope to give them.

...

of their ministry." The deacon is then clothed with the insignia of his office: the stole (symbolizes the sweet yoke of the law of God) and the dalmatic (symbolizes joy and justice); then he touches the evangeliarium, presented by the bishop.



through the sacraments and the sacramentals). The ordination, properly speaking, takes place between the epistle and the Alleluia. The matter of the sacrament is the imposition of the hands by the bishop. The form is the words following the consecratory preface: "Almighty Father, we beseech Thee, give to Thy servants here present the dignity of the priesthood; renew in their hearts the spirit of holiness, that they may keep the rank in Thy service which they have received from Thee, and by their conduct may afford a pattern of holy living". All the other rites of the ceremony of ordination (the anointing of the hands, etc...) explain the meaning of the priestly powers.

The priest: the priesthood is the third major order. It is the greatest that can be conferred upon a man in the state of grace. This sacrament confers an indelible mark and makes the priest an "other Christ" having power on the physical body of Christ (power of consecration of the holy species) and on the mystical body (power to confer grace on the faithful



The investiture with the priestly vestments: "Take thou the yoke of the Lord, for His yoke is sweet, and His burden light." "Take thou the priestly vestment, whereby charity is signified; for God is powerful to give thee an increase of charity and its perfect works."



The handing over of the instruments

(chalice filled with wine and water and paten with host not consecrated): "Receive the power to offer Sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Mass, both for the living and the dead, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ."



The concelebration:

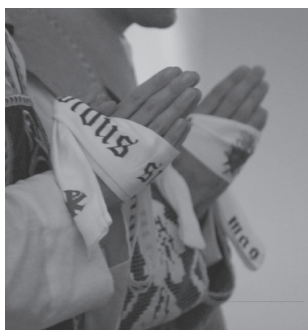
the very first Mass of a new priest is that which he concelebrates with the bishop. He recites the prayers at the same time as the celebrant, while an assistant priest stays at his side.

The unfolding of the chasuble:

After the ablutions, the bishop unfolds the chasuble to express the power to forgive sins: "Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

The anointing of the hands:

"Be pleased, O Lord, to consecrate and hallow these hands by this anointing, and our blessing (...) that whatsoever they bless may be blessed, and whatsoever they consecrate may be consecrated and hallowed, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ."



The promise of obedience:

Do you promise to your Bishop reverence and obedience? – I do promise!

The conclusion:

The ceremony concludes with a last exhortation, a special benediction and, of course, a vibrant Te Deum.

