

# What is happening in the Church?

*This column strives to keep the reader up to date with some of the more important statements, events, challenges that confront the Church in Canada, Rome and the world. Keeping in mind the fact that the Church militant does not just consist in the works of Tradition, but in all those who keep the true Faith, even if they do not love and defend it as they ought, it hopes to keep Catholics aware of good and positive developments, as well as the betrayals of modernism, in order to understand the situation of the Church in all the complexity of its reality.*

Rev. Fr. Peter Scott

## SWITZERLAND BANS MINARETS

There are at present only four minarets attached to mosques in Switzerland and they are not presently being used for the loud Muslim call to prayer. However, the Swiss are concerned about the ever increasing vocal minority of Muslims in their country, and on November 29 voted 57.5 % in favor of introducing into the Swiss constitution an article forbidding the construction of minarets throughout the country.

The strange thing about this whole affair was the position of the Swiss Catholic bishops, who expressed their strong opposition to this vote, both beforehand and afterwards, on the basis of the religious liberty of Vatican II. Here are some excerpts from their text of December 1, 2009:

"It (the people's decision to prohibit the construction of minarets) represents an obstacle and a great challenge on the path of integration in dialogue and mutual respect...the prohibition of minarets does not contribute to a healthy coexistence between religions and cultures but, on the contrary, it deteriorates it." (Cf. Zenit).

Also from their warning of last September against an affirmative vote:

"The minarets, like the bell towers of churches, are a sign of the public presence of a religion...The general prohibition to construct minarets would make more fragile the necessary efforts to es-

tablish an attitude of reciprocal acceptance, in dialogue and mutual respect." (Ib.)



The Federation of Protestant churches in Switzerland reacted in the same way, stating that it:

"considers the decision taken today by vote as an attack on fundamental liberties. It is unacceptable that religious minorities must now expect an inequality in the way they are treated...The universal validity of human rights, and in particular the right of freely practicing one's faith, are achievements which we cannot renounce." (Cf. dici.org)

Why is it that the people's common sense considered otherwise? The Society of Saint Pius X was not silent on this issue, and the November 18, 2009 declaration of its District Superior for Switzerland, Father Henri Wuilloud, explains the fallacy in the liberal arguments against this popular vote. It denounced:

"...the confusion maintained...between the fact of tolerating every person, whatever his religion, and that of tolerating an ideology that is incompatible with the Christian tradition. He who knows it cannot find Islamic teaching acceptable. How could one, moreover, encourage the propagation of a system of thought that incites husbands to beat their wives, the 'faithful' to massacre 'infidels', justice to impose physical mutilations and chastisements and the ensemble of Muslims to reject Christians and Jews?...The Conference of the Swiss bishops, anchored in uniformity with the texts of Vatican II, is opposed to the Church's traditional teaching and apostolic mission to such an extent as... to place on the same footing the word of He who asks us to love our enemies and he who commands us to put them to death... Consequently, the Swiss district of the Society of Saint Pius X invite every person of good will to refuse to approve the propagation of Islamic teaching and to vote 'yes' on the initiative forbidding the construction of minarets." (Cf. dici.org)

## John Paul II & Pius XII approach beatification together

The joint beatification of Popes Pius IX and John XXIII on September 3, 2000, was manifestly a political gesture, an attempt to reconcile the real sanctity of the Pope of the Syllabus of errors with the human kindness of the Pope of the anti-syllabus, of Vatican II. It was clearly an effort to maintain the balance between conservatives and liberals, that neither would feel favored at the expense of the other. It is difficult to see anything different in Pope Benedict XVI's simultaneous decrees of the "heroic virtue" of Popes John Paul II and Pius XII, issued on December 20, 2009. The decrees give both of them the title of Venerable, and opens the way to the process of beatification, once a miracle has been proven through the intercession of the Venerable. Although Father Lombardi, director of the Vatican press office, denied that these two processes are "paired", but rather maintained that they are "completely independent of one another", he also made a very interesting reference to John Paul II's decree of Beatification of Popes John XXIII and Pius IX, making a distinction between the personal virtue and the specific historical decisions made by a Pope. "In beatifying one of her sons, the Church does not celebrate the specific historical decisions he may have made, but rather points to him as someone to be imitated and venerated because of his virtues" (Cf. Zenit, Dec. 23, 2009). The Church's veneration would not, therefore, be an approval of any particular decisions, but rather of personal virtue. For one who knows that prudence is the highest of the moral virtues, and that it governs all the other virtues as well as all the specific historical decisions that we make, such a distinction seems entirely false and arbitrary, invented in a vain attempt to harmonize the manifest contradictions between the pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II Popes. The objections to the beatification of Pope Pius XII, the Angelic Pastor, are lifted by this artificial distinction between historical decisions and virtue, as they were for Pope Pius IX. In the latter's case it was his repeated condemnation of liberal errors, and religious liberty in particular, that were thus overcome. In the case of Pope Pius XII, it is the obstacle to ecumenism with the Jews that is overcome, namely that certain Jews have falsely accused him of remaining silent in face of the Nazi persecution of Jews during World War II, whereas nobody was more instrumental in saving them than Pius XII. The same reasoning will be used to evacuate Pius XII's repeated condemnation of modern errors, for example in his 1950 encyclical against the Modern Errors, *Humani generis*, and his 1947 encyclical on the liturgy, *Mediator Dei*, condemning the errors of the New Mass 20 years ahead of time.

The same false distinction is in fact going to be used to bring about the beatification of John Paul II, regardless of the disastrous decisions, and great loss of Faith, that character-

ized his 26 years in the See of Peter, and from which he cannot be exempt from all responsibility. The following assessment by an author who is in no way a traditional Catholic, shows how much such a proposed beatification goes against the elementary and logical principle that virtue for a Pope is "Papal virtue", virtue in the exercise of his office:



"Though Catholics and others are loathing to admit it of an otherwise beloved Pope, John Paul II oversaw a Church which deteriorated in both its inner and outer life. His callous indifference toward the victims of priestly sexual abuse in refusing to meet personally with a single one of them, and his stubborn refusal to compel the resignation from office of any of the bishops who aided, abetted, and covered-up the abuse, are testamentary to his utter failure: not as a Catholic or a theologian, but as a Pope. And this is precisely why he should not be canonized. For in the Catholic (and popular) understanding, canonization is not simply a technical decree indicating one's everlasting abode in Paradise; it is, in addition, the Church's solemn endorsement of a Christian's heroic virtue. The question the Catholic Church must ask herself is: Was John Paul II a model of 'heroic' papal virtue? Contrary to leftist media reportage, the late Pope was not an authoritarian despot, bent on enforcing Catholic orthodoxy on an unwilling church. Quite the contrary: theological liberals and dissenters flourished in all of the Church's structures, from lay politics and Catholic universities, to the ranks of priests and bishops. Not a single pro-abortion Catholic politician has been excommunicated from the Church; only a handful of openly heretical priests were asked to stop teaching theology, but were otherwise permitted to exercise their priestly ministry unhindered..... After John Paul II, the Catholic Church is virtually indistinguishable from the Anglican Communion. Everyone has their seat at the table, liberal and conservative, high church and low." (Cf. Eric Giunta in *RenewAmerica*, August 14, 2009).

## POPE PRAISES CHARISMATIC LEADER

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Cardinal Josef Cordes was honored with a personal letter from Benedict XVI on the occasion of his 75th birthday, the week before Christmas. The main purpose of the letter was to thank him for his "contribution to the genesis and the growth of the World Youth Days" and for his "commitment to (lay) movements in his role in the Pontifical Council for the Laity". (Cf. Zenit of 12-22). In fact, the Pope was very specific about the charismatic and Pentecostal nature of the movements encouraged by Cardinal Cordes, not only showing his clear approval of them as charismatic, but going so far as to say that the Church can no longer exist without them: "The charismatic movement, Communion and Liberation and the Neo-catechumenal Way have many reasons to be grateful to you. While at the beginning the organizers and planners in the Church had many reservations in regard to the movements, you immediately sensed the life that burst forth from them - the power of the Holy Spirit that gives new paths and in unpredictable ways keeps the Church young. You recognized the Pentecostal character of these movements and you worked passionately so that they would be welcomed by the Church's pastors...Here were men who were deeply touched by the spirit of God and that in such a way there grew new forms of authentic Christian life and authentic ways of being Church...They need a guide and purification to be able to reach the form of their true maturity. They, nevertheless, are gifts to be grateful for. It is no

longer possible to think of the life of the Church of our time without including these gifts of God within it." (Ib.)

Let no one affirm, then, that the Pope does not support and encourage the charismatic movement, or that he believes in the traditional doctrine that it is through the Mass and the sacraments, and our traditional prayers and devotions, that the Holy Ghost is communicated to us. He has manifestly embraced the charismatic thesis that in this post-Vatican II age the Spirit is given through non-structured, non-clerical, humanistic organizations, although they despise traditional Marian and sacramental devotion.

## EPISCOPALIAN "BISHOP" ORDAINED

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### PRIEST

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James B. Lipscomb, former Episcopalian "bishop" of Saratoga was one of those who objected to the ordination of Gene Robinson, an openly practicing homosexual, as an Episcopalian bishop. He eventually left the Anglican Communion and was received into the full communion of the Catholic Church in 2007. On Wednesday December 2, he was ordained a Catholic priest by Archbishop Favorola of Miami at the Bethany retreat center in Lutz, of which he is the director, in the presence of his wife and 100 diocesan priests (Cf. Americatho of 12/6/09).

## CHURCH REVERSES MODERNIST CHANGE TO CANON LAW

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The 1983 Code of Canon Law contained a radical novelty concerning the sacrament of matrimony. It was an exemption from the canonical form, according to which all Catholics, in order to contract a valid marriage, are bound to marry in the presence of a Catholic priest and two witnesses. It was also an exemption from the prohibition against the marriages of Catholics with disparity of cult (i.e. with non-baptized persons) or mixed marriages (with somebody baptized in a sect); those prohibitions are rarely enforced, but still exist in the Church's law. This exemption was granted to all those who had abandoned the Church by a formal act, that is who had apostatized. The novelty lay in the admission that once a person was baptized in the Catholic Church and had received the indelible mark of baptism on his soul, he could cease to be a Catholic, so that he was no longer bound by the laws of the Catholic Church.

This iniquitous law, found in Canons 1086, 1117 & 1124 of the 1983 Code, was directly a consequence of the spirit of religious liberty, allowing a person to determine his own religion, according to his conscience, and consequently allowing him to leave the Catholic Church and still marry validly in the eyes of God. This could only matter for a person who tries to live in

the state of grace. But how can a person be in the state of grace who has deliberately abandoned the one true Church in which he was baptized? In practice, this exemption caused great confusion, for the marriages of formal apostates had then to be considered valid. What happens when such a person's marriage (without grace) breaks up, and he attempts to return to the Catholic Church? He finds out that he is no longer free to marry before God. The other difficulty about the interpretation of this law was that of determining precisely what a formal act of apostasy is.

Consequently the October 26 Motu proprio, "Omnium in mentem", of Benedict XVI, released on December 15, 2009, is most welcome. It abolishes entirely the exemption from the canonical form of marriage for those who have formally left the Catholic Church, and retains the general principle that they, like all baptized Catholics, are subject to the Church's laws (Canon 11 of the 1983 Code). Archbishop Coccopalmerio, president of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, gave this explanation: "this clause, following much study, was held to be unnecessary and inappropriate" (Cf. Zenit). It is the least one could say