THE ATHANASIAN

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The Society Of Saint Pius X And The Crisis Of Faith

John Kenneth Weiskittel

For more than two decades the group most visible in opposing the innovations of Vatican II has been the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X or, as it is more popularly known, the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX). The coverage it has received in both the secular and Conciliar "Catholic" news media has been so pervasive, in fact, that unwary readers may be excused for wrongly assuming it to be the *only* such group in the world.

While such reporting is woefully inaccurate, the press is not entirely to blame for this. The SSPX has always been a high-profile group: first, its founder, the French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991), was the highest member of the Catholic hierarchy to publicly condemn the Vatican II reforms and insist that the faithful resist these changes in the name of Tradition; second, whereas others, such as Cardinals Siri, Oddi, Bacci and Ottaviani, were known from time to time to voice dissatisfaction with the changes, only Archbishop Lefebvre had the combination of courage and foresight needed to step out of the crowd — despite the personal attacks he knew would surely follow — and make this holy discontent the basis of his apostolate; third, his very stature enabled the SSPX to attract the most followers of any such group; and fourth, his defiance of "commands" by Paul VI in 1976 not to ordain priests (leading to his "suspension") and by John Paul II in 1988 not to consecrate bishops (leading to his "excommunication") enabled the media to portray him as an "outlaw," "rebel," "renegade," etc.

Just how large is the SSPX? In July, 1988, the Society's official U.S. magazine, *The Angelus*, devoted a special issue to the consecrations. There appeared a two-page photo spread that highlighted the group's churches and seminaries and an accompanying text reporting that the SSPX had at that time, among other things:

* 210 priests stationed all over the world;
* 269 seminarians in six seminaries (France, Germany, Switzerland, Argentina, Australia and the United States);
* 339 churches, 77 priories, 13 convents and 9 secondary schools;
* 583 regular Sunday missions and 125 regular monthly missions.

In addition, the Society has its own publishing facilities, churning out books and periodicals in various languages. Estimates of the total number of SSPX supporters have ranged from the low of 50,000 to 100,000 made by the Conciliar Vatican to Society claims of several hundred thousand. (To put these figures in perspective, the lowest amount is greater than any similar group, while the largest is significantly more than the total of *all other such groups combined.*) In other words, we are talking here about an organization with real clout.

It is likely, then, that more than a few readers of *The Athanasian* have been introduced to what is generally referred to as the traditional Catholic movement through the SSPX, and some may still attend Mass at its chapels. Rare indeed is the traditional Catholic who has never heard of the group, and rarer still is the one who, having heard of the Society, doesn't have strong feelings about it. For its supporters, the Society *is* traditional Catholicism (one of its leaders, Bishop Richard Williamson, has virtually equated it with the Roman Catholic Church) and its founder has been likened to Saint Athanasius (holy cards promoting Archbishop Lefebvre's canonization have been circulated and some of his followers already encourage prayer *to* him). Another body of Catholics, while deploring what it sees as the SSPX's compromise with the Conciliar "Catholic" Church and double-talk regarding that sect and its false pontiff, "Pope" John Paul II, considers these as tolerable "aberrations" (given the confusion of the times) and has little or no qualms about attending Society churches (or, in the case of priests, advising laity to attend them if they are the nearest Latin Masses available).

Still others argue that the SSPX, in refusing to make a clean break from the Conciliar Church and its robber hierarchy, cannot be accepted as Catholic and hence

should be avoided until the problem is rectified. This lack of agreement on how to perceive the Society is but another example of the unprecedented destruction left after Vatican II: each of the positions given has defenders who will cite relevant Church documents and eminent theologians to their advantage, yet, with the defection of the hierarchy, the issue remains officially unresolved, that is, as far as definitive Church ruling is concerned.

The present study considers the question of what use the Society of Saint Pius X has made of its lofty stature. While it will be taken to task for certain of its policies and positions, every effort will be made to keep this presentation balanced. Regular readers of this newsletter will recall my open letter to Bishop Williamson, which appeared in the December 1, 1990 issue, and its conciliatory (not to be confused with *Conciliar*) tone. I would like to follow the same course here, with the hope, however faint, of bringing the Society to see how contradictory is its stand and how it could become, because of its worldwide prominence, an instrument for militant, uncompromising fidelity to the one true Roman Catholic Church and a similiarly fierce, unwavering opposition to the counterfeit Conciliar Church and all it represents. Above all, I write with the conviction that it is time that we who still profess the Catholic Faith do all we can, with God's grace, to stop bickering, make sincere attempts to resolve our differences, and unite to do battle with our common enemy — a formidable foe that has wrought havoc for more than a quarter of a century on everything we hold dear, and has accomplished much of this evil because Catholics have spent more time devoted to infighting than to assembling the kind of resistance necessary to mount a victorious Crusade.

The Archbishop And The Conciliar Church

Any examination of the SSPX must necessarily begin with a consideration of its founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. It is difficult to overestimate the manner in which his figure loomed above the Society, his character animating every facet of it, from the formation of its priests to the final determination of its stand on different issues. Today, more than a year after his passing, the vigor of his guiding spirit has in no way diminished.

It is outside the focus of this article to go into any lengthy account of Archbishop Lefebvre's life but a brief recounting of significant events may help in understanding this perplexing figure. Born in northern France into a very devout Catholic family, Marcel Lefebvre was one of eight children, five of whom became priest or religious. After earning doctorates in philosophy and theology at the French seminary in Rome, he was ordained in 1929. He joined the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1932, and promptly was sent to Gabon, Africa, as a missionary. The zeal and effectiveness of his apostolate were such that Pope Pius XII crowned it, first, by making him the Apostolic Delegate for all of French-speaking Africa in 1948 and then, seven years later, appointing him as the first Archbishop of Dakar.

In 1960, he was appointed to the Central Preparatory Commission of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII. This body was made up of 871 scholars, ranging from Cardinals to laymen, who spent two years drafting 72 documents (*schemata*). These schemata, the Archbishop would later recall, were "absolutely orthodox" in their presentation of Church doctrine, so "there was hardly any need for retouching." They were not retouched, it turns out; rather, stated Archbishop Lefebvre: "A fortnight after (the Council's) opening not one of the prepared *schemata* remained, not one! All had been turned down, all had been condemned to the wastepaper basket. Nothing remained, not a single sentence. All had been thrown out." During the Council, he was one of the leaders of the International Group of Fathers which was organized to defend traditional Catholic teachings. Hence, Archbishop Lefebvre is credited as being one of the very first to warn against the perilous waters into which Vatican II was steering the Barque of Peter.

And yet, only a few years after the Council, he did something completely inexplicable for someone who clearly saw the disastrous course of the modern Church. He retired. Resigning in 1968 from the Holy Ghost Fathers (the order had become saturated with the Modernism of the new "Catholicism"), Archbishop Lefebvre quietly moved to Rome and rented a modest apartment not far from Saint Peter's. How he ever hoped to find peace in retirement when the Church he had served so faithfully for so many years had been torn asunder we cannot begin to explain. What we do know is that the tranquility he sought was short-lived, for young aspirants to the priesthood, finding the "reformed" seminaries unfit, sought him out for truly traditional priestly formation. And so, on October 7, 1970, the now famous seminary in Econe, Switzerland, was opened, and on All Saints' Day of the same year the SSPX was established.

The glaring contradiction in Archbishop Lefebvre
appealing to the Conciliar Church for recognition: since
the post-Vatican II hierarchy had presided over the ruin of
Catholic seminaries to such an extent that a prelate had to
be coaxed out of retirement in order to form a solitary
traditional seminary, it confounds reason to find him
seeking the blessing of the same ecclesiastics for this
undertaking. While he of all people ought to have seen
this, it should be pointed out that at that early date many
faithful Catholics were in a state of confusion over what
had happened, and it was precisely upon this confusion, of
course, that the enemies of the Church had counted.
Unfortunately, while the unlimited number of outrages in
the intervening years caused many Catholics to eventually
wake up to the grim reality confronting the Church,
Archbishop Lefebvre and the SSPX, for the most part,
[illegible] their followers see events through the same
rose-colored spectacles they themselves wore.

[illegible] that the Archbishop always attributed (as
[illegible] and its kin) the destruction of tradition
[illegible]." At times (though less often than many
[illegible] have liked), he spoke of the crisis with the
[illegible] clarity. All too often we only remember
[illegible] Lefebvre who kept in touch with the
[illegible] recently hoping that negotiations would
[illegible] the SSPX to carve out a traditional niche
[illegible] the Conciliar Church. The following
[illegible] we may be reminded of his more

[illegible]ossible not to compare the
[illegible]s in the last decades with what
[illegible] during the Council. How can
[illegible] that we are faced with a
[illegible]an that of the Church..."
[illegible]tween the third and fourth
[illegible] Pentecost, 1965. Here he also
[illegible]ctrines a "new magisterium"
[illegible]." This and all other quotes
[illegible] article are taken — unless
[illegible] from *A Bishop Speaks:*
[illegible] 1963-1975, translated by V.
[illegible], Scottish *Una Voce*, no date.
[illegible] have been made in wording,
[illegible])

[illegible]ers who believed that the
[illegible]nists would come to applaud
[illegible]effect (he refers to their calls
for "religious freedom" and "collegiality") were doubtless very few. Today, the reality is there, staring them in the face. The statements are many, the traditional enemies of the Church rejoice to see eminent members of the Church abounding in ideas that they [those enemies — JKW] have always upheld..." (*Ibid.* Archbishop Lefebvre was one of more than 450 bishops — including Brazilian Bishop Antonio de Castro-Mayer, who later assisted him in the 1988 consecrations — to sign a petition asking the Council to condemn Communism. This appeal was totally ignored, thanks to the efforts of people like Polish Bishop Karol Wojtyla — now John Paul II. Elsewhere, the Archbishop quotes Masonic approval of the Council.)

* "Satan's masterstroke is to have succeeded in sowing disobedience to all Tradition through obedience..." (Lecture given at Barcelona, Spain, in April, 1972.)

* "Born of liberalism and modernism, this Reform is poisoned through and through. It begins in heresy and ends in heresy, even if not all its acts are formally heretical. Hence, it is impossible for any informed and loyal Catholic to embrace this Reform or submit himself to it in any way soever... The only way of salvation for the faithful and the doctrine of the Church is a categorical refusal to accept this Reform." (Declaration of November 21, 1974, published by *Itineraires* in January, 1975.)

* "Read the beginning of the (Vatican II) Schema on *The Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*), the description of the way in which modern times are changing; read the conclusions, they are pure liberalism. Read the Declaration on *Religious Freedom* and compare it with the Encyclical *Mirari vos* of Gregory XVI, or with *Quanta cura* of Pius IX, and you can observe the contradictions almost word for word." ("Friends and Benefactors" Letter Number 9, Feast of Saint Pius X, 1975.)

* "The Council, its reforms and the directives following from it are presented (by Rome) as indissolubly linked. Hence, those who speak of a mistaken interpretation of the Council, as if the Council was perfect in itself and could not be interpreted in the light of reforms and directives, are grievously mistaken." (*Ibid.*)

* "A serious problem presents itself to the conscience and to the faith of all Catholics since the beginning of the pontificate of Paul VI. How can a Pope, true successor to Peter, preside over the deepest and most extensive destruction of the Church in her history within so short a space of time, that which no heresiarch has ever succeeded in doing." (Declaration of August 2, 1976. I wish to thank Father Joseph Collins for his translation.)

When quotations like these are read it is evident that Archbishop Lefebvre had a keen awareness of the revolutionary coup that had occurred during the Second Vatican Council. Moreover, he was saying some of these things long before most others had grasped the full impact of the Council and its pestilential changes. And he educated countless Catholics around the world about the crisis facing the Church, the need to resist the "reforms," and to follow and uphold her perennial teachings regardless of any conciliar pressure tactics or deceitful reassurances.

When Is A Council *Not* A Council?

Unfortunately, these insights often have been weakened by other statements (sometimes in the same speeches and writings) that amounted to blunting in one sentence the effect of what had been asserted in the previous half-dozen. This zigzagging in positions taken (and policies adopted) has long been the way the SSPX has conducted itself, and has been a source of bewilderment for many faithful supporters. Even today, readers of the Society's literature will be puzzled by the contradictory signals: one month it informs them in no uncertain terms that it is locked in mortal combat with the Modernist usurpers in Rome; the next month it tells of a cordial visit it has had from a representative of the same Conciliar Vatican. (*The Angelus* for March, 1992, provides a striking example of this: on page two, the semi-official Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano,* is attacked because of its "support (of) the Modernist errors" on biblical scholarship, while on pages 24, 25 and 27 of the same issue it publishes approvingly — but apparently without permission — a full article from the paper on a 1983 declaration on Masonry. Somehow, in the SSPX Wonderland, *L'Osservatore Romano* has one side that is Catholic and another that adheres to positions condemned by the Society's namesake as heretical — go figure!)

Consider for a moment the remarks of Archbishop Lefebvre concerning Vatican II and its reforms cited in the previous section. He speaks of it as a "false magisterium" based on "liberalism and modernism"; it "begins in heresy and ends in heresy"; it is so at odds with true Catholicism that for "any informed and loyal Catholic" to "submit to" or "embrace" it is "impossible."

Strong words. Words that differ only in phrasing from what can be found in any issue of *The Athanasian*. Why, then, bewildered readers ask, do we find that Archbishop Lefebvre frequently communicated and negotiated with John Paul II (whom he called "Holy Father" and whose name he insisted his priests insert in the Canon of the Mass), and considered himself "in union with" Rome even after his false excommunication? This is the great enigma concerning the prelate — how a man so keenly aware of the crisis could take such a wavering and self-defeating stand against the enemies of the Church.

In light of such behavior, some have rashly accused Archbishop Lefebvre of being a conspirator bent on destroying the traditional movement he pretended to represent. Little besides insinuation has been brought forth to defend the charge, while the best evidence at hand suggests that a more moderate and sensible solution is to be found by attributing his equivocation to a lack of decisiveness and an unwillingness to carry his position through to its logical conclusion. Sometimes, as will be shown later, his compromising also stemmed from a protectiveness towards his beloved Society.

Going back to the question at hand: Archbishop Lefebvre devised a novel approach to get around the problem of, on the one hand, condemning forthrightly the Council and its progeny, the Conciliar Church, while, on the other, recognizing and carrying on dialogue with its leaders. Let me make it clear that I am not using the term *novel* lightly, for, in order for His Excellency to accommodate the contradictory notions, he was obliged to formulate an explanation that does not harmonize with conventional Catholic concepts about the Church and its magisterium. I am not imputing an evil motive on his part for arriving at these conclusions, since the situation experienced over the past 30 years is unprecedented in Church history, but I nevertheless believe it necessary that these same conclusions be considered and refuted. The cornerstone for this (and for all subsequent SSPX policy) is the manufacturing of a supposed distinction between Vatican II and all prior Councils. At a conference he gave at Rennes, France, in November, 1972, the Archbishop, while enumerating the errors of the Council, put forth a

possible objection: " 'Yet,' you will say, 'the Council is inspired by the Holy Spirit.' Not necessarily. A pastoral, nondogmatic Council is a sermon which does not, of itself, involve infallibility."

Archbishop Lefebvre matter-of-factly declares that an ecumenical Council, convoked by a Pope to include the entire hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and for the entire Church to obey, is "not necessarily" inspired by the Holy Ghost nor assured His protection against error, simply because it falls into the category of a "pastoral, nondogmatic Council." This is a crucial point because it defines the very heart and soul of the SSPX manner of dealing with the crisis. It explains the Society's similarly peculiar notions that an utterly non-Catholic sect — the Conciliar Chruch — *coexists* within the Church, and that the leader of this sect *simultaneously* is the Pope. What of the claim that Conciliar reform "begins in heresy and ends in heresy" — *yet remains Catholic*?

There are two aspects of the question that need to be addressed: (1) the contention by Archbishop Lefebvre and his supporters that Vatican II was merely a "pastoral" Council (thus capable of erring) seen in the light of the history of previous Councils and Church teachings, and (2) Conciliar insistence that it was much more than just a "sermon." Many SSPX followers no doubt have found the "pastoral Council" argument a very comfortable solution to a troublesome predicament for, if it is said that the entire Catholic hierarchy, from the Apostolic See down, may officially promulgate error (so long as it is in a pastoral setting), then the present apostasy can be written off as simply a colossal mistake that in no way affects the dogma of infallibility. However, the difficulties resulting from this "solution" are not, as we shall see, ones that are easily resolved.

Vatican II: Accept It Or Reject It!

Prior to the Second Vatican Council there were twenty general (or ecumenical) Councils in the life of the Church — from the First Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) to the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). Twenty genuine, undisputed Councils that — through their defining of dogmas, clarifying doctrine, enacting ecclesiastical laws and uprooting heresy — have greatly enriched Catholics' love and appreciation for the Holy Ghost's ever-abiding presence in their midst. The great glory of these Councils is their consistent validating of the Roman Catholic Church's identity as the only divinely sanctioned religion on earth. This was manifested by their authoritative, infallible voices, coming together through the ages as *one* voice: despite the fifteen hundred years separating the first and the last, the Councils are in complete harmony; never does a single one differ in its teaching from those that preceded or followed it; the Deposit of Faith has been admirably guarded, generation after generation.

No one can reasonably argue that any of them introduce any novelties or innovations, much less that they promulgated explicit errors. When Vatican II ended in 1965, however, many were the deviations from Catholicism, not the least of which were a defense of religious liberty, a distorted definition of the Church and the affirmation of man-made sects as "means of salvation." Its conspicuous contrast with the true Councils predating it was such that I, for one, continue to be amazed at its easy acceptance by the world's bishops. For any perceptive Catholic the break is so complete that this robber Council, its false reforms and its Conciliar religion must, of necessity, be rejected.

Returning to Archbishop Lefebvre and the SSPX, we see at best a partial resistance, one in which a process of "pick and choose" takes place: those parts of the Council that adhere to Tradition are accepted; those that deviate from it are rejected. Here, they fall back on the "pastoral Council" argument. Because no doctrines were definitively proclaimed and no anathemas hurled, because *extraordinary magisterium* was not invoked, they contend that Vatican II need not be heeded in its entirety — yet they defend it as a legitimate Council.

However appealing this approach may appear on the surface, it must first be tested against the teachings of the Church. In 1863, six years before Vatican I (the only valid Council bearing the name), Pope Pius IX wrote the Archbishop of Munich to inform him — as paraphrased in a preface to a document by the Jesuit Fathers of Saint Mary's College — that "not only the Church's dogmatic definitions but also its ordinary teachings infallibly proposed revealed truth." (*The Church Teaches*, Rockford, Illinois, TAN Books, 1973, p. 83) Or, in His Holiness' own words, Catholic souls are bound in obedience not only "to those things which have been defined in the express decrees of the ecumenical Councils or of the Roman Pontiffs of this See; but it must be extended to those things which, through the *ordinary teaching of the whole Church throughout the world, are proposed as divinely revealed and, as a result,* by the

universal and constant consent of Catholic theologians *are held to be matters of faith.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 84. Emphasis added.)

The First Vatican Council teaches: "Moreover, by divine and Catholic faith everything *must be believed* that is contained in the written word of God or in Tradition and *that is proposed by the Church* as a divinely revealed object of belief either in a solemn decree or in *her ordinary, universal teaching.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 30. Emphasis added.) Hence, the SSPX contention is seen as untenable, for the ordinary teaching of the Church, which it holds Vatican II to represent, cannot be parceled into sections but must be accepted or rejected *as a whole.*

This realization renders consideration of the Council's objectives unnecessary. However, a brief examination will show that it has always been claimed as a true Council. On December 25, 1961, Pope John XXIII issued an apostolic constitution convoking the Council, in which he wrote that it was to be "an addition to, and a continuation of, the series of the twenty great Councils" and, in his opening address to the Council ten months later, while referring to its objectives as "predominantly [not "solely" — JKW] pastoral in character," he said he intended it to "assert once again the magisterium, which is unfailing and perdures [lasts — JKW] to the end of time..." (Cited, Michael Pavel, "Vatican II: Merely Pastoral?", *Sacerdotium*, Autumn 1991, pp. 32, 36. Emphasis deleted in these and all other citations from this source.) All Council documents conclude with the claim of being produced "by the apostolic authority conferred on us by Christ," and of "approving, decreeing and establishing these things in the Holy Spirit" — and a Conciliar commission issued a 1964 declaration warning that "each and every member of the faithful is obliged to accept and embrace" all that it teaches, even that which is not openly defined. (Cited, *ibid.*, pp. 37, 39)

When he closed the Council a year later, Paul VI wrote that "all that has been established synodally is to be religiously observed by all the faithful..." (Cited, *ibid.*) But John Paul II has given perhaps the clearest statements of all when, in an address to the Sacred College, he said, "Obedience to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council is obedience to the Holy Spirit"; and, in the Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, where he teaches (ostensibly from the Chair of Peter): "that which the Holy Spirit says to the Church by the Council, He says at the same time in full harmony with Tradition and according to what is required by the sign of the times." (Cited, *ibid.*, p. 42. The phrase "in full harmony with Tradition" is revealing, for only a Council promoting novelties requires such a justification, while "sign of the times" suggests a Modernist "evolution" of doctrine.) Such unequivocal defenses of the Council's authority and the demand for full compliance with its decrees make it clear that Archbishop Lefebvre and the SSPX are quite wrong to suggest that an optional approach is acceptable.

Is The SSPX Failing Its Apostolate?

In its twenty-two years, the SSPX has witnessed with the rest of traditional Catholics an ever-sharpening picture of Conciliar apostasy. There is hardly any need to rehash the scandals that occur on almost a daily basis in that sect, scandals that touch the Holy See. The SSPX knows well of them, has even written of them, but in the final analysis remains unfazed by them. No matter how great the outrage, no matter how indefensible the practice, no matter how wicked the denial of essential Catholic doctrines, the Society always manages to find some excuse for them, although this sometimes involves concocting the most outlandish explanation of events. (Remember Bishop Williamson's ingenious attempt to get John Paul II off the hook by suggesting that the "pontiff's" mind is subdivided into a Catholic half and a Modernist half? Surely, he jests!)

What compounds the Society's trouble in what comes across to outsiders as a haughty attitude that dismisses any attempt at public dialogue by traditionalists who do not share its views on all points. This often approaches a SSPX-as-final-arbiter (or substitute magisterium) mentality, and makes fraternal or filial correction out of the question. For example, my open letter to Bishop Williamson (December 1, 1990, *The Athanasian*) did not receive a similarly public response, despite the fact that it was polite, sincere and forthright in its handling of the subject. An article by Father Donald Sanborn, former superior of the Society's American seminary, met with a different and, in some ways, *worse* fate.

"Resistance and Indefectability," appearing first in the Autumn 1991 issue of *Sacerdotium* and then in *Catholic Restoration* for December, 1991, examines the way various groups deal with the question of the Conciliar Vatican. Father Sanborn criticizes the SSPX for its contradictory policy much the way I did the year before. This time, however, Bishop Williamson had no choice but to respond, since around 10,000 people had been sent one or the other of these publications — that is, ten times the number who receive *The Athanasian.* The response

appeared in the bishop's monthly "Friends and Benefactors" letter dated March 5, 1992, but was disappointing on a number of counts. First, unlike either Father Sanborn's analysis, which it attempted to answer, or my earlier study, there is no identification of the magazine (save for the cryptic letters *CR*), the article or its author. Second, instead of quoting sources (as both Father Sanborn and I did), Bishop Williamson paraphrases arguments, and not always fully or accurately. Third, he finds a loophole in the authority question by asserting that Paul VI never made the "new Mass" obligatory whereas in fact the "Pope" did strictly prohibit the true Mass. Fourth, he uses (or, rather, *abuses*) the distinction between "abstract and concrete," and derides sedevacantists for failing to see that "the 'Conciliar Church' and the Catholic Church can overlap." Fifth, he charges a lack of charity, since he claims "sedevacantists slay the erring along with their errors."

A few corrections are in order. On the third point, Bishop Williamson conveniently ignores the fact that Paul VI also ratified Vatican II, as did John Paul II ratify the false revision of Canon Law (which extends "eucharistic hospitality" to schismatics), both of which *are presented as binding by their authors*. On the fourth, he fancies that a parasitical *non-Catholic sect* can "overlap" the Catholic Faith, though he wisely does not attempt to prove this. And on the fifth, he lumps all sedevacantists together as uncharitable (apparently SSPX members have a monoply on this virtue), and fails to see that the matter of stating a view against John Paul II's validity does not involve *per se* charity or its lack, merely a perception of the crisis.

The attitude exhibited here by Bishop Williamson seems to suggest an almost imperial scorn for those who dare disagree with the SSPX position. But in doing so, he simply reflects Archbishop Lefebvre's stance — one manifested throughout the Society — which could be summed up as: Econe has spoken; the matter is settled.

On the heels of Bishop Williamson's attack, however, new evidence has surfaced that Archbishop Lefebvre secretly subscribed to the "vacant see" theory. In France, Father Noel Barbara has uncovered evidence showing that the Archbishop allowed temporal interests to sway his decision in this regard. In an open letter to the SSPX accompanying the first trimester 1992 issue of his magazine, *Forts dans la Foi*, Father Barbara notes that on the day of the 1988 SSPX consecrations Bishop Castro-Mayer walked through the crowd of faithful, exclaiming: "We have no Pope! We have no Pope!" A Belgian priest, Father Paul Scoonbroodt, who was present that day, approached Archbishop Lefebvre about making a similar statement, yet the latter declined, saying that "such a declaration would make us lose too many people." At a conference in Brussels, the Archbishop acknowledged the correctness of a young sedevacantist's view, but once again refused to openly proclaim it: "I think that this young man is right, but I cannot say it, for it would do harm to our priories and my seminaries." (Translations courtesy of Father Joseph Collins.)

How Archbishop Lefebvre could privately doubt the validity of John Paul II, yet still enter negotiations with him and insist that SSPX priests use *una cum* ("in union with") a false Pope in their Masses is a mystery. As long as the SSPX keeps its vacillating *una cum* Masses, I can see no way a truly informed Catholic can take part, since in so doing he affirms his union with a non-Pope. Please God, may the day be not far distant when the bishops, priests and faithful of the SSPX manifest a full measure of courage by taking the *only* stand that will assure the eventual restoration of the Roman Catholic Church. †

This Issue of *The Athanasian* Late — The Reason

For the past eight years every issue of *The Athanasian* has been mailed out on time — and usually several days before the date on it. Every issue, that is, until this one. And the reason: lack of the funds needed to pay for the printing and mailing. I have no comment to make. Just thought that the matter might be worth noting. Incidentally, this is the 100th issue of *The Athanasian* (January 15, 1980 -June 1, 1992). *Fr. F. Fenton*

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The Quest For Happiness

Fr. Oswald Baker (England)

Every mature person knows that happiness does not come of material possessions, or power, or fame, or popularity, or even success. Happiness is a do-it-yourself art, and the root of it lies exclusively within us. It is impossible to make someone truly happy, and any promise to do so is extravagant. Efforts to attain perfect happiness simply by possessing, or being possessed by, another are as fruitless as the quest for happiness in wealth. Nor is happiness produced by optimism. Optimism can, in fact, be frivolous. A foolish tendency to be relaxed and cheerful in the face of ominous prospects is likely to be disastrous.

We are each fitted by our Maker for a particular work in life, and in so creating us God has foreseen the events and phases of our lives. He gives us all the graces we need to follow the path in this life along which He calls us to our heavenly home. Our vocation in life, with all its difficulties and its consolations, its joys and its sorrows, was contained in the act of our creation by God. What matters is not what happens around us, or even to us, but our reaction. When by the help of God's grace we respond to environment and influences according to fixed principles, inflexible standards, genuine ideals, then before God we are achieving personal fulfillment. When we behave habitually so, then we are truly mature. But the process of character formation is as long as our lives.

We must be aware of the delusion that if we had followed another course in life, or had had a different background and environment, or, of course, if we could win one hundred thousand dollars, life would have no problems. Such imagining is fallacious. Every way of life has its obstacles, strains and demands, and requires constant adaptation, not of rules but of self. One who is unable to face the problems of his way of life and adapt to them is immature, no matter his age or education. In every walk of life our adaptation has to be disinterested and generous. No one foresees all the sacrifices that will be required, in marriage, or in the priesthood, or in business or in any other form of practical living. Fail in generosity, fail in prayer, and you will fail to see how wrong you are about self. We are none of us so good as we think we are. We could be more earnest in our desire for virtue, more fervent in our quest for holiness. †

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CATHOLIC RESTORATION

For *The Athanasian* to carry a recommendation of any traditional Roman Catholic publication is indeed a rarity — and especially so when this is done without reservation. Such a recommendation I am very pleased to give to *Catholic Restoration*, a new and much needed periodical in the field of traditional Catholicism. Having thoroughly read each of the several issues that have thus far appeared, I have found all of the articles therein to be soundly Catholic and of exceptional quality. *Catholic Restoration* assuredly has my endorsement. It is published every two months and the subscription price is $15 per year in the USA and $30 foreign (Air Mail). Fr. Donald Sanborn is the editor. The subscription address:

1409 West 14 Mile Road, Suite 300
Madison Heights, Michigan 48071

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One of the writers for *Catholic Restoration* is Mr. John K. Weiskittel, a name very familiar to the readers of this newsletter whose excellent articles have been a feature of *The Athanasian* for some eleven years now. That his writings are appearing in *Catholic Restoration* is particularly gratifying to me because they will thereby get the far wider circulation which they so much deserve.

"John Paul II Gets A Third Eye" is the intriguing title of an article by Mr. Weiskittel which *Catholic Restoration* published in a previous issue. The title relates to the participation of "His Holiness" in the pagan rites of the Hindus when he visited India in 1986. This article is an exceptionally fine exposé of John Paul II. Fortunately, it is now available as a 22-page reprint ($1 per copy) and may be ordered from *Catholic Restoration* at the above address. An extensive distribution of it could prove to be very worthwhile. *Fr. F. Fenton*

Pray the Rosary Daily

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