
Rightful Aspirations

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Lt. Col. David Sonnier


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Dozenal numeration is a system of thinking of numbers in twelves, rather than tens. Twelve is much more versatile, having four even divisors—2, 3, 4, and 6—as opposed to only two for ten. This means that such hatefulness as “0.333...” for $\frac{1}{3}$ and “0.1666...” for $\frac{1}{6}$ are things of the past, replaced by easy “0;4” (four twelfths) and “0;2” (two twelfths).

In dozenal, counting goes “one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, elv, dozen; dozen one, dozen two, dozen three, dozen four, dozen five, dozen six, dozen seven, dozen eight, dozen nine, dozen ten, dozen elv, two dozen, two dozen one...” It’s written as such: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Ƨ, Ǝ, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 1Ƨ, 1Ǝ, 20, 21...

Dozenal counting is at once much more efficient and much easier than decimal counting, and takes only a little bit of time to get used to. Further information can be had from the dozenal societies (<http://www.dozenal.org>), as well as in many other places on the Internet.

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Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
1 <i>Je ne propose rien; j'expose</i>	1
1 From <i>De Oppresso Liber</i> to UNIX	3
2 And Then it Happened.	ε
3 The Great Awakening	13
4 Exactly What Did Happen?	19
5 The Second Vatican Council	23
6 Girls Will Be Boys — or — From UNIX to Eunuchs	29
7 Montgomery, Alabama	35
8 Fort Bragg, North Carolina	3ε
9 The Society of Saint Pius X	65
ζ The General's Exec	77
ε De Oppresso Liber	83
10 Whither NATO?: Brussels, Belgium, June 15, 1998	91
11 Quo Vadis?	95
12 The Big Lie	71
13 Letters Across the Atlantic	79
14 Finally!	ε5
15 The US Army vs. The Catholic Church	ε7
16 Meet the Press	105
17 Excuses, Excuses	10ε
18 Farewell Letter	123
19 <i>Introíbo ad altáre Dei</i>	125

2	<i>Je n'expose rien; je propose.</i>	127
17	A Modest Proposal for an Immodest Era	129
Appendices		
A	Ten Years of the Motu Proprio "Ecclesia Dei"	139
B	Letter from "Tim" to the Chaplains at Fort Bragg	143

Acknowledgements

ONE OF MY PROFESSORS at West Point commented that it takes a period of at least five years after a divorce to fully understand what went wrong. When I asked him why, he said that people are not able to see events clearly because of human nature — their emotions can cloud their reasoning. With that thought in mind, I've held publication of this saga for five years to ensure that my emotions did not cloud my narration of the events leading to my departure from an Army I loved in 2001. The events were all well documented, with meeting notes, letters I've kept on file, and hard copies of e-mail I've retained.

This book has been a collective effort, and my role in it has only been to string the sequence of events together into somewhat readable form. My apologies for the numerous military acronyms, which the civilian reader may find confusing, but it is intended for the military audience — particularly Catholics serving in the military — so that they can know and understand that they are being deprived of their heritage.

I am most grateful to a number of individuals who must remain anonymous, either because I was unable to contact them to obtain permission to use their real names, or for other reasons. I am very grateful to the Donnelly family, Lt. Cleary, Tim, and LTC Kleinfeld; perhaps their real names will be used in a future version.

We are most grateful to Paul Belien and Alexandra Colen for the inspiring and most courageous example they've been to us and to so many other people. We're also grateful to the many French and Belgian families we met along the way, most notably the Brions.

We are forever grateful to the many priests who helped us: Fr. Gerald Duroisin, Msgr. Edward Spiers, Fr. William Hudson, Fr. Domingos Pereira, Fr. Hervé Hygonnet, Fr. Prasad Marneni, Fr. Josef Bisig, Fr. Arnaud Devillers, Fr. Marc-Antoine Dor, Fr. Larry Jensen, Fr. Charles Troncale, Fr. James

Jackson, Bishop Joseph L. Howze, and Msgr. Gilles Wach.

I am most grateful to those who helped in the editing for both readability and content: Dr. Ronda Chervin, Dr. Joseph Bonometti and his lovely wife Peggy, Anne Kootz, and my old friend John Labrucherie who I haven't seen in years.

Additional thanks to those who reminded me of the necessity and urgency of getting this into print: Charles Coulomb, Michael Davies† and even Zach Mobley.

All servicemen should be forever grateful to Brig. General Earnie Callender USAF, for setting an uncommonly good example for general officers to follow. We have more admiration and gratitude for him than he will ever know.

I am personally grateful to Chuck Wilson and the Saint Joseph Foundation for the peace of mind they gave me after a sleepless night resulting from a bogus threat of "excommunication." Had they not been there, who knows what may have resulted? A mad Green Beret on a rampage with guns and grenades?

I am also particularly grateful to Fred Haehnel for working to build and expand *Una Voce America* at a time at which I needed the help this organization could provide by putting me in touch with the right people — Michael Davies and Chuck Wilson, for example.

Thanks to Dr. Austin Welsh for throwing me a life preserver at the end of my military career, and to my colleagues at Lyon College for their support as I've worked on this book.

I am even grateful to the priests, mostly military chaplains, who treated us with disdain and disrespect and even took the time to express their sentiments in writing. Had they not done so, I would have been accused of exaggerating because it is certainly not easy to believe that priests would behave in the manner described herein. Again, we can see that even those who intend to thwart God's will end up contributing to His Greater Glory unwittingly.

Finally, I am forever grateful to Lorri for so thoroughly rejecting the modern notions of motherhood and feminism in favor of the Catholic Faith, and for John David, William, Clair, Louis, Annie, Thomas and Anthony for so firmly embracing the traditional Catholic Faith we've strived so hard to pass on to them. May they always do so.

Part 1

*Je ne propose rien;
j'expose*

Chapter 1

From *De Oppresso Liber* to UNIX

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

President Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the Brandenburg Gate, West Berlin, Germany, June 12, 1987, in a speech that was delivered to the people of West Berlin, yet it was also audible on the East side of the Berlin wall.

THE NOVEMBER 1989 FALL of the Berlin Wall and the consequential end of the Cold War caught me by surprise. I thought I would be engaged in this monumental Cold War effort for the rest of my life. Suddenly it was over. Just like that. And there had been no warning that the end was in sight. . . just, from one day to the next, German kids were climbing on the once formidable wall, drinking wine, singing, laughing, mocking the ridiculous and absurd scenario that had existed for the last half of the twentieth Century. Now what? What's a Cold Warrior to do?

I had been commissioned at West Point on 27 May 1981. Even at the time of my graduation I never believed that I would take great interest in being a soldier. Four years at West Point had given me the knowledge I would need as an officer, but, I must admit, the experience did not leave me with enough desire to commit twenty years to the Army. I took my initial assignment with the 7th Infantry Division at Fort Ord, California, assuming I would spend the mandatory five years in the Army and then find a job working as an electrical engineer somewhere in the area — perhaps Silicon Valley. I had

more interest in eventually going to work in industry as an electrical engineer than in being an Infantry officer. Initially I just went through the motions at the Infantry Officer Basic Course at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Then somewhere during my time going through the Infantry training at Fort Benning something clicked. It all came together. I found myself actually enjoying the rugged outdoor life, the weapons ranges, the long road marches. I discovered my agility at navigating with a map and compass, with tactical thinking, and mission planning. I began to actually enjoy being a soldier and I began to think like a soldier. As a Southerner, I was unafraid of snakes, insects, and heat. As a competitive swimmer, I was unfazed by the physical requirements. As a Catholic, I was unafraid of death. This final point was not something I pondered excessively or even considered important until much later in life, and I will expound upon it later. It's not that being a Catholic exempts one from the normal fear one experiences in times of danger, but...I'll explain later. My most delightful discovery at that time was that I could do just as well as some of the top-of-the-class guys I hadn't been able to keep up with academically at West Point. Soon I found myself volunteering for Ranger School. After all, *everyone* of importance seemed to have one of those Ranger Tabs on their left shoulder.

When I first encountered my future wife I was sporting what's known as a "Ranger Buzz" — the shortest haircut possible without shaving your head. Through some small miracle, even though the two of us had attended high school together, we had never met or spoken with each other. I say "miracle," because it's quite likely that had she met me as a high school student she wouldn't have been in the least interested in ever again having anything to do with me. The reasons for which I say this are best left unexplained, but I will allude to the fact that they have to do with some rather bizarre hairstyles and clothing fashions I fell in with in the 1970s. The fact that my future wife and I never met is all the more interesting when one considers the extremely small size of the high school we both attended, and that we were both members of the same Catholic parish in predominantly Protestant Mississippi. In fact, it must have been Divine Providence that we never met until I had been away from home for long enough to get a good haircut. Well — a cheap haircut — a 1/16 inch buzz that was required for Ranger School. During a weekend leave in our home town in Mississippi I made a last minute decision to attend a wedding, and after the reception, my sister Joan and her friend (and my future wife) Lorri invited me to go with a group of their friends to New Orleans. We made the two-hour drive and invaded the honeymoon of the poor newly wed couple, then spent the evening visiting with them at Pat

O'Brien's. By this time I had become more respectable, if it is possible to be a respectable honey-moon invader. The groom, as it turned out, was an Army Aviator (helicopter pilot) who would be flying missions for my Ranger Class! The simple joy of spending an evening talking with Lorri and her friends was soon over, but it left a lasting impression I tried to shake off as I returned to the business of being a soldier.

I survived Ranger school, but by the time I actually reported to Fort Ord for my first assignment in February 1982 I was ruined as a future electrical engineer. I paid no attention to Silicon Valley — didn't even pay a visit — and I spent all of my spare time in rugged outdoor activities — on the pistol range, riding a motorcycle, hiking, or fishing. I never learned to enjoy and appreciate the finer administrative details of running a military organization with perfection, but I learned to love being an Infantry Platoon Leader.

After only eighteen months at Fort Ord, the company I was assigned to, C Company 3/17 Infantry, transferred to the Republic of Korea. The entire company was transferred together. This massive reassignment was based on an early 1980s effort by the Department of the Army to reassign units, instead of individuals, for rotation to the Republic of Korea for a rather difficult one-year period. It seemed like a good idea at the time. The origins of the concept, known as "COHORT,"¹ were in the regimental system in the U.K. Supposedly, soldiers who entered the army at the same time would go through Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training together, spend an initial tour together in the US, and then rotate overseas to Korea. It never quite worked for us the way it did in the U.K. for various reasons. Our company arrived in Korea in August of 1983, and we spent a year working just a few kilometers from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), at a small installation called "Camp Grieves" which we affectionately referred to as "Camp Grievous." Located just north of the Imjin River, the battalion at this post had the mission of patrolling the US sector of the DMZ during the most difficult time of the year — in the dead of the bitter, cold Korean winter.

It was during a leave prior to the transition of my company from Fort Ord to Korea that I met Lorri again and we were quickly engaged. Oddly enough, just as a wedding had brought us together previously, now it was another wedding that would bring us together for good. Her college roommate was getting married to an old friend of mine from the AAU swim team days who

¹COHORT was the Army's unsuccessful unit manning program of the 1980s. The acronym COHORT is derived from "Cohesion, Readiness and Training." The program was unsuccessful; studies showed that the constant rotation of officers and senior noncommissioned officers kept COHORT units from reaching their full potential.

was now finishing SEAL training — the difficult six-month BUDS (Basic Underwater Demolition School) in Coronado. Lorri and I attended his graduation, then the wedding ceremony, then in the days that followed we discovered that we were meant for each other. People are fond of saying that they “decided to get married” but if one considers marriage a divine institution then one “discovers” or discerns one’s spouse — or discerns some other vocation in life. Our marriage had to wait through a one-year Korea tour, which in retrospect would have been much easier had I not “discerned” this marriage vocation just prior. After finishing a year with the 2nd Infantry Division in the Republic of Korea, I returned to the US and we were married less than a week later. We set off for Fort Benning, Georgia in September 1984, where I was assigned for the six-month Infantry Officers Advanced Course (IOAC).

It was about this time that I began to study Spanish. Studying Spanish and observing events in Central America led me to a genuine belief that we were justified in taking steps to prevent the wholesale turnover of Latin American governments to Cuban-sponsored guerrilla groups. It seemed that their first target was always the Church. I read of the persecution of the Church, the silencing of Cardinal Obando y Bravo in Nicaragua,² and the use of the military to prevent the continued advancement of the communist ideologues seemed quite appropriate to me. And it seemed that President Kennedy, years ago, had placed into a position of honor just the type of military outfit for times such as these — the Special Forces, better known as the Green Berets. So, after completion of the six-month Infantry Officers Advanced Course at Fort Benning Georgia, I transferred to Fort Bragg, North Carolina to give it a try. After a rather painful six months in the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) I earned the Green Beret and was assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group as the commander of an A-Team, Operational Detachment A-735.

Much of what followed was quite interesting, but outside the scope of this book. I derived more satisfaction from being an A-Team leader than any other position I ever held. If I could have done it, I’d have stayed several years; however, after a mere two years I was forced to transfer to a staff position.

Lorri and I had no children at this point in my military career. I was deployed sometimes nine or ten months out of the year, and with my misplaced priorities the most important thing to do was to get my wife into the work

²For an excellent overview of the reality of the Sandinista era, read *Nicaragua: Corozon Herida de las Americas*.

force to make some money. I paid her tuition for a masters degree in Physical Therapy at Duke University and licensure as a Physical Therapist so that she could earn a second income, as if we needed that instead of children.

In 1988 I departed from the 7th Special Forces Group and we relocated to Colombia, South America. I was assigned as the Exchange Officer at the *Escuela de Lanceros*, the “Lancero School,” at Tolemaida, a Colombian training center about 100 kilometers south of Bogota. Taking this position required that I first complete the *Lancero* course, a very difficult two-month commando course similar to our own US Army Ranger School. I did so, but by the end of the two months a serious case of dysentery and malaria left me looking like a skeleton or a refugee — the kind of sight that has become all too familiar in the “enlightened” times in which we live. It was worth the effort, though, in more ways than one. The kind of humiliation and suffering one goes through to get through the training was beneficial to me as an American, since Americans tend to deliberately deprive ourselves of the normal level of both humility and suffering, having lost any notion of the importance of humility and the redemptive value of suffering. Despite the difficulties of getting through the training, the time I spent as an instructor at the *Escuela de Lanceros* was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, and if I had been able to stay longer I certainly would have. The Colombians were kind and gracious. We were assigned a set of Colombian Officer Quarters, and we quickly established some good friendships with the people around us. There were very few Colombians who spoke any English, so Lorri had to learn Spanish as well. She quickly became conversant in Spanish, established a circle of friends among the officers’ wives, learned to cook *Ajiaco* and other Colombian dishes, taught her friends some of her favorite recipes, and worked a few hours in the military hospital from time to time.

My assignment was to give some of the instruction for the Lancero School, which included marksmanship, patrolling, riverboat operations, rope bridge construction, and such things. There were some periods of time during which I was busy day after day from 4:00 in the morning until late at night. But then, when there was not a course in session I was virtually free to travel around the country. We were able to get to know this beautiful Andean country well.

Colombia suffered during this period; there was an outbreak of violence prior to the 1989 elections, and three of the leading presidential candidates were assassinated. The spouses of all US Military and State Department personnel were temporarily evacuated back to the U.S. Despite Colombia’s difficulties, it soon became apparent that the Cold War was over. We had

no access to television in Tolemaida, but during a brief trip to Panama in late 1989 I had access to cable TV and an opportunity to catch up on the news from the US point of view. It was then that I had the shocking but pleasant CNN view of German kids climbing on “The Wall,” drinking wine, and breaking off pieces of the formerly formidable barrier with pickaxes and hammers.

What to do? As much as I loved being a soldier, I had not expected this and began to wonder if there wasn’t some other way I should be spending my time. Would there still be a need for highly trained Special Forces soldiers? A friend of mine suggested that I could go to work as a hit man for the Mafia. I was open to all suggestions at the moment, but they had to be within reason. . .

A few weeks later, I was running a range for a *Lancero* class when I received a message to contact the U.S. Military Advisory Group (MILGROUP) in Bogota. I called Major Yul Campos on the microwave telephone, who informed me that my assignment officer was trying to contact me. It turned out to be an assignment in which I would go to graduate school to learn about computers and then go on to a two-year position in which I would be working as an Army “Systems Automation” Officer (or, in other words, an Army computer guy). I didn’t think twice.

What a radical change! I left the world of Special Forces, the Latinos, the great outdoors, and the frame of thought I had been living in for years and found myself in a mysterious and fascinating world of emerging computer technology. All of what I had studied years ago as an Electrical Engineer was still relevant, but programming had taken on a whole new meaning. Whereas I had previously spent an entire semester just learning a few basic constructs for a program, now such things were covered in the first few weeks of class. I learned the exciting basics of computer networks, how computers are designed, artificial intelligence (simulation of the human thought process), databases, and analysis of algorithms — the study of efficiency of programs — and automata theory. I studied digital logic, computer architecture, assembly language, and parallel computing. It seemed like an endless process: the more I learned, the more I discovered that there was to learn.

While we were in Atlanta Lorri worked for a short period of time as a physical therapist, but she soon left her job when our first child, John David, was born. We had been married for seven years by the time he came along, and we had become quite set in our ways. This invasion of our privacy was yet another change in our radically changing lives! We suddenly found ourselves beginning to consider the future.

I graduated in June 1992 with a Masters Degree in Computer Science from Georgia Institute of Technology. We moved to Dayton, Ohio, and I was assigned as one of the faculty members at the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. About half of my students were Army officers and the other half were Air Force officers. I taught classes in introductory and advanced digital hardware and computer networks. There were so many interesting problems to solve, and so many fascinating things were happening in the world of technology. The intellectual environment was so stimulating that, even in my spare time I would find myself thinking about concepts that I would like to test in the digital hardware lab or daydreaming about programs I wanted to write. I did some research on a parallel processor, the INTEL Hypercube, and even managed to get a paper published in conference proceedings.

Life was good. I had found a new home — I was now a computer guy! That's one way to recycle a Cold Warrior.

Chapter 2

And Then it Happened...

IT WAS SOMETIME IN EARLY MAY 1993, and I was deep in thought. I don't recall exactly what the subject was; perhaps something we would be doing in the hardware lab that week. Or, perhaps it was the some network software. Maybe it was some upcoming lab project. Who knows? Something intriguing. Something fascinating. Whatever the case, what I was thinking about had absolutely nothing at all to do with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Lorri huffed, slapped her missalette with the back of her hand, and slammed it noisily into the back of the pew in front of us. She crossed her arms, and glared at the short-dressed lady doing the reading. My wife's evident fury brought me back to the awareness of my surroundings, and the horrible realization that I had been daydreaming instead of paying attention to what was going on in church. This couldn't be good. I had become accustomed to thinking about all kinds of things during Mass. I knew it was wrong, but I could never seem to concentrate for some reason. What was Lorri so angry about, anyway?

“Stupid politically-correct...idiots ... this is *ridiculous!*”

My heart skipped a beat. She was furious. “What's the matter?” I whispered, immediately regretting that I hadn't just waited to find out later.

Without saying a word she picked up the missalette again, found the text that the lady with bare legs and a mini-skirt by the altar was reading. Darts shot from her eyes as she pointed to the text of the scriptures. I followed along, observing that wherever there was a reference to “him,” or “he,” or the Almighty “His,” or any other reference to anything masculine it was being

changed to the feminine form. This lady was changing the Sacred Scriptures, the Word of God! The nerve! Feminism had gone too far this time. We had become accustomed to seeing it all around us; angry feminists were everywhere, making all kinds of ridiculous demands, condemning the Church for not ordaining women (or, rather, “womyn,” some feminists preferred, in order to avoid the string of characters “men”) and insisting on all kinds of paybacks from the “male dominated society.”

Hearing condemnations of the Church for every little this-and-that was something that the both of us were long accustomed to. In predominantly Protestant Mississippi people had held a strange view of us; we were accustomed to being in the minority, and we had always felt a special bond with other Catholics who, we believed, held the same Faith as us. But here was something new. This...this “Catholic” lady was actually changing the scriptures! The priest sat nearby, doing nothing about it. Did he approve? Why didn’t he just read it correctly himself? Was this lady one of those liberal pro-abortion Catholics? If so, why was she up there on the altar? And who gave her the right to change the scriptures?

We had chosen the house we rented in Dayton partly because it was close to the church we were now sitting in — Corpus Christi. The idea of walking to Mass on Sundays seemed so romantic and quaint, yet we had been mildly disappointed from the first day. The pro-life activists in the congregation were not allowed to distribute literature; and we found that almost everyone else was overjoyed about the recent election of Bill Clinton as president. What was *that* all about? Isn’t each abortion a murder, according to the Catholic Church? Hadn’t he just run his campaign on keeping this act of murder “legal?” What about his administration — Jocylen Elders, for example — hurling these bizarre accusations against our “male dominated Church?” His efforts to force the military to accept open homosexuality? How could these people, supposedly Catholics, support the Clinton administration?

And why were there “altar girls?” Since when was this allowed?

In the military we had always had to move around; each time we relocated, we would simply find the nearest Catholic Church and that’s where we would attend Mass. But it seemed since our return from Colombia, we had consistently been disappointed with whatever parish Church we selected. The thought of having moved into the house we were renting specifically to be close to this church, which was apparently run by operatives of the Democratic Party, was unnerving. I put the thought out of my head, or just blamed myself... I was the problem. I was at fault here. I had been sitting there thinking about work and all kinds of other things during Mass, which

may have been a sin, and I needed to go to confession, get my head back in the present, and be a good Catholic.

Lorri, who had been much more aware and silently suffering because of these shenanigans for some time, had long since found an interesting Bible Study to attend with a group of other women in the downtown Dayton area. Many of them were former Catholics, and the Bible Study was based on a rather fundamentalist view of the scriptures. The scriptures were to be understood exactly the way they were translated into English. . . which of course depended somewhat on the version of the English language used. Exceptions were often made when such interpretation could lead to the Catholic understanding of the Scriptures; then it was considered to be “symbolic.” Despite these contradictions of this understanding of the scriptures, these women were sincere. They had salvation in mind, not the Democratic Party agenda. Lorri was now expressing a desire to attend “church services” with these women. Her suggestion, after this feminist-scripture-rewrite incident was essentially that we should go to their church to hear a dose of genuine Christian doctrine, maybe to get a warning that Hell exists or that abortion is wrong or something like that, and then go to Mass just to receive the Sacrament and meet our Sunday obligation. I did a rare thing — I began to give serious thought to what was going on in the Church. I recognized from the start that I was at least partly at fault here. Whatever was happening in the Church at large that the priests and bishops had become so enamored with the left-wing ideologies rattling loose in our society, I was clearly in the wrong for not being seriously engaged as a Catholic; basically for not paying attention and being engaged.

The following week a seminar was to be held at our parish — a “Life in the Spirit” seminar. My wife suggested that I go. She did not tell me this at the time, but she had already started praying that I would take the lead as the spiritual head of our little family, which now included one child. We had no clue what a “Life in the Spirit” seminar was. All we knew was that I was going to become more actively involved in the Church.

The event was to take the better part of the day on a Saturday. I arrived on time, waited, and looked around as others arrived. About thirty people were there. Then some speaker came in; he gave a motivational talk about “speaking in tongues,” and then he began to do so. Or so he claimed. It appeared to me that he was just babbling on like an idiot, but supposedly he was doing the same thing the apostles had done when they had spoken to the multitudes in various languages. Others joined in the babbling. The only problem I saw, and I still see to this day, was that there was not a person

anywhere in the room that could understand what the other was saying. To get around this inconvenient and obvious fact, the babblers said that they were “talking to God,” and expressing their love to Him in a language understood by Him and by nobody else.

Then a priest came in and began to do the same thing! He babbled! Afterward we spent some time in prayer, with most everyone around me carrying on in this manner (I think I just said some Hail Marys), then we read some scriptures, and then we broke into some small groups. This was the interesting part. We were each encouraged to babble, in our small groups. The group leader babbled, and then we went around the group of. . .oh, say, about five. . . and everyone took turns doing it. Except for me. I was rather ashamed of myself; obviously some recalcitrant, rebellious element on my soul would not permit me to partake of this babbling, so I just shook my head in shame.

Afterward we had a small reception, and a little old lady was crying tears of joy; she had done it! She had finally done it! She had babbled! Oh, Glorious Day! It appeared to be a most important accomplishment for this poor woman.

I left in a daze.

Chapter 3

The Great Awakening

FOR SOME TIME I HAD BEEN having lunch once a week with several other members of the faculty at the Air Force Institute of Technology. The faculty members were a mix of civilian and military, we had a variety of backgrounds, and it was something I always looked forward to.

On one such occasion shortly after having wasted a Saturday with this babbling experience, I mentioned the bizarre babbling episode to a friend I knew to be Catholic. Will was a good Catholic. In fact, a very good and devout Catholic who seemed to know more than anyone I had ever met. He was a bit older than myself. For many years he had been a fallen-away Catholic, but he had returned to practicing his Faith in recent years and brought his family along with him. His rather exasperated response is forever etched in my memory: “I’m telling you for the last time — *you need to just go to the Latin Mass!*”

Now, according to my wife, sometimes people tell me things that I don’t hear. I had heard Will say this same thing several times over the previous months. Each time had evoked an image of a priest facing a high altar, with a cloud of incense hanging over him as light shone through a colorful stain glass windows. A nostalgic image from my childhood. A very beautiful, radiant image. For some reason I had put it out of my mind each and every time.

But now with this new crisis emerging — with my wife wanting to go to a Protestant church to get some decent Christian doctrine, and with our parish forbidding pro-life literature, encouraging people to babble like idiots, and changing the Sacred Scriptures, I was ready to confront what he was suggesting. It just so happened that this weekend Lorri was taking John

David to Mississippi for a week to visit her parents. I thanked Will for the invitation and wrote down the directions. He said to get there fifteen minutes early for the Rosary.

Mysterium Fidei

I arrived a few minutes early and walked into Holy Family Catholic Church, which appeared to be a typical Catholic Church, as I had remembered them, but had not seen in quite some time. Gone were the felt banners. Gone were the short dresses, the hustle and bustle of people running around in their various “ministries.” Gone was the noise. There was complete silence, broken occasionally by a cough, a kneeler dropping too hard, or the squawk of a baby or a small child. Someone began leading the Rosary.

Most of us can point to a few defining moments in our lives, and they usually come at an unexpected time. I was completely unprepared for what followed. The Rosary concluded; there was a priest and there were altar boys; and then the choir began singing. I have no idea whether it was the *Asperges Me* or the *Introit*, but it was Gregorian Chant accompanied by an organ — the subtle organ accompaniment I now recognize to be from the *Solennes*. I felt chills from head to toe; there was something so supernatural about the whole affair. I was able to detect strings of words that I recognized as they continued on through what I now know to be the *Missa de Angelis*:

... *Kyrie eleison. . . Christe eleison. . .* That’s the “Lord have mercy. . . Christ have mercy. . .”!

... *et crucifixus et pro nobis. . .* and He was Crucified for us. . .

... *unam, Sanctam, Catholicam, et apostolicam Ecclesiam. . .* One Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church. . .

This language was close enough to Spanish that it was easy for me to follow. I knew no Latin, and even though I was occasionally lost there was something so overwhelmingly beautiful about the whole affair that made it inconsequential whether or not I understood a single thing.

The Epistle and Gospel were read. . . by the priest. There were still no women flitting around on the altar, and I somehow knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that I wouldn’t see any such thing on that day! I somehow knew that there would be no announcements such as “everyone turn and shake the hand of your neighbor,” or “do we have any birthdays today?” or “If you’re a visitor would you please stand. . .” I knew there would be no applause or guitar music. There would be no platoon of eucharistic ministers or babbling.

There would be no liberal ideology infused in the sermon...in fact, when the priest began his sermon, and it was unlike any I had heard in ages. He actually had the courage to condemn sin! Not just the sins it's politically correct to condemn. We had for years been hearing condemnations from the altar of the sins of bigotry, the sins of intolerance towards homosexuals, the sins of not being "open to change," and anything else that was seen as offensive to the liberal agenda. Yet, we had been getting nothing but complete silence on the issue of abortion. Complete silence on the spread of the homosexual agenda. Or worse...one sometimes wondered if some of our clergy were fostering support for it. The truth on this would take years to reach the public eye.

After Mass I felt like I was in a different world. I met Will, his wife Cecilia, and their two daughters on the steps outside the church. As it turned out, they all sang in the choir. Then they invited me to lunch, and of course I couldn't resist, since my wife was gone and I've never been much of a cook anyway. By now I was full of questions. I followed them to the officers housing area they lived in at Wright Patterson Air Force Base. While we were grilling on the patio, I started in with what must have sounded like an interrogation. The answer to each question opened up ten new questions.

"What about this French bishop...didn't he get excommunicated for saying Mass in Latin?"

"That would be Archbishop Lefebvre. No, he got excommunicated for illicitly consecrating bishops; not for saying Mass in Latin. Any priest or bishop can say Mass in Latin. The Pope normally does during his Daily Mass."

"I thought Vatican II did away with Latin...didn't it?"

"Vatican II said that Latin and Gregorian Chant should remain in the Mass. Modernists hate it, so they removed it by convincing people that it's all forbidden."

"What's a Modernist?"

"A heretic."

"Does the Catholic Church still teach that there's heresy?"

"Yes."

"Why do you never here sermons condemning it?"

"Why do you never hear sermons condemning abortion?"

Now that was a good question! Why *don't* you ever hear sermons condemning abortion? Why were the pro-life people at Corpus Christi treated so badly? There were several genuinely dedicated pro-life activists there, and yet they were never allowed to distribute hand-outs within the Church for

some reason.

Will continued on: “I never heard good sermons in the Novus Ordo. You almost always get good Catholic Doctrine in sermons if you attend the Tridentine Latin Mass regularly. We have the Indult Mass here.”

“What’s ‘Novus Ordo?’ What’s ‘Tridentine?’ What’s ‘Indult?’” My head was spinning.

“The ‘Tridentine Mass’ is what we had throughout the West up until a few years ago. The ‘Novus Ordo’ is the new Mass. It’s been around since about 1970. A few years ago the Pope asked all of the bishops to reallocate the old Mass. In some cases they’ve complied. In most cases they haven’t. Anyway, it’s here in Dayton by ‘indult,’ which means the permission of the bishop.”

As he continued, I couldn’t believe the story that began to unfold. Vatican II had most certainly *not* required that Latin be removed from the liturgy, and it certainly had stated clearly that Gregorian Chant was to be a part of the liturgy:

“[T]he use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 36)

“The treasury of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 114)

“The Church acknowledges Gregorian Chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 116)¹

Latin is to be preserved! Gregorian Chant has “pride of place!” Pride of place? Until today, I hadn’t heard the first note of Gregorian Chant during Mass since I was a child! Yet, what had been revealed to the public through the news media over the previous thirty years was that the Mass was to be strictly in the vernacular. The average American had no way of knowing that he was being led astray.

The unfathomable began to cross my mind — was it possible that Catholics knew their Faith so poorly that we had been tricked? Unless one took the time to actually pick up a copy of the Vatican II documents and read them, how was one to know? Why was it that so few people ever took the time to do this? Where were the priests and bishops who were supposed to be explaining this to us, and why was I having to hear it from a lay Catholic?

“Well. . .” Will explained, “It was the way in which these documents were written that was the catch. Each of the above was followed by a ‘*but. . .*’

¹These three quotations and full citations can be found also below, in Chapter 17, at 129.

clause that left a loophole too big for the leftist ideologues to resist. Let me give you an example:

“The use of Latin is to be preserved in the Latin rites... *[b]ut since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or in other parts of the liturgy, may frequently be of great advantage to the people, a wider use may be made of it, especially in readings, directives and in some prayers and chants.*²

“Now, in no way could one construe that the elimination of Latin from the liturgy had ever been intended. However, that extreme interpretation was the one that had prevailed.”

By the time I said farewell I had a headache. It was too much to comprehend for the moment, but I tried anyway. Intellectual candor means occasionally having to accept a conclusion you hope you don't have to reach. I resolved to study the issue related to the status of the Tridentine Mass, and accept whatever conclusion I arrived at.

²This quotation is taken from the translation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* available at <http://www.christusrex.com/www1/CDHN/v8.html>.

Chapter 4

Exactly What Did Happen?

We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement. . . we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.

Isaiah 28:15

THE NEXT WEEKEND Lorri and John David were back in Dayton with me. At this point I had no problem convincing her of the need to attend Mass at Holy Family instead of Corpus Christi. Shortly after Mass began I looked over and saw her wiping tears from her eyes.

Over the next week I began to immerse myself in study in an effort to understand what had happened. My joy at finding that the Mass I had known as a young child had survived was accompanied by a profound disturbance over the contradictions I was seeing. Why was it that we had been told that Vatican II meant the Mass was to be exclusively in the vernacular if that was not the case? What was important was not so much the Latin itself, but the integrity of the Mass. In theory the Tridentine Mass could have just been translated directly into good English. Instead, it appeared, at initial glance through the information I could dig up on the subject, that the Tridentine Mass had been scrapped for a new Mass composed by a committee which included Protestants, people separated from the Catholic Church because of their refusal to accept the authority of the Church — for the first time ever in history. But not really — as a matter of fact it had never really been scrapped. Or at least that was not entirely the intent. Or was it?

As it turned out, the “New Mass,” known as the *Novus Ordo* (“New Order”), was not the direct result of the Second Vatican Council, but rather came much later. It was the product of a committee led by an Archbishop who was suspected of having been a Freemason. Archbishop Bugnini had been a liturgical radical for years, and it was under his influence that the new Mass was “designed,” with the help of some Protestant “experts,” and placed into effect. In April 1976 Tito Casini, a leading Catholic writer in Italy, publicly accused Bugnini of being a Freemason.¹ A few months later, October 8, 1976, *Le Figaro* published a report stating that Archbishop Bugnini denied ever having had any Masonic affiliation. He also denied the charges of Freemasonry in his autobiography, but whatever the case, Paul VI assigned him to a useless titular post in Iran within hours of being presented with a dossier on his Masonic affiliations.²

The changes Bugnini ushered in were radical. Nothing of this nature had ever been attempted in either the East or the West. Liturgies of the Catholic Church, or the Orthodox for that matter, were not designed by committees. They had developed slowly and organically over centuries. Suddenly what had once been considered Holy and Sacred was old and tiresome and had to be replaced at all costs. But instead of the dawn of a great new era, the results turned out to be more disastrous than anyone could comprehend — and very few can comprehend to this day. Mass attendance fell dramatically, vocations slowed to a standstill, orders of priests and nuns were dying.³ But by the time Archbishop Bugnini was sent into virtual exile it was too late. The damage was done.

Although the *Novus Ordo* was promulgated in Latin initially, it was very poorly translated — even mistranslated — into English. In other vernacular languages, such as Spanish, better translations had been produced, but in English the mistranslations were so severe as to cause some people — a small number who were paying attention — to wonder whether the Mass was still valid. For example, I had always heard on Sundays:

This is my blood, which is shed for you and for **all** for the forgiveness of sins. . .

which was translated from

¹Casini, Tito, *Nel Forno di Satana* (Florence: Carro di San Giovanni, 1976), p. 150.

²Davies, Michael, *Pope John's Council* (Angelus Press, Kansas City, Missouri 1992), p. 172.

³Jones, Kenneth C, *Index of Leading Catholic Indicators: The Church Since Vatican II* (Oriens Publishing Company, St. Louis, Missouri, 2003).

pro vobis et pro multis... (for you and for **many**).

The original translation indicates that Christ's suffering redeems many, but not all. The English translation seems to indicate that all are redeemed. According to some, this simple error has led many to accept the heresy of universal salvation. It was quite true, I had to admit, that Catholics no longer believed as I had once been taught... that not all are saved. Whether or not this mistranslation had led to the widespread belief of universal salvation, one thing was clear: Catholics no longer seemed to believe in the concept of Hell. Or if they did, they believed that nobody went there. It certainly wasn't something that would happen to us modern day people. All of this had made it possible for modern Catholics to justify the strange ideologies so many of them had embraced.

There were other mistranslations — no small number of them. I heard a few of them on that day, enough to begin to understand the gravity of the situation. For example: *Credo in unum Deum...* translates to "I believe in one God..." not "We believe..." I obviously cannot speak for the person standing next to me. Yet the translation that was used for the English liturgy was "we." This coincided with an over-emphasis on the communal aspect of the Mass to the detriment of accurate translation.

Furthermore there had never been any mandate to strip the altar rails out of the churches, to receive communion standing, to remove the statues, and to engage in the radical church-wrecking that had occurred. And "girl altar boys" were strictly forbidden. This practice, in fact, was a very grave abuse of the liturgy. It had been strictly forbidden in at least two postconciliar documents:

(April 1980): *Inaestimabile donum* No. 18: "There are, of course, various roles that women can perform in the liturgical assembly: these include reading the Word of God and proclaiming the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. Women are not, however, permitted to act as altar servers."⁴

(September 1970): *Liturgicae instaurationes*, No. 7: "In conformity with norms traditional in the Church, women (single, married, religious), whether in churches, homes, convents, schools, or institutions for women, are barred from serving the priest at

⁴This document is available at the Adoremus website, <http://www.adoremus.org/InaestimabileDonum.html>.

the altar.”⁵

“What are women doing reading the ‘Word of God’ anyway?” my wife interjected when I showed her this. “This is contrary to St. Paul’s teaching that women are to remain silent. What does this mean? Do they read the Epistle and the Gospel? Just the Epistle? Just the Gospel? Who’s in charge of this Church?”

“The Pope is in charge, John Paul II, and he says they’re not supposed to be wearing vestments and pretending to be altar boys,” I said. “They’re cross-dressers. Transvestites.”

“Confused. Nice people can get confused. A couple of months ago when I complained to you about this, you didn’t seem to think it was any big deal.”

She was right, but I hadn’t known any better at that time. “That was before I knew it was condemned by both John Paul II and his predecessor. Anyway, don’t worry about it. We don’t have to go to Mass there anymore,” I said.

She nearly dropped the book she was re-shelving and stared at me in disbelief. “We’re just going to abandon all our friends at Corpus Christi and start attending Mass at Holy Family? Just like that?”

How could she be so incredulous? “Of course! That’s exactly what we’re going to do,” I said, and I think she instantly regretted that she had been praying for me to take the lead as the spiritual head of the family.

As I studied and read I was flooded with images of people I had known in my lifetime who had quit going to Mass. I simply couldn’t recall them all. There were so many. All I knew was that as long as I could remember, people had been leaving the practice of the Catholic faith in droves.

I remembered a co-worker I had met one summer while working in the oil industry in Louisiana. “Ah quit goin ta Maaaass when they took th’ Latin owt of it. I couldn’t staaand all that backslappin b-ll s--t.”

I remembered a very shy girl I used to often see on the school bus when I was in high school. “I can’t stand that hand-shake thing! Joe always sits in front of me so he can stick his bony hand out at me and I have to shake it.” She was soon a Protestant.

I recalled a time at West Point, when a couple of lesbian cadets were thrown out of the academy for being caught in the act, our priest lectured us during the sermon to be tolerant of homosexuals. I was sitting next to my dear friend and roommate, a fellow Catholic Mississippian (a couple of rare

⁵This document is also available at the Adoremus website, <http://www.adoremus.org/LiturgicaeInstaurationes.html>.

birds indeed!) He was much more politically astute at age twenty than I will ever be. Women had only recently been admitted to the academy, and we were severely warned that for us to make a big public scene of this lesbian incident might endanger their continued presence at the Academy. Who were we to judge them, anyway? Well, that was the last time my roommate ever went to Mass. He soon became a pious and devout Baptist. This memory brought back a flood of memories of other fellow cadets at West Point. So many of them were Catholic, but so few went to Mass. Often I would invite one of them to go to Mass. They never went. I recalled that one had said: “No way. You go ahead — I’m not going. My family goes to a church where we don’t have to do all that handshaking *kumbaya* stuff.”

I thought about the Catholic school I had attended in the first grade. The sight of groups of twenty-five to thirty students walking in single file lines, each group following a nun in full habit. The kindness with which she had taught us to read, write, add, subtract, and avoid the eventual loss of our soul. “When I get to heaven I’d better see each and every one of you there. . . OR ELSE!”

This just didn’t all add up, not quite yet. Could it really be that the Catholic Church had NOT changed as we had been lead to believe? Could it be that we had all just had the wool pulled over our collective eyes, that none of this was supposed to have happened?

Normally people will resist when some injustice is imposed on them. You can’t fool all of the people all of the time. . . assuming that the majority of Catholics in the US had been mislead by hostile media over the years. Certainly there would have been some people aware of what was going on. Was it just the hostile media? How could this have happened without the collaboration of a large number of priests and bishops?

No matter what time of the week it was I couldn’t wait to talk to Will again. On Sundays we continued to meet after Mass, and our families developed a close friendship. During the week we usually found an opportunity to go somewhere for lunch.

“So. . . Latin was supposed to be retained, and it wasn’t. Gregorian Chant is supposed to be in the Mass and it isn’t, generally speaking. There was no mandate for destroying the beauty of the Churches, and it was done anyway. Why didn’t some people just rise up in protest?”

“Protest to whom?”

“I don’t know. . . .complain to the bishop. Isn’t he supposed to have a handle on these situations?”

“Most bishops in the US don’t want anything at all to do with the Latin

Mass. With very few exceptions, they don't care about anything but avoiding confrontation."

"Why not? It's so beautiful. The prayers are beautiful, and meaningful. The music is beautiful. Why would anyone want to do such a thing?"

"Eventually some bishops may give permission in one location in their diocese, in a way that's so restrictive that you can't possibly expect a community to grow out of it. Like 6:30 in the morning, or in a drive-by shooting district on Saturday night, or one Thursday night per month. Quite frankly, there are a few bishops who recognize deep down that the postconciliar 'reforms' were an unmitigated disaster, but they'll never admit it publicly because it would mean having to admit that they all screwed up in a huge way. They give out permission here and there..."

"Well, why don't they just complain to the Pope?"

"What good would that do? He doesn't seem to get it. Remember Archbishop Lefebvre? We see what happened to him."

"But I thought you said he wasn't excommunicated for the Latin Mass. You said it was for something else. Wasn't it? What exactly did happen?"

"It's a long story..."

Chapter 5

The Second Vatican Council

*The truth is that this particular Council [Vatican II] defined no dogma at all, and deliberately chose to remain on a modest level, as a merely pastoral council.*¹

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, future Pope Benedict XVI, in an address to the Chilean bishops, July 13, 1988

*[T]he teaching authority of the Church, even though not wishing to issue extraordinary dogmatic pronouncements...*²

Pope Paul VI, discourse closing Vatican II, December 7, 1965

THE VAST MAJORITY of the bishops assembled in Rome for the Second Vatican Council had no revolutionary or radical inclinations. They were assembled to agree upon modest, pastoral and disciplinary changes that could help the Church to grow, evangelize, restore Christian unity, and more fully accomplish Her mission on Earth, which is to bring to all of mankind the means of salvation. The council was not doctrinal, as no new doctrines were to be advanced. Some minor disciplinary changes were to be proposed. For the first time in centuries, some modification would be allowed in the *Missale Romanum*, but the modifications were to be minor. Of course, the prayers would remain in Latin; any radical change was unthinkable (Article 36). Steps were to be taken to ensure that the faithful could sing or

¹This document is available at the Una Voce website, http://www.unavoce.com/-cardinal_ratzinger_chile.htm.

²This document is available at the Vatican website, at <http://www.vatican.va>.

pray together in Latin (Article 54). All lawfully acknowledged rites were to be considered to be of equal authority and dignity, and were to be preserved in the future (Article 4). The treasury of sacred music was to be preserved and fostered (Article 114) and Gregorian Chant was to be given “pride of place in liturgical services” (Article 116). There were to be no innovations unless absolutely necessary for the good of the Church, and any new forms adopted would have to grow organically from existing forms (Article 23).

People throughout the world became aware that things would change somewhat, but they were unaware of the degree to which they would see any change. Most did not concern themselves with such things, placing their trust completely in the hands of their priests, bishops, and the Holy Father. They trusted the Church. In retrospect, they trusted in specific individuals who were betraying Christ and His Church. Very few, as we would see, really knew their Faith.

A number of people with exceptional intellect or some spiritual insight became alarmed as events unfolded; Dietrich von Hildebrand, Evelyn Waugh, J.R.R. Tolkien, Fr. Gomar DePauw, Fr. Malachai Martin, John Senior, and many others. In several cases, the agreed upon and carefully advanced “schema” for the council documents were abandoned and radical or ambiguous texts were advanced, leaving loopholes and vulnerabilities for a radical post-conciliar agenda. Radicals, convinced that fundamental change was necessary and unable to see the collapse that would accompany any attempt to radicalize the Church, pushed for the most abrupt implementation possible. Archbishop Anibale Bugnini, who controlled the committee (*consilium*) responsible for implementation of the revised liturgy, adhered to the radical view.³ Knowing that he could not sell a wholesale revision of the prayers of the Church to the majority by honest means, he cited Vatican II as the authority by which the prayers of the Church would be radically revised.

In 1969, four years after the closure of the council, a new rite was introduced. Its introduction to bewildered and confused Catholics was carried out in such a careless and crass way that none of the key points of the Vatican II Document on the Liturgy were observed. In violation of Article 36, the Latin language was *not* preserved, but rather was quickly and abruptly replaced by the vernacular. For English speaking Catholics that meant a seriously and fundamentally flawed English translation that still, *Anno Domini* 2006,

³Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, translated by Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990). It is best to let him speak for himself. To get an idea of his disdain for Catholic heritage, see particularly the section on *Sacred Music and the Liturgy* pp. 885-917.

has not been corrected. Steps were *not* taken to ensure that the faithful could sing or pray together in Latin, in violation of Article 54. All lawfully acknowledged rites were supposed to have been considered of equal authority and dignity, and all were to be preserved in the future, in accordance with Article 4, but clearly this was not to be applied to the timeless Tridentine Rite western Catholics were accustomed to at the time. No provision was planned for its continued use... although, as we would eventually find out, it was never formally abrogated — repealed. While it had not been formally abrogated, or replaced, practically speaking, it was. The treasury of sacred music was *not* preserved and fostered (Article 114). Gregorian Chant was *not* given “pride of place in liturgical services” (Article 116). Supposedly there would be no innovations unless absolutely necessary for the good of the Church, yet everywhere one turned one found countless innovations, all in the name of “Vatican II.” Or better yet... if there were no explicit support for the innovation, it was railroaded through on the “spirit of Vatican II.”

And despite the fact that any new forms adopted were supposed to grow organically from existing forms (Article 23), what really happened was quite different. The old rite was completely replaced — in practice, but not by law — by a new one. Fr. Joseph Gelineau, S.J., a liturgical expert at the French National Pastoral and Liturgical Center, who was considered by Archbishop Bugnini to be one of the “great masters of the international liturgical world,” once commented:

*Make no mistake about it. To translate is not to say the same thing with other words. It is to change the form. If the form changes, the rite changes. If one element is changed, the totality is altered... it must be said, without mincing words, the Roman rite we used to know exists no more. It has been destroyed.*⁴

In short, what happened was nothing less than a revolution. To quote another authority, Fr. Yves Congar, one of the artisans of the “reform”: “The Church has had, peacefully, its October Revolution.”⁵ The use of the word “Revolution” by myself or by Fr. Yves Congar should offend no one, since Fr. Yves Congar is mentioned by Pope John Paul II as one with which he had the “good fortune to work,” and to whom he is “particularly indebted.”⁶

⁴Quoted in Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, *Open Letter to Confused Catholics* (Angelus Press, Kansas City, KS, 1986), p. 100.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), available at <http://www.hismercy.ca/content/ebooks/Crossing.the.Threshold.ofHope-PopeJPII.pdf>.

Accompanying this revolution in the liturgy was the growth of a radical, immoral, and angry “Catholic” social activism. Void of a spiritual element (or, at least a good and holy spiritual element) this movement sought to topple governments, realign alliances, re-draw borders, place women in seminaries, and re-write legislation. Very often, nearly always, it was an ideological movement of the left, and it played right into the hands of those who sought to destroy any remnant of Christian civilization. Its more extreme elements included Revolution Theologians, pro-choice “Catholics,” and homosexual activists.

The devout Catholic watching the horrifying decay of Catholic culture, morality, and decency, had not only the spectacle of a dying civilization to deal with Monday through Saturday, but then on Sunday Morning he had bad liturgy and guitar music. Gone were the beautiful Catholic hymns, so meaningful and timeless. Out with *O Sanctissima* and in with *Sons of God*. Out with *Panis Angelicus* and in with *Kumbaya*. (Yes, we actually sang this, for those too young to remember. And yes, we held hands while doing so.) Thomas Day describes what he calls the triumph of bad taste in “Why Catholics Can’t Sing.” A holder of a Ph.D. in musicology from Columbia University, a member of the American Guild of Organists, and a man of exceedingly good humor, he describes a scene that took place sometime after the revolution. He was in the church practicing the organ while a Cuban refugee who spoke no English mopped the floor. While playing the organ he drifted into *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Dr. Day describes the encounter:

Suddenly, the Cuban man dropped his mop and came dashing up the stairs of the organ loft. When he got to the organ (a little out of breath) he started singing the grand old hymn, which he had learned as a youngster. For a few brief minutes we were united by a Latin hymn dealing with theological complications we could barely follow. What united us was the sound of something uncommonly beautiful, something which did not come from Cuba or the United States, but from the “highest common denominator.”⁷

It is helpful to ponder this example, because it is often considered that the preconciliar Mass was something for rich people, for the elites, for noblemen; the upper crust. Yet it was the Mass for all Catholics of the West, and regardless of social status any devout Catholic loved the Church’s beautiful

⁷Thomas Day, *Why Catholics Can’t Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste* (New York, NY: Crossroad), p. 105.

traditions, especially the music tradition. One has to wonder what evil lurks in the mind of a priest or bishop who would further burden this poor Cuban man by suppressing the beautiful Catholic music tradition in favor of Glory and Praise (1984), which according to Dr. Day, “makes almost a complete break with the past.” With few exceptions “there is no old music in this collection, nothing written before the 1960’s. The past is repudiated.”⁸ Why, with all the talk of “the poor” and “social justice,” could the poor Cuban janitor not have the beauty of the Catholic music tradition during Mass rather than while mopping?

In addition to the destruction of the liturgy of the Roman Rite, something even more sinister was developing behind the scenes. Something ugly beyond comparison, scandalous, frightening. Many would become aware of it over the next thirty years, but very few would discuss it publicly until after the turn of the century. In some cases seminaries were being taken over by a homosexual subculture. In other cases, homosexual cliques were infiltrating, leading many into the worst form of sin and causing many others to abandon their vocation rather than submit to sexual predators.

What was a devout Catholic to do under these circumstances? At some point any person who loves the Church reaches a limit. If the ideological agenda doesn’t offend, the music does. If not the music, the ugly architecture, the felt banners, the milquetoast sermons, the banal English, the sheer lack of piety and the disregard for anything on a spiritual plane, or the new catechism texts employed against the children does. What happened to the belief in the Eucharist? If people still believed in it, why were they suddenly touching the consecrated hosts with unconsecrated hands? Why did so many women no longer cover their heads in respect for the Real Presence? Why were men wearing jogging suits?

Catholics recognized these problems to a degree which depended on how well he or she knew his or her Faith. While the most astute recognized trouble immediately, for others it took much longer. Others, like me, were just now beginning to figure it out. It was difficult not to conclude that what was happening in the Church did not come about as a result of something from within the Church, but rather as a result of something hostile to the Church. Pope Paul VI spoke of the “smoke of Satan” in the sanctuary: “From some fissure the smoke of Satan entered into the temple of God.”⁹ Pope Paul VI also spoke of the “auto-demolition” of the Church. The decline in baptisms,

⁸ *Why Catholics Can’t Sing*, p. 70.

⁹ Pope Paul VI, June 29, 1972, On the occasion of the Ninth Anniversary of his Coronation.

the closure of schools, the dismantling of religious orders, the unhabiting of nuns, and the beginning of the collapse of priestly vocations stunned Catholics in the pews. The better one knew their faith, the more painful continued Mass attendance was. Mass attendance declined by the millions.

A quick view of the numbers of seminarians entering seminaries in the United States showed that a vibrant, healthy, and increasing flow of entries up to 1965 had been replaced by an exponential decay.⁶ In other words, the decline in the number of seminarians could be described by an exponential decay function just as the cooling of a hot brick thrown into the snow or — as one German Math professor is fond of showing — the shrinking of the foam head at the top of a cold Bavarian beer. The significance of this point was lost on many, but nature does not allow reversals of exponential decays. The Church in the United States would never again be at its pre-Vatican II level of seminarians. Millions of souls would be left without the sacraments and lose their faith.

And when did this process begin? In 1965 — the year the of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. What was one to conclude? Was this what Vatican II was all about? However one may answer that question, one thing was certain: the Church was in decline in America.

⁶Kenneth C. Jones, *Index of Leading Catholic Indicators: The Church Since Vatican II* (Oriens Publishing Company, St. Louis, MO, 2003).

Chapter 6

Girls Will Be Boys — or — From UNIX to Eunuchs

Roman Catholic Christianity has a problem with women. This problem is deeply rooted in its history, in its assumptions about gender and sexuality. The foundational thinker of Latin Christianity, St. Augustine, in the late fourth and early fifth centuries established certain assumptions that still plague Catholicism.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, Catholics for a Free Choice, *Women, Reproductive Rights and the Catholic Church*, May 2006

For there will come a time when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap up to themselves teachers according to their own lusts and they will turn away their hearing from the truth and turn aside rather to fables.

II St. Tim. 4:3–4

THE INEVITABLE HAPPENED. Nobody stays in the same place for long in the US Military. Some serious post-cold-war manpower reductions were pushed through. Guys were bailing out left and right; the Army was literally buying them out of the service by giving huge departure bonuses. It seemed that it was no longer of any benefit to the US Army to have three officers assigned to AFIT, so at some point we were all reassigned. In fact, during the summer of 1993 I was reassigned to the US Army Computer Science School at Fort Gordon, Georgia. Lorri was expecting at the time we moved, and according to the Housing Office there was a four month wait for housing at Fort Gordon. The way we saw it, we had no choice but to rent a house in Augusta and plan on moving after the baby was born. We found an apartment and spent the next few days unpacking, arranging

furniture, hanging pictures, stocking the refrigerator, and setting up in the small apartment. As I hung the last picture the phone rang — it was the Housing Office.

“Captain Sonnier?”

“Yes. . .”

“A set of quarters is now available for you to move your family into.”

“Er. . . thanks. What happened to the four-month wait?”

“We were able to find an available house for you in much less time!”

Such is life in the Army. We spent the next few days re-packing everything in the apartment and moving three miles to Fort Gordon.

Where would we attend Mass around here? I scanned the list of “episcopally approved” Tridentine Mass locations. There were none on Sundays anywhere in Georgia! One Thursday each month there was one in Atlanta, at 7:00 p.m. Fat chance I’d ever be able to make it to that one. Whatever happened to the Pope’s plea for “generosity” with the old rite? We decided that we just wouldn’t worry about it. We would just look for a good parish the same way we had always done.

There was a weekly Mass at the Fort Gordon post chapel, so we decided to go there first. There it was again — girls all over the altar! Why? Wasn’t this a serious abuse of the liturgy? When the Church has liturgical norms, aren’t they to be respected? Or was it more important to pander to the feminists than to worry about what the Church has to say about it?

I recall years ago accidentally walking into a homosexual bar in New Orleans while looking for a restroom. It was dark, and as I looked around and realized what was going on a sense of profound repulsion overtook me. I wanted to vomit, but more than anything else I just wanted to politely leave the establishment and never come back! The same feeling overtook me upon seeing the girls on the altar; playing with their hair, primping, waving at someone, or even trying to look serious. There could be no excuse for the parent that put them up to it. It was forbidden by the Church, yet they were doing it anyway! On an Army base, of all places! Sexual confusion — on the altar!

I met with the chaplain Fr. David Kernighan, to discuss it. He listened politely to my concern, then laughed, waved his hand, and expressed amazement that I would have second thoughts about such a trivial issue. According to Fr. David, there was no need to respect such guidance from the Church. The Pope didn’t understand how things were in America; he had a “medieval mentality,” as did Mother Theresa and other old people. Surely I didn’t want to be like them. When he said the word “medieval,” the “e” was stretched

out as long as possible. “Medieeeeeeeeval!” Be scared. Be very scared. He dismissed me as quickly as possible.

Attending Mass at Fort Gordon was obviously out. We found a nice, rather traditional parish in downtown Augusta and began attending Mass there. The priest gave good sermons, and he was obviously very orthodox. He took an active interest in his flock, and came to our house for dinner when we invited him. We missed the Tridentine Mass, but since we knew that we were only here temporarily we were content with the situation. We would just be happy, content “Novus Ordo” Catholics who had a great appreciation for the Latin Mass.

On New Years Day, January 1994 our second child, William, was born. It was about this time that I discovered that we would be moving again in a mere six months. Life in the Army can involve lots of moves, and we were definitely getting our share of it.

Then, out of the clear blue, something happened. Something bizarre. A letter was issued from the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts. I say “issued,” but it’s not clear what exactly happened. A letter from this office, bearing no signature, was sent by fax to news agencies all over the world proclaiming a new truth. For many bishops, the first they would hear of it was when they would read about it in the newspaper. The letter stated, contrary to previous instructions, that now there really was no clear prohibition of female altar servers because it was not mentioned in the new Code of Canon Law.¹

Well! Neither is a motorcycle procession to the altar!

Now, it appeared, the Vatican had decided, in contradiction with previous instructions, to allow “female altar servers,” . . . or had they? Not only was there no signature on the document, but the Holy Father was in the hospital for three weeks. Had he even been consulted on this? What was going on? At least the letter made provisions that we would not have to accept this new practice:

it will always be very appropriate to follow the noble tradition of having boys serve at the altar.

And . . .

As is well known, this has led to a reassuring development of

¹Vatican Communication on Female Altar Servers, Congregation for Divine Worship, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDWCOMM.HTM>.

priestly vocations. Thus the obligation to support such groups of altar boys will always continue.

The only way to “support groups of altar boys” was, obviously, to have exactly that — groups of altar boys. But somehow I knew, based on how the US bishops seemed to be doing everything these days, that we would have this forced on us whether we liked it or not. Sure enough, the US bishops quickly organized to issue new guidelines. On Thursday June 16, 1994, they held a special assembly to discuss implementation; the result included the following “suggested guidelines” for developing “diocesan guidelines”²:

1. Although institution into the ministry of acolyte is reserved to lay men, the diocesan bishop may permit the liturgical functions of the instituted acolyte to be carried out by altar servers, men and women, boys and girls. Such persons may carry out all the functions listed in no. 100 (with the exception of the distribution of Holy Communion) and nos. 187 - 190 and no. 193 of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

The determination that women and girls may function as servers in the liturgy should be made by the bishop on the diocesan level so that there might be a uniform diocesan policy.

2. No distinction should be made between the functions carried out in the sanctuary by men and boys and those carried out by women and girls. The term “altar boys” should be replaced by “servers”. The term “server” should be used for those who carry out the functions of the instituted acolyte.

Had the original document said anything about replacing the use of the term “altar boys” with “servers?” Of course not. And of course, there was no mention of the following from the original Vatican document:

it will always be very appropriate to follow the noble tradition of having boys serve at the altar.

And . . .

As is well known, this has led to a reassuring development of priestly vocations. Thus the obligation to support such groups of altar boys will always continue.

²Committee on the Liturgy, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/servers.shtml>. Originally published 16 June 1994.

So from one day to the next what had previously been a grave abuse of the liturgy was to become mandatory — obligatory in the vast majority of locations. But how can something be a grave abuse of the liturgy one day and acceptable the next day? Not to mention. . . how can something that was a grave abuse of the liturgy be mandated the next day?

The answer is simple. It can't. What was given was a permission, not a mandate. Anyone can see that by reading the plain text: “may permit.” Unfortunately, it would not be for many years that the Holy See would clarify that this was not something that *any* bishop has the authority to force on anyone, and that every priest has the right to have exclusively boys serving at the altar.³ Another fact that has remained hidden throughout the years since 1994 was that this practice was never permitted in the Pope's own Diocese of Rome. But this secret was not revealed to U.S. Catholics, who were led to believe that it was something that the Holy Father was demanding.

During his long pontificate Pope John Paul II only addressed this issue once, in 1980, and he condemned it. On the other hand, he addressed the need to retain Latin in the liturgy and allow the 1962 Missal on multiple occasions. Yet, within the United States it was the reverse: the use of Latin in the liturgy was highly restricted — even suppressed in some cases — and the feminization of the liturgy was forced “generously” on unsuspecting Catholics. Had the U.S. bishops responded correctly, there would have been Latin Masses throughout the land, and on a handful of radical college campuses there would be women pretending to be altar boys.

So it was that in 1994, an act of rebellion, born out of the sexual distortions of the post 1960s American “liberalism,” was suddenly to be mandated throughout the land.⁴ Of course, the decision was to be left at the diocesan level so that each bishop could decide whether or not to allow this new practice. But it was soon clear that this was not something that most of them saw as a problem, but rather something to embrace — to forcefully impose with threats, if necessary. Or perhaps, they just lacked the courage

³Seven years later, in July 2001, the Congregation for Divine Worship issued a response to a bishop's question (*dubium*) concerning the possible admission of girls and women as altar servers. The response made it clear that only a diocesan bishop may decide whether to permit female servers in his diocese; furthermore, that no priest is obliged to have female servers, even in dioceses where this is permitted. The letter stressed that no one has a “right” to serve at the altar, and also strongly reaffirmed that altar boys should be encouraged. *Notitiae* - 421-422 Vol 37 (2001) Num/ 8-9 — pp 397-399, <http://www.adoremus.org/CDW-AltarServers.html>.

⁴This practice was never implemented in the Diocese of Lincoln. The Diocese of Lincoln has since built two new seminaries.

to say “no, we won’t be engaging in this novelty.” In most cases the new policy was implemented with an iron fist. There was no escape from it. The ordinary diocesan priest who didn’t want to go along with it was intimidated, threatened, and cajoled into compliance. Even at our parish in downtown Augusta, it appeared that there would be no avoiding it. The bishop had spoken. What else was there to do?

Our poor parish tried to organize a sodality of some sort that would minimize the damage while meeting this new requirement, but we would never see it implemented because I received orders for a new assignment and we would move before any such thing came to pass. But what about our future homes and parishes as the Army continued to move us around?

Throughout the country the fruits of years of disobedience were paying off for the dissidents! Today girl altar boys, tomorrow women deacons, eventually priests, bishops, and one day there would be a woman pope! Then, finally, the Catholic Church would accept that abortion was a womyn’s right!

What were we to do? Just live with this bizarre liturgical novelty as an act of obedience, knowing that it would cause grave harm to the future vocations of our children which we were bound to protect? Or were we to take some action to protect our families? We are never obliged to obey in the case of sin and participating in anything that would destroy our Faith and in turn our soul and eternal salvation. If cross-dressing on the altar had been wrong for 1994 years, it was still wrong. Just because it had been permitted “in some cases” to avoid having the American Church go into schism did not mean that we had to accept it.

We had one last hope for avoiding the constant barrage of propaganda and the loss of the Faith in our family: the Holy Father himself had authorized the old Mass (an “authorization” which wasn’t technically necessary since it had never been unauthorized to begin with). There would be no such silly problems if one just assisted at the Mass of the Ages. The significance of the *Ecclesia Dei* document, with its plea from the Pope for liberal permission to offer the Mass unaltered by vile political modifications, took on a new significance. This Mass would be the only way to avoid having to make faith-damaging and very un-Christian liberal politics become a part of our Sunday mornings. I was quite aware that there would be no end to the radicalization of Catholicism in the US at this point. If the dissidents were so bold as to change God’s Holy Scriptures and to defy the Church until they had their way, certainly they would continue in their defiance and I would have no part of it by participating in it with my family. There would be no such show of support for this sexually confused rebellion against God’s law,

Sacred Tradition, and common sense.

We would remain loyal to the Church come Hell or High Water. We would do so by simply attending, from here on out, the Mass of the Ages. The Mass the Saints had attended during their lifetime. The Mass that, it appeared, the Modernists had not been successful in obliterating from the face of the earth.

The question was, how do you go about getting one of these Latin Masses to come to your local church?

Chapter 7

Montgomery, Alabama

Now I exhort you, brethren, that you watch those who cause dissensions and scandals contrary to the doctrine that you have learned, and avoid them.

Rom. 16:17–18

SOMETIME AFTER SERVING between twelve and sixteen years as an officer, if you do your job reasonably well, you may have the opportunity to go to “Command and General Staff College.” Each of the services has one: the Army’s is at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; the Navy’s is located in Rhode Island; the Air Force has theirs located in Montgomery, Alabama. It’s not unusual to have the opportunity to attend the service school of a sister service. I ended up with orders to Montgomery, Alabama to spend the year studying strategy with Air Force officers.

From the first day, I enjoyed the academics. We read the great military classics, solved logistics problems, discussed military history, and did numerous presentations on a variety of topics. I also had the dubious honor of being selected to go around showing officers in various seminars how to use their computers, how to do web searches, how to use software packages, and answering any questions they had about computers.

We found a house to rent in a small town a few miles from Montgomery, and we found a Catholic Church nearby. The first Sunday we were there, a letter was read from the pulpit stating that the new policy would be implemented in just two weeks, and they were looking for girls to volunteer to serve. I looked at the faces of the boys on the altar for some sign of emotion. I saw none, but a few weeks later I would notice that none of these boys were

even at Mass any longer. Not only would they drop out of serving at the altar, they would eventually drop out of the Church altogether. I prayed and asked God to help my family through the difficult days that the Church was going through. I also asked God to show me the way to avoid participating in this desecration of the liturgy.

Birmingham was not far away, a little over an hour's drive. One could attend the Tridentine Mass there in one of two churches. Mass was offered in the old rite in these two churches on alternating Sundays. Also, there was Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) in Irondale, just outside of Birmingham. The new liturgy was followed there, but we knew that the feisty Mother Angelica would never allow such silly shenanigans as had been forced on us. It was interesting to note that her order of nuns was young and vibrant, not dying of old age in blue jeans and t-shirts like so many of the liberal, Modernist-infested orders.

Birmingham was in another diocese, though. Once a month one could attend a Tridentine Mass within the Diocese of Mobile, in the city of Mobile, but that was too far to drive with an expecting mother. It was also just once a month — what about the other Sundays? We made trips as often as possible to Birmingham. But with my wife expecting again, I knew it would not be possible to make the drive every Sunday.

We tried to just remain active within our parish. Almost immediately upon our arrival in July 1994, I was asked by the “CCD Coordinator” to volunteer to teach CCD, and I accepted. “CCD” stands for “Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.” This is an acronym used in the modern age for the apparent reason of ensuring that the appropriate word “Catechism” is never used. Anyway, she wanted me to teach the seventh grade class. I had to wonder how she knew, without interviewing me or asking any questions, that I was no dissident. On Wednesday evenings from September through December I would meet with about ten students. Then I was given some material to use to teach them, and it was very weak. In fact it was garbage, but very expensive, thick-glossy-page garbage with lots of flowers. However pretty it was, there was no Catholic doctrine in it. It seemed to be more of the same liberal agenda I was noticing every time I entered the Church these days. I decided that I would not be able to use it, and that I would instead just purchase some copies of the Baltimore Catechism out of my own money and use that.

During one of the first meetings of the CCD teachers, we were asked for comments, or questions on what we were to do. I said that I'd like to look into the possibility of bringing the students to the Tridentine Mass, and I

asked whether there was a bus or a van or something of that nature available for transportation. The priest, Fr. Charles Troncale, blew a gasket! He asked me to step out into the hallway.

“What are you trying to do? Who do you think you are coming in here, trying to... what are you doing anyway??!?”

Now, I had never been yelled at by a priest before, but then again, I had never voiced an opinion in favor of exposing young people to the old Mass. Anyway, I was quite shocked and speechless. What exactly was the problem? Certainly he just didn't understand, and he was confused about something. I made an appointment to see him a few days later. I gave him some copies of documents from the *Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei*¹ and showed him the list which included the Mass times and locations in Birmingham. He apologized, and in doing so he revealed that there was a group of Catholics in Montgomery holding Mass in the old rite without the permission of the Bishop. He said that they were “crazy,” and that he thought that I was one of them. They had a chapel of some sorts — it was normally a dance hall or something, but they used it as a chapel one Sunday a month, “Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Chapel,” and a priest from Cullman, north of Birmingham, came to offer Mass, without Archbishop Lipscomb's permission. I asked whether the Archbishop made any effort to establish an “authorized” Mass in the area to try to keep them in the fold? Fr. Troncale didn't know.

I decided to initiate a petition, and Fr. Troncale, to his credit, helped me. In October 1994 I wrote a letter to Archbishop Oscar Lipscomb, Diocese of Mobile, in which I quoted some key sentences from *Ecclesia Dei* and I asked that the old Mass be made available to those of us residing in the vicinity of Montgomery. Fr. Troncale even assisted me in putting the word out so that we could gather signatures for our petition. I think he felt guilty about the way he had treated me. Also, to Fr. Troncale's credit, when the CCD Coordinator found out we were using the *Baltimore Catechism* and tried to demand that we stop, he told her, instead, to reimburse me in the amount I had spent.

When we received Archbishop Lipscomb's initial reply, it looked hopeful. He asked for an estimated number of those who would be in attendance. Over the next few weeks I collected around a hundred signatures and forwarded them to him with a letter. While collecting signatures, I found two priests that volunteered to offer the Mass.

We waited for permission to come through. A couple of weeks later the

¹Coalition in Support of *Ecclesia Dei*, P.O. Box 2071, Glenview, IL 60025-6071, <http://www.ecclesiadei.org/index.html>.

response came. I was anxious when I opened the letter, because this process had taken quite some time and effort. I was going to have to relocate in a few months, and it would be nice to have this “approved” Mass in place for at least our final weeks of residing in Montgomery. As I read the letter it began to all come clear to me. There was a disconnect here; the Archbishop did not at all see this *Ecclesia Dei* as a mechanism by which Catholics could be reconciled to the Church — *in fact, he wanted nothing at all to do with them!* It is probably best to let Archbishop Lipscomb speak for himself here:

Thank you for excluding from participation in this effort those who, in a stable manner, might be attending what I can only regard as a schismatic chapel styled “Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Chapel.” It is not, in fact, the Tridentine Mass that is offered there — though the rite ceremonies and other outward aspects of worship are very similar. The Tridentine Mass presupposes a vital union with the source of our faith and worship and that requires a priest not only validly ordained but one who possesses legitimate faculties to offer public worship...

This was patently false. Any validly ordained priest, as is Fr. Leonard Giordina, may offer Mass in the old rite, in private, and the faithful have a right to be present. Despite the Archbishop’s words, the Mass attended by people in Montgomery was very much valid, since the priest was validly ordained. It may not have been “licit,” but it was certainly valid. The Holy Father had asked “bishops and clergy everywhere” to be generous in allowing the old Mass, yet these people had, at the moment no other option. Where else were they to go? Could it be that, by not allowing these folks an “authorized” traditional Mass, the Archbishop was participating in the schism himself?

I would have a difficulty in approving usage of the Tridentine Mass on a weekly basis. Such an opportunity would separate those who would so use it from their parishes and the life of the Catholic community that is centered in parish relationships.

And that’s exactly the point! There was no way to avoid the politicized environment of the parishes, such as they were becoming with their feminized, politicized liturgies. It was in part the Archbishop’s fault that this schism existed to begin with! These people couldn’t in good conscience attend Mass in the politicized setting he had created throughout his archdiocese, and he

would rather have these, his most loyal sheep, cast out from the fold rather than provide for them in accordance with the Holy Father's guidance!

I began meeting with one of the priests who had volunteered to take responsibility for our soon-to-be-established Latin Mass community to discuss the details. As time dragged on it became clear that the Archbishop was playing a waiting game. Perhaps he discovered that I was in the military, that I was just there for a year, and that I would soon be departing. He held out, and to ensure that we didn't go ahead without his permission he transferred the priest I had been meeting with. To this day he remains in an obscure location on the outer reaches of the diocese, on the border of Mississippi.

And Montgomery still has no Tridentine Mass, other than at the independent chapel, Our Lady of Lourdes.

The waiting game went unnoticed for a while when our third child, Clair, was born in February 1995. Her birth made it easier for us to make the long commute to Birmingham for Mass, as my wife had been quite nervous about making this drive prior to her delivery.

We did have the unique pleasure of coming to know Joe and Peggy Bonometti at this point in our lives. We met them during one of our weekend treks to Birmingham to attend Mass at the chapel near the EWTN studio. We had a lot in common, and right away we hit it off. Joe was a 1982 West Point graduate who was pursuing his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering and working for NASA. Peggy initially came across as a charming sidekick, but eventually we figured out that she was the one doing the majority of the work to keep the two of them on the path to salvation while Joe remained heavily engaged in his dissertation. They had both been raised in an extremely liberal post Vatican II climate, which they both found revolting but didn't talk about much since they had found peace and tranquility in being orthodox Catholics. Joe did confide that while he was on active duty his dog tags had "VULCAN" for his religion instead of "Catholic."

"They let you do that?" I asked incredulously.

"Sure thing," he said. "An Army chaplain told me that it was his job to do whatever he could to provide for the spiritual needs of every service member — even sci-fi 'vulcanism.' Whatever that is."

We left in June 1995 for Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Well prior to our departure the Archbishop of Mobile quit responding to our requests and inquiries. I never heard from Archbishop Lipscomb again.²

²Actually I did hear from him, years later, after I left the Army. He wrote to me asking for donations. My reply was very comical; basically I told him that I would be as generous with his request as he had been with mine.

Chapter 8

Fort Bragg, North Carolina

I REPORTED TO FORT BRAGG for the second time in June of 1995. Fort Bragg lies next to Fayetteville, about a two hour drive south of Raleigh. Adjacent to Fort Bragg is Pope Air Force Base, which provides much of the airlift support for the XVIII Airborne Corps, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the various Special Operations units at Fort Bragg. Despite my previous skepticism about any continued need for my services in the Special Forces, I found that I was looking forward to my new assignment. Things definitely had changed, however. By now I had a different view of my military service to the United States. Previously (from 1984 to 1988) I had served in the Special Forces during the Cold War era, at a time the Special Forces mission was clearly defined. In 1988, while I was still an A-Team leader, the Special Forces had become an actual branch for officer assignments, management, and promotions. This was a significant change, as it “de-stigmatized” the Special Forces as a career path. At one time serving as a Green Beret officer was seen as a career killer — you gave up any chance of being a general. Now it was seen as a good career choice and many career-minded officers had come pouring into the SF ranks. That was both good and bad, for various reasons that I will leave up to the imagination of the reader.

However, the missions had become fuzzy. Previously, the Special Forces missions had fallen into four general categories:

FIDD: Foreign Internal Defense and Development. This was the provision

of assistance to the armed forces of nations friendly to the US. FIDD missions involved equipping and training combat units that would enter into combat with hostile guerrilla forces within their own country. The idea was that the US, rather than simply providing equipment with no training, or training with no equipment, would provide both. One or more A-Teams would normally be involved for a period ranging anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. Or longer.

UW: Unconventional Warfare. The skills required for this type of mission were related in many ways to those required for a FIDD mission. But the “shoe was on the other foot,” so to speak. In this case we provided equipment and training to an “unconventional warfare” element that was struggling to overthrow a hostile government. Operations of this nature were kept under the tightest security possible.

Strategic Reconnaissance: A-Teams were to be capable of reconnaissance deep into enemy territory. An operation of this nature would require some means of infiltration — perhaps a waterborne infiltration or a high-altitude parachute drop.

Strike Operations: A-Teams were also to train for ambushes, raids, and other violent and sudden assaults on some significant enemy target that other US Armed Forces units were not adequately suited to hit.

These were the classic four Special Forces operations categories. Traditionally some A-Teams had been required to train more in one area than the other three; in recent years the Ranger Battalions had begun to lay claim to the Strike Operations category. Now, there was no longer the simple clarity of four general categories of missions. It appeared that now we had some doctrinal instability and we were likely to be thrown into such missions as “disaster assessment and survey” after a good hurricane, “disaster relief,” or election supervision and monitoring.

Despite the post Cold-War “mission creep,” as this loss of focus was referred to, it was refreshing and invigorating to be among troops again. The euphoria quickly ended with a series of sobering events. One occurred almost the very day I reported for duty. A Special Forces soldier had committed suicide and I was assigned the duties of “Survivor Assistance Officer,” which meant helping the family to close out all of his affairs, terminating utilities services, closing accounts, and turning all of his possessions over to the family. As I prepared for the movers to pack up his belongings I discovered items,

which according to the guidelines, I was to dispose of in some way so as to avoid embarrassing the already grieving family. There was no less than a ton of these items — the most vile, disgusting hard-core pornography I had ever witnessed: a large walk-in closet full of it. Videos and magazines mostly. I nearly broke the axle of my pick-up truck carrying it all to a dump, and it took the better part of a morning, leaving me drenched with sweat, nauseous, and disgusted. I returned to the apartment to await the movers, who still had not arrived, and collapsed in a chair. My eyes wandered across his desk, and landed on his dog tags. His name I will not reveal; his age was about the same as my own, his blood type I can't recall, but his religion was "Roman Catholic."

Ah, yes, the "Fruits of Vatican II." Another non-practicing Catholic — still identifying himself as such, but was there any place for a *warrior* in the Catholic churches around here? Or had it all been feminized so that a young man who was willing to lay down his life for his country would want nothing to do with it? I couldn't wait to find out.

I was assigned as the commander of B Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group. Our battalion was in Haiti at the time I signed in, and I would end up making several trips there over the coming months. Part of the battalion was behind, and we had mostly administrative duties that supported the operation of the deployed element. Our battalion was working to restore order, get water supplies running again, supervise elections, monitor construction projects, and work with the Civil Affairs units who were... passing out coloring books teaching birth control. This is what happens in an Army full of Catholics who don't know their faith. Would they find any clue that this kind of activity were wrong if they discussed it with one of the six or seven Catholic chaplains assigned to various units at Fort Bragg?

That Sunday I went to Mass in one of the Fort Bragg chapels. There it was again. Girls all over the altar, a meaningless sermon, and the scriptures, once again, were being altered! Ugly, horrible music. Felt banners. No wonder we had soldiers passing out birth control coloring books in Haiti. Committing suicide. Covering their bodies with grotesque tattoos. With this kind of liturgy and doctrine it could be expected. Ever the servant of the United States Army, however, I did not despair. I discussed it all extensively with Lorri and we saw it as my duty to try to elevate the culture a bit, to encourage Catholic soldiers to be good Catholics, and generally speaking, to try to help soldiers discover right from wrong as part of my daily activities. I began looking into the issue of Church authority at this point. The Fort

Bragg chapel activities that come under the title of “Catholic” are under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, which at that time was under Bishop Dimino as the bishop. Either I could conceivably write to him and complain about it or I could send him a request for the Latin Mass, which could only be a positive influence in the lives of these poor soldiers. Meanwhile we could try the local Maronite Rite parish.

I had recently made the pleasant on-line discovery of an Eastern Catholic Church in Fayetteville. The Eastern Rites are Catholic, in every sense of the word, although their liturgy is different than what most Catholics know. Very often they resemble a liturgy of one of the Eastern Orthodox churches, they often celebrate different feast days, they have distinct devotions, practices, vestments, and even a separate code of canon law. In Fayetteville Archangel Michael Maronite Catholic Church did not come under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Raleigh, but rather a Maronite Catholic Bishop in New York. Above him in the hierarchy is the Patriarch of the Maronite Catholic Church, who resides in Lebanon. Above him, of course, is the Pope, which is why this particular Eastern Church is “Catholic” and not “Orthodox.” As I discovered, many Roman Catholics had sought relief in these Oriental Rites of the Church as a consequence of the spread of modernism throughout the Roman Rite. The Eastern Catholics are often rather insular because they are based on some immigrant group. In this case there were several Lebanese families. Communities of Eastern Catholics are usually not influenced by modern culture to the same extent as a typical parish, so their liturgy, spirituality, and prayer life often is much closer to the heart of the Church. No political agendas. And since their liturgies did not fall under the Roman Rite, they were not subject to the whims of a liberal liturgist or a modernist bishop. Not wanting to experience the same *Novus Ordo* difficulties we had gone through in Alabama, we decided to make this Maronite parish our own for the time being — at least until we were able to secure permission for a Latin Mass.

Pope John Paul II, coincidentally, had recently published a document entitled *Orientalis Lumen*, or “Light of the East,” in which he addressed the role of the Eastern Rites in the Catholic Church.¹ The Maronites have a beautiful liturgy. The chants are Eastern and minor, and their Eucharistic prayers are in Syriac, which is similar to Aramaic, the language Christ himself spoke at the last supper. We found this particular branch of Catholicism to be quite appealing. Of the Eastern Catholic Churches, the Maronite Church

¹ *Orientalis Lumen*, Apostolic Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops, Clergy and Faithful to Mark the Centenary of *Orientalium Dignitas* of Pope Leo XIII.

is known by the name of a person — St. Maron, a fourth century hermit. By his holiness and miracles he attracted many followers. When he died in A.D. 410, his disciples built a large monastery in his honor, from which other monasteries were founded. St. Maron's followers were always faithful to the Catholic Church, and they maintained their bonds with Rome and the Successor of St. Peter throughout their history. During the seventh century, the Maronites suffered persecution and sought refuge in the mountains of Lebanon. There they continued to maintain their liturgy, faith, culture, and unique spirituality up until the present.

Nevertheless, we are not Maronite Catholics, we are Roman Rite Catholics, and we also have a very beautiful liturgy — the preconiliar liturgy. And so far it had not been re-established in this diocese as Pope John Paul II had requested, so as much as I loved the Maronite Rite I wasted no time in sending a polite letter to Bishop Gossman of the Diocese of Raleigh requesting that the Traditional Mass of the Latin Rite be made available in his diocese.

Since I was a member of the military, it seemed to be a good idea to send a letter to the Archbishop of the Military Archdiocese and put forth the same request. If he gave us permission for the Latin Mass it would be on the military installation itself; if the Bishop of Raleigh gave us permission, it would be in the vicinity of Fayetteville somewhere.

The bishop of Raleigh wrote back promptly. He simply instructed me to take the issue up with the Military Archdiocese, since I was a member of the U.S. Army. I didn't think it appropriate to respond to him and ask what he was doing to respect the Holy Father's will, as expressed in *Ecclesia Dei*, at least not yet.

A couple of weeks later the response came back from the Archbishop of the Military Archdiocese:

Before a judgment can be made it is necessary to hear from the chaplain(s) at the bases about this matter. The request must come from the senior Catholic chaplain who in the meantime should contact this office for the information that would be needed.

I would therefore suggest that you talk this over with the Catholic chaplains of the two bases, if you have not already done so.

Fair enough. I did some research, and what I found was that there were six Catholic chaplains assigned to Fort Bragg and an additional one at the adjoining Pope Air Force Base. That may seem like a lot, but for a military community of 42,000, some 30% of which is at least *nominally* Catholic, that

is one priest for every 2100 Catholic soldiers and airmen, not to include the families residing there. The ratio of priests to laymen was declining rapidly. Soon the number of Catholic Chaplains on active duty would fall below a hundred, nearly down to a third of the 286 or so needed. By now it was well known that there was a serious shortage of priests everywhere, and the military was to be more immediately affected by this trend, because it's a young man's profession.

I met with the senior Catholic chaplain, a graying old priest from New York who held the rank of Colonel and who seemed to have painted his hair black to avoid the appearance of graying. He seemed very aged, and in fact he was preparing for retirement soon. He wasn't much interested in what I had to say, and he avoided answering the question about having a Latin Mass in one of the Fort Bragg chapels as long as he could by talking exclusively about himself and his pre-conciliar Catholic education. I could see no point in his telling me this. Sure, he had a great education. This was what I wanted for my children, and yet it was virtually impossible to find such a good education in the time in which we lived. That's why thousands of parents have chosen to home school, ourselves included. I kept pressing the question.

"Things are better now than prior to Vatican II," he explained.

"What about all the shortages of priests, empty seminaries, and declining orders of nuns?"

"Oh, well, that. Well, as a pastor, I have to say that things are much better."

I never did figure out where he was coming from. What about a guy trying to raise children to know and understand and love the Catholic Church? Was it any better for us? I avoided a debate, and tried to coax some response out of him. Perhaps he would be interested in offering the Mass for us himself before his upcoming retirement. He suddenly seemed very agitated and anxious for me to leave. I could tell that I wouldn't get anywhere with him, so I decided that it would be best to just pray and wait for his replacement to arrive.

The wait turned out to be several months. When his replacement finally did arrive, I gave him some time before I raised the issue. I made an appointment and visited our new "Senior Catholic Chaplain," Fr. Sidney Marceaux, who, like his predecessor, held a rank of Colonel in the US Army Chaplains Corps. Fr. Marceaux had no knowledge of the purpose of our meeting. I was met with silence when I enquired about the possibility of having the Traditional Mass celebrated somewhere on the installation on Sundays and Holy Days. I sensed hostility immediately.

“For what purpose?”

“Because the Holy Father has asked bishops and all pastors to be generous in allowing the old liturgy of the Roman Rite, and it’s beautiful, so . . . why not?”

“What’s wrong with the new liturgy? Isn’t it beautiful too?”

I wanted to laugh. Now, in all reality, how was I supposed to respond respectfully to his question? Sure thing, just love that Gregorian Chant. And the treasury of sacred music that’s been so carefully preserved — like “Kumbaya” and “Sons of God.” You’ve got to love those highly accurate and very inspiring translations into the English Language. And the political message that keeps us Catholics voting for pro-abortion Democrats. It’s all just so *beautiful!* I put away the sarcasm and asked God to help me to do my best to answer it without lying.

“Well . . . uh . . . yes, but we’ve come to appreciate the Latin Mass.”

“You’re too young to remember the Latin Mass.”

“No, I’m not too young. I could remember the one in Dayton, Ohio, and the one in Birmingham, Alabama — that has all been within the last two to three years. The local bishop in those locations gave people permission to just continue to follow the old rite. The bishop in Mississippi that confirmed me says the Mass in his Cathedral one Sunday every month.² They do this because the Pope asked them to. He’s asking you to.”

“No, that’s just for old people who grew up with it. When they die, the old Latin Mass will go with them. You didn’t grow up with the Latin Mass, so it’s not intended for you. We have a new Mass now, and that’s the one we’re to follow.”

Maybe honesty would be the best approach. “Well, Father, I did that for a while, but there seems to be no end to the tinkering with it by the liberals. They just don’t know when to stop. Anyway, populating the altar with women is just a step too far. I’m not interested in my children seeing that.”

In retrospect, sadly, honesty was not the best approach. This seemed to have angered him greatly, but he carefully avoided showing it. He wanted me to put the request in writing, which I did on January 15, 1996. Along with

²Bishop Joseph L. Howze, Diocese of Biloxi. Bishop Howze gave the first ever “universal indult” in his diocese. He told his priests that any of them who wanted to could offer Mass in the old rite any Sunday of the month except for the first Sunday; he wanted to have a gathering once a month, in which all the followers of the traditional rite could come to the cathedral the first Sunday of each month for a High Mass. None of the priests took him up on it, so he offered a Low Mass once a month in a side chapel of the cathedral until he retired.

the request, I sent a copy of the document *Ecclesia Dei*, information about the FSSP (*Fraternitatis Sacerdotalis Sancti Petri*, a society of priest established by John Paul II for those desiring to follow the traditional Latin rite) and a list of “authorized” Latin Masses.

His response was short:

After consulting with the Catholic chaplains assigned to Fort Bragg, I have decided not to grant your request.

What does that mean? For what reason? The Holy Father had asked that “bishops and of all those engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church” be generous in allowing the old Mass, had he not?

I had no intention of accepting this response, because the Holy Father’s plea for generosity could in no way be considered fulfilled when there was absolutely no authorized Latin Mass anywhere in the state of North Carolina. Fortunately, since we had the Maronite Church nearby, there was no sense of extreme urgency to get permission pushed through; we were able to attend Divine Liturgy there in tranquility, thereby fulfilling our Sunday obligation without suffering ideological assaults against our sensibilities. My wife and children were able to attend the daily Novus Ordo Mass in the Fort Bragg chapels offered by a retired priest who, despite following the new liturgy, seemed to have the same Faith that we adhered to. He was a “contract priest,” paid some amount per month to offer Mass in the Fort Bragg chapels for the soldiers assigned there.

As soon as I had the opportunity, I made an appointment with Fr. Marceaux to see what his objection was, since it was not stated in his response. He was late, so I waited. And waited. And waited.

Now, let’s put this in perspective. I was a Major in the US Army Special Forces, and a commander of Company B, Second Battalion, 3rd Special Forces. My time was a most precious asset; I had so little of it that it was difficult for me to be there to begin with. I had to abandon my company for at least an hour on a very busy day in order to be there. I have no recollection of what my company was doing on that day, but on any given day we had A-Teams on one of the ranges firing mortars or weapons of some make and caliber. Perhaps we were in the field somewhere, studying Spanish or French, doing some kind of training having to do with the numerous perishable Special Forces skills, or doing some form of maintenance. Yet, for the sake of the Faith of my children, my wife, and myself — AND the Catholic soldiers in my command as well as throughout this huge military base, I wanted to bring something truly beautiful to this Army I so loved. Something that would

give the Green Berets and Paratroopers assigned there a better alternative for attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. Something to help them find greater sanctity and strength of soul as they prepared for the dangerous tasks they could be called to undertake at a moment's notice.

Fort Bragg is the heart of the US Army. The 82nd Airborne Division is there, as well as its higher headquarters, the 18th Airborne Corps; two Special Forces groups were there, the 3rd and the 7th, as well as our higher headquarters, the US Army Special Operations Command. Many of the soldiers were Catholic. It was abundantly clear to me by now that many of them had abandoned the practice of their faith. It is not difficult to understand the reason for this. You don't tell Green Berets and Paratroopers they have to hold hands at Mass. You don't feminize the liturgy in such a testosterone-laden setting and expect to have Catholics just accept it. Protestant churches in the area were full of fallen-away Catholics. There was one, Northwood Temple, that had over 400 Catholic families in their congregation.

The Bishop of Raleigh occasionally called our Maronite priest to tell him that ONLY Maronite Catholics were to be attending Mass at Archangel Michael Maronite Catholic Church. He demanded that Roman Rite Catholics attend Mass in his highly politicized and feminized churches. This was a most ridiculous attempt at abuse of ecclesiastical power by the bishop, as he had no right to mandate such a thing. Any Catholic can attend Mass in the Eastern Rites — and should consider doing so at times like this. Finally, during one such phone call our Maronite priest told him “why don't you contact Northwood Temple and tell them what you're telling me? There are far more Roman Rite Catholics there than here!”

Finally Fr. Marceaux arrived. Making no apology for his tardiness, he called me into his office with a flip of the wrist. I stuffed my green beret in my right side pocket, sat and waited for him to get settled; I listened to his complaints about his back problems and waited patiently for him to get off the subject so that we could get to the point.

“What brings you here?”

I asked him about his response; why had he not given us permission to have a Latin Mass?

“Well, it would not be a good idea.”

Why not?

“Your thinking is not in line with the USCCB [US Council of Catholic Bishops]. Therefore I can't grant your request.”

“Why do you say that? My thinking is ‘not in line with the USCCB?’”

What does that mean?"

"Because you're opposed to having women on the altar."

For my lack of experience, the words hit me rather hard. At this point, I am greatly consoled in the knowledge that "my thinking is not in line with the USCCB," but at that time it was as if this priest was accusing me of being a dissident, or a heretic or something. I brushed off my own personal concern over the situation and continued because there was much more at stake here than my own personal feelings. "Fair enough, but what fruit do we see coming forth from this kind of liturgical experimentation? Where's the 'new springtime?' Declining vocations everywhere. . . and these women will not eventually be ordained, so it's best left to boys and men to serve at the altar."

"That's not necessarily true. Some canon lawyers believe that women can become deacons. In fact some of the best canon lawyers in the United States are convinced it will happen soon."

Fr. Marceaux was a canon lawyer. At least he called himself one. I decided not to argue with him about what the "best canon lawyers in the United States" believe.

"What about having a Latin Rosary? What about having the New Mass in Latin, or at least partially in Latin with Gregorian Chant, the way that the Second Vatican Council had indicated in the document on the Liturgy?"

"No. . . that might lead to other things."

"What other things?"

Silence.

"What other things???" I asked several times.

"It would be divisive."

"How can something the Holy Father asked you to do be divisive?" I asked.

"I'd rather not talk about it."

"Why not?"

"I'd rather not say."

It was clear that this priest was not impressed with the words of our Holy Father, and it was clear that he was not going to allow me, MAJ David Sonnier, to have one bit of input as to what Catholic activities took place on Fort Bragg. It was clear, despite the fact that he was the one ignoring the Holy Father's guidance, he somehow considered me to be the "dissident," since my thinking was "not in line" with the US Catholic bishops.

In my heart I knew that I was not a dissident, and that my loyalty was to the Holy Catholic Church of Rome, whose present Pope, Pope John Paul

II, was obviously having a most difficult time with dissidents who really were in rebellion. Perhaps people such as this same Fr. Marceaux! Whatever happened with the Church in the US, my loyalties were to remain with the Church of Rome. Therefore, I decided to simply appeal through ecclesiastical channels.

First, to ensure that I had tried all avenues at the local level, I contacted the Catholic Chaplain at Pope Air Force Base, and provided him with some information about *Ecclesia Dei* and a request for a weekly Mass according to the 1962 Missal. The letter included a request for the new Mass in Latin, should the use of the 1962 Missal be impossible. The result was predictable:

MEMORANDUM 9 October 1996

FROM: 23 WING/HC
315 ETHRIDGE ST.
POPE AFB, NC 28306-2396
SUBJECT: Latin Mass

1. After our previous phones [sic] conversations and your mailing me your package asking about the possibility of having a Latin Mass here at Pope I am responding to your request. After prayerful consideration I have decided not to grant your request.
2. I have strong convictions about fragmenting the Catholic community. The Mass is a sign of our unity and to begin to separate that unity because of special needs creates an atmosphere of individualism and special interest that weakens the bond of unity and can become divisive. I also have a strong working relationship with the Catholic priests at Fort Bragg and since you are a member of that community, I do not wish to undermine their authority in the decision that they reached. To date, no member of the Catholic community at Pope AFB has requested to have a Latin Mass available.
3. It is unfortunate that we have lost touch with the Latin liturgical tradition. I believe a better way of tapping into this liturgical tradition is to integrate more traditional Latin music into our celebration of Mass. The Church should use her whole treasury of music when celebrating Eucharist. I personally miss some of the wonderful Gregorian chants in Latin that were used in the seminary. In my previous parish assignments I worked closely with music ministers and encouraged them to use more

traditional Latin music. I found the music of Taize to be both beautiful and fairly easy to have a choir sing.

4. By copy of this memorandum, I am informing the Archbishop of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA of my decision and am sending a copy to your pastor, Fr. Marceaux.

THOMAS M. ANGELO, Ch, Capt, USAF
Senior Catholic Chaplain

Several things jump out at one who reads this letter. It is clear that there had been no concern about separating the “unity” because of “special needs” of the feminists. The chaplain pointed out, correctly, in paragraph 3 that Latin belongs in the liturgy, but it is quite impossible to sing Gregorian Chant if attending Mass to do so means accepting the presence of girls primping on the altar, or old ladies trying to look like stern schoolteachers as they read the modified, feminist-friendly scriptures.

What about the multitude of liturgies that were being allowed? Childrens Masses, guitar Masses, Spanish Masses. . . how could a Latin Mass “fragment the Catholic community?”

Basically what this priest said was, “it’s sad that the beauty of the liturgy is lost, but it’s lost and, well, for the sake of ‘unity’ we all have to wander in the wilderness together.”

“Go ahead,” I thought, “but don’t expect me to follow.” On March 1, 1996 I sent an appeal to the office of Bishop Dimino, Archdiocese for the Military Services. In it I stated:

I mailed a letter to you in July, 1995, in which I requested that the Tridentine Mass be made available to Catholics at Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base. A copy of this letter is enclosed, as well as the response from your office indicating that we should coordinate this effort through the chaplains at Fort Bragg and Pope AFB. We have made every effort to do so, but the senior chaplains are opposed to the idea. I anticipate that you will have no request for permission coming forth from them. This does not mean that the need is not here, it simply means that the senior Catholic chaplains do not support our request.

Although they do not understand our concerns, our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II has indicated that he does, and he has

asked for the wide and generous support from the Bishops and all others engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church.

The reply arrived on March 25, 1996.

Dear David,

I wish to acknowledge your recent letter to Archbishop Dimino regarding your request for the “Tridentine Mass.”

As you have already been informed by Father Halligan in his letter to you of August 1, 1995, any such request should be presented by the Catholic Chaplain for consideration.

*With every best wish, I am
Sincerely Yours in Christ,*

*Rev. Msgr. Aloysius R. Callaghan, S.T.L., J.C.D.
Moderator of the Curia/Chancellor*

What was *this*? Did he not bother to read the letter I sent him? The Catholic Chaplain had denied our request, and I was making an appeal to him to assist. Perhaps to make a decision that would overrule the decision of Fr. Marceaux. The Holy Father had asked for generosity and there wasn't a Latin Mass anywhere in the Diocese of Raleigh — nor on Fort Bragg. When the Holy Father asks for the support of the “bishops and of all those engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church” on something, you would think that it would be respected.

I couldn't let this response stand and just drop the issue. There was obviously a disconnect here.

Meanwhile, my wife had become an active member of the MCCW, the Military Council of Catholic Women, and she met a retired priest that lived in the area. Msgr. Edward Spiers was a kind old priest, and he was certainly old enough to remember better days for the Church. Hopefully he would be willing to take on responsibility for our Latin Mass community once we had the opportunity to organize it. I contacted him. Not only was he willing, he was enthusiastic about the idea!

Soon I began to come into contact with other Catholics who would be interested in being a part of a Latin Mass community. Other Catholics, in some cases Catholics who had attended the Tridentine Mass in other locations in the country, were just as frustrated with the situation as we were.

I contacted Fr. Marceaux. Perhaps if he knew that a retired priest would take responsibility for our Latin Mass, and that there were other Catholics

interested, he would be more willing to support the idea. Maybe he just didn't want it to be a burden to him or one of the other chaplains, but with a retired priest taking responsibility, surely he would allow us to proceed.

The answer was definitely "no," and he seemed quite angry by my persistence. And "no," he would not allow Msgr. Spiers any such role among the Catholics at Fort Bragg either.

Now, at this point, we have to wonder "why not." What harm could have possibly come from a retired old priest coming to Fort Bragg and offering Mass in one of the multitude of chapels at the garrison on Sundays and Holy Days? There were other retired priests who played an active role; the daily Mass and Saturday "vigil" Mass at our own USASOC chapel was offered by a retired priest. What could possibly be the harm? He wouldn't say.

Shortly thereafter word came back to us, through some of the other women in the MCCW (Military Council of Catholic Women) that Fr. Marceaux and some of the other priests were warning Catholics to "beware of people trying to cause divisions" in the Catholic community at Fort Bragg. They were now issuing warnings from the pulpit that there were people who "couldn't cope with change" who were trying to throw the Church back into an earlier era, and trying to divide the Church. These dangerous dissidents were circulating a petition that Catholics should refuse to sign.

We got a laugh out of it, but it seemed rather peculiar. With all the high-profile Catholic pro-abort politicians, the *real* public dissidents who opposed the Church on numerous fundamental issues, why would they target people who were only trying to exercise a valid option for this type of calumny? All we were asking for was for an option, a valid option. And unlike the "Girl Altar Boy" option which had been a very reserved permission, this was an option that the Holy Father himself had asked for generosity with in a *motu proprio*.

Time to write to the bishop again. Perhaps if he knew that we had a priest to volunteer for the effort, he would be more willing to approve our request, override the chaplain's decision, or take some meaningful action on our behalf. I wrote to the Archdiocese for the Military Services again on May 24, 1996. Prior to sending the letter, I showed it to Msgr. Spiers, and made a few editorial changes he suggested.

24 May 1996

Archbishop Dimino:

I have appealed to your office on several occasions, on behalf of myself and others stationed at Fort Bragg, to request that

the Traditional Latin Mass be made available here under the provisions of Ecclesia Dei. You relinquished the decision for implementation of Ecclesia Dei to a local level, specifically, to the Garrison Chaplain, who has repeatedly denied our requests without giving any good reason. The only reason offered by the Senior Catholic Chaplain is that it would be “divisive,” as if compliance with something the Pope has asked “wide and generous” support for can possibly be divisive. Fort Bragg, as you know, has one of the largest concentrations of troops anywhere, and so it is no surprise that a significant number of Roman Catholics here who grew up with the Latin Liturgy desire to have the Traditional Latin Mass.

... now there is a retired priest, Msgr Edward Spiers, volunteering to have the Traditional Latin Mass here at Fort Bragg weekly, and yet the only thing stopping him is that Chaplain (COL) Marceaux, the Garrison Chaplain, is not giving us permission.

I think that I am justified in appealing his decision. I am appealing to you, with hopes that you can assure Chaplain (COL) Marceaux that the Traditional Latin Mass is not bad or divisive in any way, but rather it is something that will bring Roman Catholics together to a greater understanding of the Church and our traditions. ...

I would suggest, rather than a reversal of Chaplain (COL) Marceaux’s decision, a modification, in which the Traditional Liturgy is allowed for a period of several months, during which the impact is evaluated to determine whether it is good or bad.

Certainly now the problem should be clear to the Archbishop. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, as Msgr. Spiers said I should do, I prepared for a long, patient wait for him to respond. Once he understood the problem, he would certainly want to spend some time thinking about it.

It took only four days for the response to arrive:

May 28, 1996

Dear David,

I wish to acknowledge your letter of May 24, 1996 written to Archbishop Dimino.

As for the request for the Traditional Latin Mass, I once again wish to clarify that such a request must be presented by the Catholic

Chaplain.

With every best wish, I am

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. Aloysius R. Callaghan, S.T.L., J.C.D.

Moderator of the Curia/Chancellor

This was becoming rather difficult to believe. What bureaucracy! What red tape! The Church truly had to be a divine institution to survive such incompetence! Had he not even read what I sent to him? I was trying to appeal to the Archbishop, and he was referring me back to the same chaplain whose decision I was appealing! Furthermore, the response came from this “moderator” guy, not the Archbishop.

I gave a copy of the response to Msgr. Spiers. He was rather surprised by it, but, being over eighty years of age there was not much in the world that could upset him. “Don’t worry about it; I’ll take care of getting permission for the Mass,” he said.

God Bless Monsignor Spiers! I left it to the good Monsignor to sort out while I just focused on doing my job. A lot was going on; our battalion had returned from Haiti, and we were now engaged in numerous exercises and deployments. We were constantly on the move. I remained the commander of B Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group at that moment, but soon I would be turning over the company to another officer and assuming responsibilities as the battalion executive officer. In the Special Forces Battalion there are five positions for majors; command of the three “line” companies (A Company, B Company and C Company) as well as the Operations Officer (S-3), and the Executive Officer (XO). Of all of these, the least preferred is the XO, whose responsibility is basically to free the battalion commander of the minutiae required to run a battalion so that he can focus on the “forest” and not be lost in the “trees.”

I often invited fellow Catholics to attend Divine Liturgy at the Maronite Church with us. On one Sunday, I met another serviceman at the Maronite Church who turned out to be a military lawyer, a Judge Advocate General officer (JAG). Tim was also a Major, like myself. As it turned out he had been a member of an “Indult” parish in Richmond, Virginia during a previous assignment. When I told him of the difficulties I was having with obtaining permission for an Indult Mass at Fort Bragg he became interested. “I’ll write the senior chaplain a letter,” he said.

Tim’s letter was a masterpiece! We made copies of it, and mailed them

to every Catholic chaplain at Fort Bragg.³

A few weeks passed during which I was immersed in the change of command and the initial blast of minutiae that came with assuming XO duties. Then, nearly simultaneously, both Msgr. Spiers and Tim received responses to their individual letters:

Dear Monsignor:

I wish to acknowledge your letter of 10 July 1996 addressed to Archbishop Dimino.

It is the policy of this Archdiocese to permit the celebration of the Mass in the form prescribed in "Ecclesia Dei" only after a request is made for such a celebration by the Catholic chaplain of the installation.

I want to thank you for all your good work in service to our people in the military. May God bless your apostolic labors.

Yours in Christ,

*Rev. Msgr. Aloysius R. Callaghan, S.T.L., J.C.D.
Moderator of the Curia/Chancellor*

The letter Tim received was much more curt. He read it to me over the telephone in an agitated voice. I asked him to provide me with a copy of it, but he never did; quite frankly I think he was embarrassed by it — and this seemed to be the intent of some of the letters we received from these chaplains. In the past Tim had often commented that the reason “traditional” Catholics were having so many difficulties with the clergy is that they’re always making demands, they’re rude, and they don’t know how to ask for something politely. After the receipt of this letter, I would never hear him say that again!

Over the next few weeks I spoke with every Catholic chaplain at Fort Bragg individually; either over the telephone or in person.

One, Fr. Jerome Habarek, who was the Chaplain for USASOC (my own higher headquarters) had only one word for me: “No!” One would think that a chaplain would have a bit more consideration for a fellow Catholic in their own unit, especially in the Special Operations Command. We had risky jobs, and at any moment we could have been called out into harm’s way and killed. Yet, all he would say was “No!”

³For the text of this letter, see Appendix B, at 143.

Another priest actually took the time to engage in discussion. Fr. Patrick Healy seemed more amenable to the idea initially, then he bared his soul. At some point in the discussion, which was by telephone, he snapped: “The Pope says. . . the Pope says. . . I’m tired of hearing about what the Pope says!”

Then, there was Fr. Czech. He actually took the time to meet with me; we had lunch together, and we talked about the liturgical crisis in the Church. He knew exactly where I was coming from. He even agreed. “Oh, yes, the Latin Mass is more Catholic,” he confided.

I couldn’t believe my ears. “Why?”

“Because it’s more universal. ‘Catholic’ means universal.” He understood that the original intent of the Second Vatican Council was that the Mass was to remain, at least partly, in Latin, and that much of what had taken place with the new liturgy had not been intended by the Church.

Now this was a change. Perhaps at last I had found a priest who would be able to help out. Fr. Czech held a rather low military rank. He was only a Captain. The senior chaplain held the rank of Colonel, and in fact, all of the other priests outranked him. But, he was a priest, and he agreed to talk with Fr. Marceaux. He would meet with him as soon as possible; if it was not possible to start having a weekly Mass by the 1962 Missal under the provisions of *Ecclesia Dei*, at least we could have a Latin Mass in the new rite. Under the provisions of Canon Law any priest could do that.

We parted and we didn’t speak again for about a week. When I next saw him he was quite disturbed. Fr. Marceaux had warned him on the sternest terms possible that he was to have nothing to do with me. Suddenly concerned about his military career, which he would soon lose anyway, he offered no resistance to this abuse of authority.

Then there was Fr. Eric Albertson. Fr. Albertson was also only a captain, but he was known for his orthodoxy. He had taken the unusual step of going through the Army’s difficult Ranger School as well as Airborne School. A priest going through Ranger School would clearly come to a much better understanding of the life of an infantry soldier. One had to admire him for enduring it, as one has to admire anyone that can endure such a trial for two months.

Yet I could never really speak with him. Every time I tried, the strangest situation would emerge. Every time! I tried to discuss some possibilities for improving the liturgy for soldiers assigned to Fort Bragg; I tried to talk about Church documents, or the erroneous implementation of Vatican II. I really tried to discuss serious issues with him. I was concerned about the massive apostasy, the feminization of the liturgy, the bizarre ideologies of the left that

had crept into our worship, and the terrible loss of souls. I, the soldier, was talking about these things. And Fr. Albertson, the priest, would invariably want to shift the conversation to Ranger Tabs, Airborne wings, ribbons, and other doo-dads that go on the US military uniform. He wanted to talk about the most trivial of things that military people would want to talk about during their first few years in the Army. I was concerned about the salvation of souls, he seemed more interested in military toys. Eventually I came to understand that, for whatever reason, whether it was due to ambition, a desire to protect his career, a lack of interest, or a warning he had received from his superior, he would make no waves. It was clear that we would never get anywhere with him.

I went to Mass once when Fr. Albertson was scheduled at his chapel, which was the 82nd Airborne Division Chapel. Yes, he was known for his “orthodoxy,” and it was clear that he upheld Catholic doctrine in his sermon, but sure enough — he had done nothing to avoid the feminization of the liturgy. There were female altar servers, there was sappy music, and the surroundings were the same modernist aura that left the tremendous spiritual void I had come to notice whenever I attended the new Mass. When Mass ended, a gentleman in front of me, who appeared to be about the same age as I was shook his head and said “Mass has become so politically correct.” His irate wife snapped, “Honey, can you please keep your opinion to yourself!?”

My only conclusion at this point was that, for whatever reason, every single Catholic chaplain on this installation was opposed to our request. Now at this point, certain things become very clear to me. It was clear that the current state of the liturgy did not reflect the desires of the “Council Fathers” of Vatican II. It was also clear that each and every one of the Chaplains at Fort Bragg either:

- Knew that there was a problem, but didn’t have the courage to do anything about it
- Were not intelligent enough to recognize that there was a problem, or
- Were part of the problem, desiring to drive a wedge between the US Catholics and the Vatican.

It was also clear that the Archbishop of the Military Archdiocese would do nothing to help us.

Here the problem began to take on a more serious aspect, because the military personnel, of all people, need to be exposed to good Catholic doctrine.

I began to consider the impact of military Catholics at Fort Bragg, the heart and soul of the military fighting force, being turned against the Catholic Church. It seemed clear to me that the eventual outcome of just letting this situation continue would be extremely harmful.

I continued to hold meetings with others who shared a desire for the Latin Mass; there were a couple of young Field Artillery officers from New York; both were in the same battalion. One was a lieutenant, the other was a captain who commanded a company. There were a couple of JAG officers by now, several other officers of various branches, two or three other families, and a few enlisted personnel. We circulated a petition and all of us signed it.

I presented the petition to Fr. Marceaux, in hopes that he would somehow be moved by the fact that the request was coming from a number of officers and senior enlisted men. He was quite blunt in his response, now. He would *never* allow a Latin Mass of any type on this installation as long as he was the senior chaplain. He didn't care if there were 500 or 1000 signatures. Since the Bishop of Raleigh had not allowed it, he, Fr. Marceaux could not allow it. Not under any circumstances. Ever.

“Why!?”

“Because, since it's not allowed in the Diocese of Raleigh, all these people from around the area who don't agree with the Bishop of Raleigh would be coming onto the military installation to go to Mass. People who have nothing to do with the Army would be here for Mass.”

“So what? It's an open installation. And it's good to go to Mass.”

“They would be running away from the Churches of the Diocese of Raleigh. They need to stay in them and accept Vatican II.” As if what was going on in the Diocese of Raleigh had anything to do with Vatican II! This wasn't the time to argue, though. I happened to know that our Maronite priest was looking for an opportunity to expand and to establish a second Maronite Catholic parish in the area somewhere. No small number of Catholics from Fort Bragg were members of Archangel Michael, so perhaps he could have a Maronite Liturgy on the installation. After all, the Holy Father had recently released a document entitled *Orientalis Lumen*, encouraging us all to come to an appreciation of the Eastern Rites.

“Would it be possible for our Maronite priest to come here. . . maybe once a month. . . and we could have Maronite Divine Liturgy on the installation?”

“No, that would not be appropriate.”

“Why not??”

“It would divide the Church.”

“Eastern Rites are *part of* the Church!”

“No, I’m not going to allow the ‘*Marionites*’ to use our chapel.”

Marionites? Had he mispronounced it by mistake, or did he just not even have a clue? I wanted to say “*MaRONITes!*” We stared at one another for a moment. I don’t know what he was thinking, but I was wondering if he knew the first thing about Eastern Rites, or if he would ever bother to read *Oriental Lumen*. Then, suddenly, he was no longer in command of the conversation; he looked somehow vulnerable. . . now there seemed to be an opening for dialogue. He became inquisitive:

“Do. . . do. . . do they say their prayers in Latin too?”

“No, but some of the prayers are in Syriac. It’s very close to Aramaic, an ancient language Christ spoke in his daily life.” He actually seemed interested in what I was saying for once, so I continued. “The Maronites are one of the many Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church, so they have their own liturgy. They also have their own liturgical calendar, with different feast days — sometimes including Saints most westerners haven’t heard of.”

He was still listening! I was on a roll. “They have their own code of canon law, liturgical calendar, and their own hierarchy of bishops. For example, the Maronites here in Fayetteville aren’t part of the Diocese of Raleigh. They come under the Eparchy of Saint Maron, and their bishop is in New York. An eparchy is the same thing as a diocese; they just call it an ‘eparchy’ instead of a ‘diocese.’ Their Patriarch is in Lebanon. They have a very beautiful liturgy; and there are no girl altar boys. It’s all quite traditional, but it’s of a different tradition than what we’re used to in the west. The forty days of lent begins with Ash Monday instead of Ash Wednesday, for example. . .”

As I continued on, he became uneasy, then anger started to re-build. This was obviously something new for him. This was something he wasn’t in control of, and he didn’t like it. There was nothing he could do about it. The Sonnier family remained safely out of his clutches, and there wasn’t a thing he could do about it. He couldn’t complain to the Bishop of Raleigh, the Maronites, or “Marionites” as he called them, weren’t under that jurisdiction. He couldn’t stop us from going to Archangel Michael. He couldn’t force us to accept girl altar boys. These people were avoiding the Novus Ordo by attending Mass with the Eastern Catholics, and he couldn’t stop them!

Unfortunately, I was slow to understand that what I was saying angered him, and I was still rambling on with all the wonderful things about Eastern Catholicism. At that time I thought it would appeal to the sense of the importance of “diversity” a liberal typically has. “There are quite a few people from Fort Bragg at Archangel Michael. . .”

“How many?!?”

“Oh, twenty. Thirty. Maybe more. It depends on whether you want to count contractors who work here, for example.”

He paused, and I took the opportunity to ask: “Don’t you think it would be appropriate to invite the priest to offer Mass here in one of your chapels, perhaps once a month or something?”

“No, it would be divisive. I think our meeting is over,” he hissed, straining, but unable to conceal his anger any longer.

I reported the sad news back to the Maronite priest the following weekend. He was unconcerned, as he had already been looking into the possibility of opening a church in Raleigh instead. It looked much more promising there. If Fort Bragg didn’t want him, he would start an apostolate in Raleigh.⁴

By now, what it seemed to boil down to was this: since Fort Bragg happened to have the misfortune of being located within the Diocese of Raleigh, we were stuck with Bishop Gossman’s policy when it came to the Tridentine Mass. The Pope had merely *asked* “bishops and [] all those engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church” to be generous with the old Mass, but they had the right to just say “no.” Or, “over my dead body.” Or whatever.

Hoping to convince the Bishop of Raleigh of the need to yield a bit on this issue, due to the difficulties he was causing for us, I sent him another letter on 18 October 1996. I explained that the path he had advised me to take had failed due to his own policy. In my initial contact with him he had referred me to the Military Archdiocese; now the Military Archdiocese was pointing to his own policy as a reason for telling us we couldn’t have a Latin Mass. He did not respond.

Through the Latin Liturgy Association newsletter, I discovered the presence of another priest in the region who was favorable to the idea. Fr. John J. Nicola was a refugee from the Archdiocese of Chicago and lived in Southern Pines with his mother. For as long as the Archdiocese of Chicago was run by Cardinal Bernadin, it had been clear that loyal, orthodox priests were not welcome in Chicago. Fr. Nicola had moved to North Carolina to stay with his elderly mother. Meanwhile, he had some limited faculties from the Diocese of Raleigh and he taught at a private school in the area. Fr. Nicola offered to help out by offering Mass in the new rite, in Latin, on Sunday afternoons at a certain hour. We were quite grateful to Fr. Nicola. As it turned out he was already offering Mass on Sundays in a private chapel in his house anyway, so it would be no difficulty to him.

⁴At that time he began a Maronite Mission in Raleigh, which is now known as the “St. Sharbel Mission.”

We began making plans, but our group had grown rather large by now, and somehow the word got back to Fr. Marceaux that we were going to have a Latin Novus Ordo Mass outside of the installation. He arranged a meeting with Fr. Nicola, and told him to have nothing to do with us. Embedded in the conversation, somehow, was a threat of “excommunication,” which Fr. Nicola reported back to me. He urged me to quit circulating the petition, and to do nothing, just accept the current state of affairs.

“Can’t we come to Mass at your private chapel?” I asked.

No, it couldn’t be permitted. He was a guest in the Diocese of Raleigh, and was only allowed to offer private Mass for the sick. Bishop Gossman wanted everyone registered in a parish, a Novus Ordo parish, and he was afraid that Fr. Nicola’s Mass would take people away from his agenda. It certainly would have.

“Why should I stop circulating the petition and submitting requests?”

“Because Fr. Marceaux may have to take some disciplinary action, like suspend or excommunicate you, and then the Church would just be weaker.”

Now all of this is an abuse of authority. Any priest can offer the New Mass in Latin (and definitely should, given the faulty translations) and any layman may be present. Bishop Gossman could place no such restrictions on Fr. Nicola as he was doing. Furthermore, there was no basis for any kind of threat of excommunication. However, to Fr. Marceaux the existence of a small but loyal group of Catholics was so frightening that he would go way beyond his authority as a priest, as a “canon lawyer,” and as a human being, to make such threats for the sake of trying to intimidate us.

It worked for only a couple of days before I discovered that it was a bluff. By now I could count on a larger network of Catholics for advice. In St. Louis, a gentleman by the name of Fred Haenel was organizing “Una Voce America” as a US extension of an international organization that had been around since prior to the end of the Second Vatican Council. Una Voce had taken great effort to ensure that traditional Catholic practice was not blown away by the bizarre winds that belched all over the world during the 1960s. They had been extremely effective in the preservation of the old rite, and Archbishop Bugnini had complained about them bitterly whenever he had the chance.

Through my contacts at Una Voce I came into contact with the “Saint Joseph Foundation,” a canon law society in San Antonio, Texas. I contacted them, sent them copies of the documents exchanged, and then one afternoon spent nearly two hours on the telephone with Chuck Wilson, a convert and a Catholic loyalist. He understood the situation perfectly. In fact, he had

come across numerous situations no different than ours. “Tolerant liberals,” pushing their ideological agendas, were always unhappy with Catholics who preferred the old Mass. They were most content when they were abusing their authority to try to mislead and deceive people. They often made such threats. In Hawaii, only recently, the tolerant liberal bishop had even gone as far as to “excommunicate” loyalists similar to us. The “excommunication” was overturned by the Vatican and Bishop Ferrario, Bishop of Honolulu, was soon in retirement. The bad news was that this kind of situation was to be found everywhere; loyal Catholics like us were suffering the same abuse from coast to coast. The good news was that we could not be excommunicated.

Thank God for the St. Joseph Foundation! I made it a point to include a donation to them in our monthly budget. Unfortunately, Canon Law is easy to abuse by canon lawyers who have ideological agendas. He and others in his office already knew of Fr. Marceaux but they wouldn’t say much about him. Anyway, there was no canonical provision for an absolute right to our old liturgy. All Chuck could do was to take away my concern that I could somehow be subject to some canonical penalty; I had every right to petition as I was doing. He gave me some suggestions for other avenues to explore: speak with the Commanding General, or the Department of the Army Chief of Chaplains.

Why not?

My wife and I co-signed a letter to the 18th Airborne Corps commander, Lieutenant General Jack Keane. Being a Catholic and a graduate of the Jesuit Fordham University as well as a “three-star” general, surely he would be able to intervene in this situation. He was only a lay Catholic, like myself, but certainly he couldn’t have the wool pulled over his eyes too easily if he had managed to reach the rank of general.

What I had not yet discovered at the time, was that it’s not just a matter of how intelligent one is. A Catholic can understand the present crisis perfectly well, yet lack the moral courage to do something about it, to take some small but significant step that will place them on the side of the Church and against the prevailing foul winds. Our first encounter with Lieutenant General Keane, his response to our letter, would lead me to believe that he was incredibly ignorant for a general and a graduate of Fordham. My second would confirm that he was just a clever dissident and fallen-away Catholic:

February 4, 1997

Dear Major and Mrs. Sonnier:

Thank you for your letter concerning your disappointment over

the decision not to recommend your petition for the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass at Fort Bragg. I recognize that it was not the decision you sought, but, I feel Monsignor Marceaux was acting in the best interest of the Fort Bragg Catholic Community when he rendered to the Military Archbishop his judgment to deny. Monsignor Marceaux used the teachings of the 1970 Roman Missal, which suppressed the traditional Latin Mass, as the basis for his judgment. It states the Pope's intention that Roman Catholics receive the new missal as a help toward strengthening their unity in a diversity of vernacular languages as they celebrate mass. It allowed exceptions for the elderly and for ill priests, with the understanding that they increase their knowledge of the new liturgy and accept the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. After meeting with you on several occasions, Monsignor Marceaux did not feel your request fell within the parameters of the Pope's guidelines.

Catholic priests serving on military installations receive their guidance from the Military Archbishop. He insures that when requests are evaluated, they are not in opposition to the policies of the local diocese. The Bishop of Diocese [sic] of Raleigh, which encompasses Fort Bragg, does not allow for the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass in any of the parishes, to include Fayetteville.

I understand that you have a schedule of traditional Latin Mass celebrations in the United States, and I encourage you to pursue these as a means of meeting your personal religious needs.

Sincerely,

*John M. Keane
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Commanding Officer*

Did he really expect that I would drive to Virginia or Atlanta? That was where the nearest "authorized" Latin Masses were. Our request would have been very easy to accommodate, and the number of people who had signed our petition, by now, was greater than the number attending, for example, the Episcopal service on Fort Bragg. I knew that for a fact. The Episcopal priest worked for me; he was the battalion Chaplain of 2/3 Special Forces Battalion, and I was the Executive Officer, his boss.

Furthermore, LTG Keane had mentioned nothing about recent developments, such as *Ecclesia Dei*, in his letter. I gave him the benefit of the doubt for the moment, and I just assumed that he meant well but that some generals weren't so smart after all. It appeared that, sure enough, Fr. Marceaux had pulled the wool over his eyes. I concluded that I, too, even given my shortcomings, could be a general one day!

I decided to try ecclesiastical channels again. Having appealed to both the Diocese of Raleigh and the Military Archdiocese to no avail, we decided that it was time to write to someone in the Vatican. I was short on time, due to an upcoming deployment, so Jeff McGowan, a young Field Artillery officer from New York agreed to draft it for me. I would just sign my name to it. He obtained the addresses of His Eminence Cardinal Felici, and wrote a very nice letter outlining the curious response we had received from everyone in the hierarchy, both within the Military Archdiocese and the Diocese of Raleigh. Cardinal Felici was the prefect of *Commission Ecclesia Dei*, the office in the Vatican that held responsibility for issues involving the old rite. Would Cardinal Felici be willing to write to Lieutenant General Keane and explain the situation to him? The general was obviously confused.

I received no response for a long period of time; incredibly long. We mailed the letter on February 27, and the response, dated 23 April, came several weeks later than that date. A number of other things happened in the mean time.

First of all, the Catholic women at Fort Bragg elected my wife to be the president of the Military Council of Catholic Women (MCCW), which meant that Fr. Marceaux had to be much more careful about what he said about us in public. In fact we heard rumors that he would be leaving soon, and we began to look forward to meeting his replacement. Hopefully it would be someone more respectful toward the desires of the Holy Father.

Then out of the clear blue I received a very encouraging letter from none other than Michael Davies, the President of Una Voce International. I contacted him by telephone to thank him for the letter, and asked if I could make copies of it and distribute them to uninformed clerics. After all, it was possible that many of the people I was dealing with had no clue as to the existence of *Ecclesia Dei* and were completely unaware of how the Holy Father viewed the old Mass. Of course he didn't mind if I made copies of his letter! And I knew just who to send copies to. Each of the chaplains at Fort Bragg, and the office of the Chief of Chaplains in the Pentagon would get one.

The Department of the Army Chief of Chaplains is a two-star general.

Each of the branches of the service has a similar position. Within the Army the office rotates on a two-year basis; a Catholic is assigned for two years, then a Protestant, then a Catholic again, etc. At the moment the office was held by Major General Donald W. Shea, a Catholic. I wrote to him on 7 April 1997, and I explained the love we had acquired for the old Mass as well as the fact that it was not available at Fort Bragg or the surrounding area. Specifically I asked him the following questions:

“Two distinct positions, with respect to the Tridentine Mass, are articulated. Which is correct — that articulated by Mr. Davies or that articulated by LTG Keane?”

“I understand that the Chaplains Corps is having extreme difficulties in obtaining priests for the chaplaincy. Given that the traditional orders in good standing with the Vatican (F.S.S.P., and the Institute of Christ the King) are flourishing, at some point will you begin taking in their members as military chaplains?”

“Currently there is no Tridentine Mass anywhere in the Carolinas, yet continuation of my Special Forces career requires that I spend considerable time here at Fort Bragg. Is it the position of the Chaplains Corps that I should sacrifice my career (leave the service or transfer out of Fort Bragg) if I would like to have the Tridentine Mass available?”

“Currently the Fort Bragg Chapter of Una Voce is not allowed to meet in Fort Bragg’s chapels, nor can we advertise in the bulletins. According to the appropriate Army Regulations, may a chaplain of a particular denomination deny an organization (in good standing with that same denomination) the right to announce and hold meetings?”

While awaiting the answer for this letter, I had some time to think. Why was this so important to me? And why do men risk or give up their lives for their country in combat? And furthermore, was there a relationship between these two questions? For a long time I had been pondering this thought, and finally I was able to reach an answer.

Yes, I now concluded, there was. The reason I had been successful as a young military officer, despite my apathy about administration, was that I was unafraid. I had the same fear that others experienced when confronted with a dangerous situation, but the fear of combat or death in some dangerous operation could be easily overcome by making a good confession, knowing that there would be eternal reward for just doing my best to be a good Christian and following through even if that meant losing my life in combat. *“Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (St. John 15:13). But I had to be convinced that what I was laying

my life down for was worth defending! Should one pay the ultimate price in the service of an Army whose Catholic priests show complete disregard for the highest authority of the Church? Defending a country whose Catholics appeared to be, largely, doing the same? I spent some time discussing this issue with my boss, who, for a non-Catholic, seemed to have an extraordinary level of sympathy. By now I had come to admire and respect my battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel David Fridovich, better known as “Frido.” Why is it that someone will risk their life in the military service?

“Why did you come into the Special Forces, sir?” I asked him.

“Free coffee.”

“... huh?... ”

“Free coffee. I always did like coffee. Well, *Oppresso* is coffee, and *Liber* is free, so *De Oppresso Liber*⁵ means free coffee.”

You could never tell when he was joking. He invited my family to the Passover Seder and we learned about Orthodox Judaism. Frido read the scriptures and prayers in Hebrew, interjecting an explanation along the way as necessary. Obviously the Orthodox Jews had some similar issues to wrestle with. I was curious as to how he coped with the efforts to feminize Judaism. “Sir, what do you think of female rabbis?” I asked.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You know... women who become...”

“I DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT.”

Hmmm. No wonder he was sympathetic to our plight.

It didn’t take long for the response to come back from the office of the Army Chief of Chaplains:

Dear Major Sonnier:

This is in response to your letter of April 17, 1997 to Chaplain Shea concerning the lack of a Tridentine Mass being celebrated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Chaplain Shea has asked me to respond to you.

The religious program at Ft Bragg is the commander’s program. The letter you received from LTG Keene [sic], Commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps explains the situation very well. He must rely on the advise of his chaplains. The chaplains follow the guidelines issued by the Archdiocese for the Military.

⁵*De Oppresso Liber*, the Special Forces motto, means “To Free the Oppressed.”

We in the Army Chaplaincy have no knowledge of the “traditional orders” you mentioned in your letter. The Archdiocese for the Military is the official endorsing agent for the Roman Catholic Church. We would have to receive an endorsement from them before we could even consider an application for the Military Chaplaincy.

The Chaplain Corps is not taking any position on your career. You are the best manager of that part of your life. You must make your own career decisions.

The use of the Chapel facilities at Fort Bragg are under the control of the Installation commander. He, again, must rely on the judgement of his chaplains about the use of the chapels.

Please be assured that you and your family will be in my prayers. Please keep us in yours.

Sincerely,

*John J. Kaising
Chaplain (Colonel) US Army
Executive Officer*

Three weeks later, Fr. John J. Kaising was featured in the *Army Times*, boasting of the efforts he took on behalf of a witch who desired his assistance in establishing a wiccan “chapel service.” It appears that it was of extreme importance to Fr. Kaising that he intervene with her commander to ensure that she could practice her “faith.”

As an example, Kaising explained how he once assisted a Wicca minister who needed to use knives in her worship service. “I had to go to her commander and explain the importance of the use of those knives and, ultimately, he accommodated her request.”⁶

Fr. Kaising, a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, and the Executive officer of the US Army Chief of Chaplains, would intervene on behalf of someone attempting to engage in something the Catholic Church condemns in the strongest terms — witchcraft. Yet he would deny one of his own spiritual children the Mass that the Pope himself had asked him to permit generously. The Mass that was then and is now not to be found in the state of North Carolina except for in the chapels of the Society of Saint Pius X.

⁶ *Army Times*, May 19, 1997, p. 14.

And with such ease it could have been done! Why did he not offer, as a priest, to intervene in our situation as he had on behalf of the witch?

And I, a loyal soldier always, ready to die for my country, would have been even that much more willing to do so. But by now this Green Beret was beginning to question whether he was serving in an Army that had the moral authority to make such a demand on my life. Was it really wise for me to be serving in such an army, as a father of a growing family? Witches were welcome but the Latin Mass was not? What kind of Catholic could take such an army seriously?

Fr. Kaising would go on to become Bishop John J. Kaising, an auxiliary bishop in the Military Archdiocese, a position he holds at the moment I write this.

Chapter 9

The Society of Saint Pius X

Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

St. Luke 12:3

DUE TO THE FACT that the bishop of the Diocese of Raleigh and numerous other bishops throughout the United States and the world were suppressing the old Mass, contrary to the Pope's clear plea for generosity, several of the soldiers on our installation were driving nearly an hour away to attend Mass in a chapel with the Society of St. Pius X. I avoided doing so, thinking that it would be somehow best to remain in the "visible" structure of the Church and to work patiently with the "Bishops and all those engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church" the Pope had referred to in *Ecclesia Dei*. But due to the proximity of the SSPX Chapels in Goldsboro and Raleigh, I at least considered the option.

But I was very late in the game. It had taken me an embarrassingly long time to even figure out that there was a problem, and I resolved to be careful in my search for a solution. For many years now, people had questioned the validity of the new Mass. Pope St. Pius V had articulated the requirements for a valid sacrament during his pontificate. Now some were questioning the validity of the new Mass based on the words of St. Pius V. In *De Defectibus* he had laid out the requirements for validity of the Mass, as well as itemized

defects which would result in an invalid Sacrament¹:

Defects of the form:

20. Defects on the part of the form may arise if anything is missing from the complete wording required for the act of consecrating. Now the words of the Consecration, which are the form of this Sacrament, are:

HOC EST ENIM CORPUS MEUM, and HIC EST
ENIM CALIX SANGUINIS MEI, NOVI ET AETERNI
TESTAMENTI: MYSTERIUM FIDEI: QUI PRO VO-
BIS ET PRO MULTIS EFFUNDETUR IN REMIS-
SIONEM PECCATORUM

If the priest were to shorten or change the form of the consecration of the Body and the Blood, so that in the change of wording the words did not mean the same thing, he would not be achieving a valid Sacrament. If, on the other hand, he were to add or take away anything which did not change the meaning, the Sacrament would be valid, but he would be committing a grave sin.

The words are, quite literally, “THIS IS MY BODY, and THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL TESTAMENT: THE MYSTERY OF FAITH: WHICH WILL BE SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY UNTO THE REMISSION OF SINS.” The substitution of the “FOR ALL” instead of “FOR MANY” that one commonly finds in the English-speaking corners of the world resulted in the conclusion by some that since the words of consecration had been improperly translated into English the Novus Ordo Mass was not valid. Generally speaking, they did not attempt to make this same case against the Novus Ordo Mass celebrated in the Latin in which it was promulgated, since the proper words of consecration are used in that case.

It is helpful to note that the attempted abolition of the old rite was not something that was protested by just Catholics. In 1971 over fifty distinguished scholars, historians, writers, and artists living in Britain wrote to Pope Paul VI to appeal to him to protect the Latin Liturgy from extinction.

¹ *De Defectibus*, Pope St. Pius V, 1570, Papal Bull decreed by Pope Saint Pius V in ratifying the Council of Trent which reaffirmed that omitting or changing the Form of the Sacrament at the Consecration is a serious sin. “On defects that may occur in the celebration of the Mass.” This document is available at <http://www.dailycatholic.org/defectib.htm>. The Latin text is available at <http://www.liturgicalatina.org>.

The majority of them were not even Catholic. Pope Paul VI signed the document that made it possible for the old Mass to continue to be celebrated publicly in England, upon seeing the name of one of his favorite writers among the list of names. This permission, granted in a letter to Cardinal Heenan, became known as the “Agatha Christie Indult.”

In the postconciliar chaos and confusion a key player began to emerge. He was born November 29, 1905, into a devout Catholic family in French Flanders. He was one of eight children in his family, and five of the eight would eventually become priests or nuns. Marcel Lefebvre recognized his vocation at an early age, and was ordained September 21, 1929. He joined the Holy Ghost Fathers and spent some time as a missionary and a seminary professor. Eventually he was made a bishop, then later promoted to Archbishop of Dakar (Senegal), and after demonstrating leadership qualities to an exceptional degree, he became Archbishop delegate, the Pope’s representative, to all of French Africa.

His accomplishments in Africa are nothing less than remarkable, and while they are a matter of historical record, the full impact of his work will not be understood for many years. Suffice to say he laid the foundation for the conversion of a portion of the African Continent.

By the time he returned to France, the year of the opening of Vatican II, he had spent nearly 30 years in Africa. He was the Archbishop of Tulle until 1968, when he resigned before the changes he would be forced to implement. Shortly after his retirement he was persuaded by seminarians to come to their aid. Appalled by the treatment given to these seminarians, whose only desire was to faithfully serve the Church, he decided to intervene despite his advanced age. He founded the Society of Saint Pius X, with the full approval of the Church, which was dedicated to preserving Catholic tradition and doctrine, and he acted as the first Superior General. From that point on he did all he could to be faithful to his episcopacy, traveling the world and encouraging Catholics to remain true to their Faith and the traditions of their Fathers.

Tensions between the SSPX and the Vatican began to emerge from the time the exploding young order was founded. In 1974 two Apostolic Visitors were sent to inspect their seminary in Ecône, Switzerland. The Archbishop felt the need to reply in a letter known as “The Declaration,” since the two visitors caused considerable scandal: “These two Visitors from Rome considered it normal and inevitable that there should be married clergy; they did not believe there was an Immutable Truth and they also had doubts

concerning the traditional concept of Our Lord's Resurrection. . . ."²

The "Declaration" was nothing more than a firm statement of intent to adhere to the "age-old magisterium, in the conviction that we can thus do no greater service to the holy Catholic Church, to the Sovereign Pontiff, and to future generations."³ He condemned "new-Modernist and new-Protestant tendencies, such as were clearly manifested during the Second Vatican Council, and after the Council in all the resulting reforms," which he credited as having contributed to the "demolition of the Church, to the ruin of the priesthood, to the destruction of the Holy Sacrifice and the Sacraments, to the disappearance of religious life, and to naturalistic and Teilhardian teaching in universities, seminaries, and catechetics, a teaching born of Liberalism and Protestantism many times condemned by the solemn magisterium of the Church."⁴

He quickly filled the void left by, not only the French bishops, but by bishops everywhere. He must have been surprised by his sudden popularity and the demands placed on his time. He fulfilled his duties humbly: "I must dispel a misunderstanding so as not to have to return to it. I am not the head of a movement, even less the head of a particular church. I am not, as they never stop writing, 'the leader of the traditionalists.'"⁵

Of course, the widespread admiration and respect for him was not shared by many in the Church hierarchy. All of this popular support for his actions amounted to a stunning rejection of the implementation of Vatican II, and amounted to an insult to those working for radical change. By following Archbishop Lefebvre these people, even if they didn't say a word, made a loud and clear statement that they had no interest in the "reforms" of Vatican II. They chose the preconciliar version of Catholicism, even if traditional Catholic life was more difficult and more demanding. His fellow bishops criticized him bitterly, and the French news agencies followed his every step.

As the darkness settled over the Catholic Church, he saw the way out, yet he never credited himself as somehow having superior insight into the emerging crisis:

Yet, on the 29th of August, 1976, the whole of France was excited on hearing that I was going to say Mass at Lille. What was so extraordinary about a bishop celebrating the Holy Sacrifice? I

²Rev. Fr. François Laisney, *Archbishop Lefebvre and the Vatican* (ALATV) (Angelus Press, Kansas City, Missouri, 1989), p. 8.

³ALATV, p. 9.

⁴ALATV, p. 9.

⁵Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, *Open Letter to Confused Catholics* (Angelus Press, Kansas City, 1986), p. 7.

had to preach before a panoply of microphones and each of my remarks was greeted as if it were a striking declaration. Yet what did I say beyond what any other bishop could have said? There lies the key to the enigma: the other bishops had been for a number of years no longer saying the same things. . . .⁶

He did not criticize the others for losing their faith, but simply credited the circumstances which had led him to his insight which the others lacked:

How have all these bishops been able to metamorphose themselves in this manner? I can see only one explanation: they were always in France and they let themselves become gradually infected. In Africa I was protected.⁷

The Archbishop actually had attended the Second Vatican Council and had participated in forming the document on the Liturgy, even signing *Sacrum Liturgicum*. But what he signed his name to has already been described. The use of Latin was to be preserved in the Latin rites. The treasury of sacred music was to be preserved and fostered with great care. The Church was to recognize Gregorian Chant as being specially suited to the Roman liturgy. Therefore, other things being equal, it was to be given pride of place in liturgical services. Obviously, none of this was taken seriously.

Additionally, as pointed out previously, all lawfully acknowledged rites were to be considered to be of equal authority and dignity, and were to be preserved in the future, and there were to be no innovations unless absolutely necessary for the good of the Church, and any new forms adopted would have to grow organically from existing forms. Again, none of this came to pass. All of the above, as we have seen, was completely ignored by the revolutionaries. While many are fond of pointing out that “Archbishop Lefebvre signed the document on the Liturgy,” it is clear that what he signed was not what was actually implemented.

Much more was written and said about Archbishop LeFebvre than he wrote or said about himself. He was “disobedient,” he was “rebellious,” and most grievously, he “rejected Vatican II.” Yet, he was obedient to a fault, submissive to the Pope as long as he echoed the timeless wisdom of the Catholic Church, and rejecting any false or modern interpretations of the Catholic Faith:

⁶ *Open Letter*, p. 7.

⁷ *Open Letter*, p. 8.

Obedience is a serious matter; to remain united to the Church's Magisterium and particularly to the Supreme Pontiff is one of the conditions of salvation. We are deeply aware of this and nobody is more attached to the present reigning successor of Peter, or has been more attached to his predecessors, than we are. . .

We are attached to the Pope for as long as he echoes the apostolic traditions and the teachings of all his predecessors. . .⁸

The Holy Father, later in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* admitted that there were false interpretations of Vatican II: "We feel the need to speak about the Council in order to interpret it correctly and defend it from tendentious interpretations. Such interpretations do in fact exist. . ." ⁹ Lefebvre not only rejected these tendentious interpretations, he did so as all bishops should have done. He didn't just *feel the need* to speak, he actually spoke.

It has been argued that he was rebellious in not going along with the new Mass. Yet in retrospect, we can see that many, many Bishops should have refused to go along with it given its abrupt departure from the directives of the Second Vatican Council. Furthermore, there was no absolute requirement that it be accepted by anyone. Archbishop Lefebvre studied the situation and arrived at the conclusion, later to be confirmed as true, that the Old Mass had never been abrogated.

"This is why we hold firmly to the Sacrifice of the Mass. And we are convinced that our Holy Father, the pope, has not forbidden it and that no one can ever forbid the celebration of the Mass of All Time (*Messe de Toujours*). Moreover, Pope St. Pius V proclaimed in a solemn and definitive manner that, whatever might happen in the future, no one might ever prevent a priest from celebrating the Sacrifice of the Mass; and that all excommunications, all suspensions, all the punishments which a priest might undergo because he celebrated this Mass would be utterly null and void, *in futuro, in perpetuum* — in the future and forever."⁷

In 1986 Pope John Paul II designated a council of nine cardinals to study the issue of whether the old Mass had been abrogated. Eight of the nine concluded that it had not.⁸ Refusing to go along with the new Mass placed

⁸ *Open Letter*, p. 129.

⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY), p. 157.

⁷ ALATV, p. 148.

⁸ In 1986, nine Cardinals were appointed by Pope John Paul II to study the legal status of the Tridentine Mass. They were: Cardinals Ratzinger (the future Benedict XVI), Mayer, Oddi, Stickler, Casaroli, Gantin, Innocenti, Palazzini and Tomko. They answered the

His Excellency in the company of Padre Pio, Saint Padre Pio that is, who also refused to do so under great pressure from his superior, although the version rejected by Padre Pio was the far less radical 1965 version.

Archbishop Lefebvre clearly was not keeping with the spirit of the times. Times they were a-changing, and for a bishop to be such a “stick in the mud” was especially problematic because it made the other bishops look irresponsible. So the accusations flew. But despite the accusations, or even because of them, Lefebvre attracted a worldwide following. The more his fellow bishops accused him, the more people turned to him.

Where was Pope John Paul II in all this? When he ascended the Chair of Peter he moved very slowly on the question of the faulty implementation of Vatican II. Radical, extreme alterations to the life of Catholics had caused so many to lose faith already that he felt obligated to actually apologize. In other words, the state of the liturgy had already, by 1980, decomposed to the point that the Holy Father himself felt the need to issue an apology:

I would like to ask forgiveness in my own name and in the name of all of you, venerable and dear brothers in the episcopate, for everything which, for whatever reason, through whatever human weakness, impatience or negligence, and also through the at times partial, one-sided and erroneous applications of the directives of the Second Vatican Council, may have caused scandal and disturbance concerning the interpretation of the doctrine and the veneration due to this great Sacrament.¹⁰

So he understood, yet he hesitated. One might say that his “eyes took some time to adjust” as he came from the darkness behind the Iron Curtain. Regardless of these problems with the liturgy, everywhere he looked he saw “Springtime” for the Church. He had suffered through his entire adult lifetime, living as a suspect, operating in secret, running clandestine seminaries, having

following two questions:

1. Did Pope Paul VI authorize the bishops to forbid the celebration of the Traditional Mass?
2. Does the priest have the right to celebrate the Traditional Mass in public and in private without restriction even against the will of his bishop?

They unanimously agreed that Pope Paul VI never gave the bishops the authority to forbid priests from celebrating the traditional rite of Mass. In response to the second question, they stated that priests cannot be obligated to celebrate the new rite of Mass; the bishops cannot forbid or place restrictions on the celebration of the traditional rite of Mass, whether in public or in private.

¹⁰Michael Davies, *Liturgical Shipwreck* (Tan Books, Rockford, IL, 1997), p. 21.

to hide from the government for church functions which we consider to be normal and routine, and now it was Springtime! He was free to speak, free to lead the Church to the worthy goal of salvation of souls. Despite the erroneous implementation of Vatican II, he did not share the gloomy perspective of the millions of Catholics in the West who saw the postconciliar plummet and wondered what “Springtime” he was referring to. Yet out of charity and kindness he would reach out, even if his heart did not appear to be fully in it, and even if he didn’t fully understand, and make some attempt to provide for those who couldn’t see the Springtime.

Archbishop Lefebvre corresponded frequently with Cardinals Gagnon and Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, during the early years of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. Lefebvre was never comfortable that his flock would be protected after his departure. He knew that his time on earth was limited, and he became concerned for the protection of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX). Very often his priests were rejected by local ordinaries. He had to fly all over the world for confirmations, to provide moral support, and to visit his apostolates. He became more and more concerned about what provision would be made for them. Without a bishop, a successor, to carry on his work, his flock would be forced into the destructive liturgical and doctrinal environment from which he had worked so hard to protect them.

He appealed repeatedly to the Holy Father, begging to be given auxiliary bishops. His letters went unanswered.

Finally, on July 8, 1987, he wrote to Cardinal Ratzinger in an emotional appeal to him to assist in securing auxiliary bishops:

In order to prevent the auto-demolition of the Church we beg the Holy Father, through your mediation, to allow the free exercise of Tradition by procuring for Tradition the means to live and develop itself for the salvation of the Catholic Church and the salvation of souls: that the traditional foundations may be recognized, especially the seminaries; that His Excellency de Castro Mayer and myself may consecrate some auxiliaries of our choice in order to give to the Church the graces of Tradition, the only source of the renewal of the Church.

Eminence, after almost 20 years of pressing requests so that the experience of Tradition be encouraged and blessed, requests always left unanswered, this is probably the final appeal in the sight of God and of the Church. The Holy Father and yourself will bear the responsibility of a definitive rupture with the past

of the Church and its magisterium.¹¹

Pope John Paul II had Cardinal Ratzinger write back to the aging Archbishop, describing a proposal that would allow for the continued use of the 1962 liturgy, and the right to “train seminarians. . . according to the particular charisma of the Society. However, the issue of auxiliary bishops could not be addressed until the tense relations with the Holy See were resolved. The letter it also contained a stern warning — not to proceed with plans for securing auxiliary bishops without the agreement of the Pope:

Excellency, do you find my words severe? I would have liked to express myself in another way, but the gravity of the matter at stake does not give me any other choice. Anyhow, I am sure you acknowledge the generosity of the proposal which is made to you in the name of the Holy Father, and which constitutes a real means to safeguard your work in the unity and catholicity of the Church.¹²

The letter indicated that a Cardinal Visitor would be dispatched to visit the SSPX and find a suitable juridical status in conformity with canon law.

Lefebvre wrote back in October, expressing his desire that the Cardinal Visitor be Cardinal Gagnon, and expressing optimism over the new development:

In order to go further towards a solution it seems indispensable to meet with the Visitor, either by his coming to Ecône or Rickenbach, in Switzerland, or by our meeting him at Albano, in order to be able to study possible concrete means of this definitive solution.¹³

Cardinal Gagnon visited the Society from November 11 at Ecône for one month. Monsignor Camille Perl visited schools, priories, and mother houses, then together Msgr. Pearl and Cardinal Gagnon visited more schools, monasteries, apostolates, and at the end Cardinal Gagnon announced:

. . . we have been struck everywhere by and keep a great admiration for the piety of the persons, for the relevance and importance of the works, especially with regards to catechesis, education, and the administration of the sacraments. We certainly have in hand all that is necessary to make a very positive report.¹⁴

¹¹ALATV, p. 22.

¹²ALATV, p. 26.

¹³ALATV, p. 28.

¹⁴ALATV, p. 39.

Two months later, an anxious Archbishop Lefebvre received a letter from Cardinal Gagnon dated February 15, 1988:

Very Dear Monseigneur,

After a long wait I was able to ask the Holy Father what had been done with regard to the Society of Saint Pius X and the wider problem of Tradition.

He has confirmed that he had attentively read my long report and the propositions that you had given me.

As usual, he had been very busy with problems of world-wide dimensions. But he has already requested some canonists to suggest juridical forms that could be applied to the Society. He should be able to present some projects for this and for the doctrinal problems before the end of April.

He has asked me to give you this assurance and to invite you to patience. He would also like you to request your collaborators to have a great discretion in public declarations, indeed those who do not desire the reconciliation are happy to take advantage of the least thing to raise up opposition...¹⁵

The constant appeals to the quickly aging Archbishop for patience gradually led him to believe that he was being stalled. Given the hostility directed toward him, personally, from his fellow bishops, he saw danger in allowing himself to be stalled. He immediately wrote back to the Holy Father, thanking him for the Visit, but going on to express his concern that “It would be regrettable if the hopes raised by this Visit turned into disappointment, observing the continual delays in the application of even a temporary solution... ”¹⁶

He suggested some key points for a successful solution, to include a Roman Secretariat composed of members chosen from within the SSPX, exemption from the local ordinaries, and consecration of several bishops by June 30:

This second point is the most urgent one to be resolved, given my age and my fatigue. It is now two years that I have not done any ordinations at the seminary in the United States. The seminarians ardently aspire to be ordained, but I no longer have the health to be crossing oceans.

¹⁵ALATV, p. 41.

¹⁶ALATV, p. 42.

This is why I entreat Your Holiness to resolve this point before June 30 of this year.¹⁷

The urgency of the situation was clear. In 1987 the Archbishop gave 2500 confirmations in France alone. In one 1984 ceremony in Chile, he had to give confirmation to 1527 confirmandi. There were 530 places of worship on five continents. And the Archbishop was aging quickly.

A meeting was arranged for mid April, 1988, the result of which was a solution that all participants could agree upon. However, it provided for only one bishop, which given the size of the SSPX and the number of faithful, was barely adequate. Archbishop Lefebvre wrote to Cardinal Ratzinger, “The prospect of having a successor in the episcopate gives me great joy and I thank the Holy Father and yourself for it. Only one bishop will hardly suffice for the heavy work load; wouldn’t it be possible to have two, or at the least, couldn’t the possibility of raising its number in the next six months or a year be provided for?”¹⁸

The response from Cardinal Ratzinger, dated April 28, 1988, must have been more than the Archbishop could take. One can see what was happening from just examining a few key lines:

... Now this requires common study and reflection and could take still more time. . .

... Thus a definitive answer cannot be given to you for the moment but it will be at latest in the first half of June. . .

... With regard to nomination of a bishop, the Holy Father tends to regard your proposition taking into account the practical and psychological reasons for such a nomination. However this one could not happen right now, even if there were no other reason than the preparation and examination of the files according to the usual procedure of episcopal nominations.

... though the definitive solution must wait some while because such an important problem cannot be resolved by being treated with precipitation. . .¹⁹

Nevertheless, a protocol was reached, and on May 5 the Archbishop signed it. However, it was most restrictive, and failed to adequately address his concerns in two areas: it was vague about the date of an eventual episcopal

¹⁷ALATV, p. 43.

¹⁸ALATV, p. 65.

¹⁹ALATV, p. 68.

consecration, and it would leave this bishop as powerless, since all jurisdiction would come from the local ordinary.

It soon became clear, at least to Archbishop Lefebvre, that there was no intention of providing a bishop for the SSPX, when Cardinal Ratzinger's secretary, Fr. Klemens, gave the Archbishop a draft letter to sign. The letter, intended to be from Archbishop Lefebvre to the Holy Father, was full of apologies, pleas for forgiveness for "my behavior and that of the Society," to all of which he was willing to sign his name, but it contained the following deadly language:

Lastly, I wish to express my gratitude for the intention that you manifested to take into account the particular situation of the Society, proposing to nominate a bishop chosen from its members, and especially in charge of providing for its specific needs. *Of course, I leave to Your Holiness the decision concerning the person to be chosen and the opportune moment. May I just express the wish that this be not in the too distant future?*¹⁷

After a sleepless night, he wrote to Cardinal Ratzinger. It seemed that in good conscience he could not postpone the episcopal consecrations again. He now believed that he was being dragged along, delayed, until it would be too late for him to do anything. This would be the fourth time it would have been postponed. The date of June 30 had long ago been set, and it was in fact the latest possible. A file of candidates had already been provided; there were still two months within which the Holy Father could make the mandate.

The rest is history. Communications broke down; instead of responding to the aging Archbishop's request with a sense of urgency, Cardinal Ratzinger and the Holy Father demanded obedience. They simply did not see any such "crisis" or an emerging state of emergency that the Archbishop seemed to see so clearly; they did not see the need for one bishop, much less several of them. And the Archbishop, convinced at this point that a crisis existed which was not fully understood by the Holy Father, trusted that the penalty of excommunication, which he knew he would automatically (*latae sententiae*) incur, would be held invalid by He Who Judges All.

On June 30, 1988 he consecrated the four candidates of his choice at Ecône; they signed the anti-Modernist oath that was once required of all bishops, and Bishop de Castro Mayer, from the Diocese of Campos, Brazil assisted at the ceremony. A hush settled over Rome that day, and the mood

¹⁷ALATV, p. 81.

was described as similar to when Rome receives the news of the death of a Pope. To the last minute Pope John Paul II tried to prevent the consecration, but acting far too late and, in a way that was unfortunate. His gesture provided for comic relief at the beginning of Lefebvre's consecration sermon:

... Yesterday evening, a visitor came, sent from the Nunciature in Berne, with an envelope containing an appeal from our Holy Father the Pope, who was putting at my disposal a car which was supposed to take me to Rome yesterday evening so that I would not be able to perform these consecrations today. I was told neither for what reason, nor where I had to go! I leave you to judge for yourselves the timeliness and wisdom of such a request.

I went to Rome for many, many days during the past year, even for weeks; the Holy father did not invite me to come and see him. I would certainly have been glad to see him if some agreement would have been finalized...^{1E}

Shortly thereafter the Holy Father issued *Ecclesia Dei Adflicta*, in which he asked "bishops and [] all those engaged in the pastoral ministry of the Church" to be generous in allowing the 1962 Missal. In most cases it was ignored by the bishops.

Soon small groups of priests who had been with Archbishop Lefebvre began to organize and approached the Holy Father with their desire to establish societies that would work with bishops, those few who were willing, to provide the Sacraments to Catholics according to the old rite. One of them, the *Fraternitatis Sacerdotalis Sancti Petri* (FSSP) would grow quickly over the next few years, as would the *Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest*.

The status of the old Mass, then, was that it had not been abrogated, that any priest had the right to say it, and the Holy Father would not state this publicly. He simply asked bishops to be generous with it, and due to his good nature he was inclined to count on their good will, but for the time being there would be no clarification of this simple fact: *the old Mass had never been forbidden*. The myth was allowed to propagate that the layman incurred the penalty of excommunication for assisting at the Mass offered by the SSPX, when in reality, no penalty was incurred. A lay person had every right to assist at the Mass, especially in those situations in which the local ordinary (bishop) did not provide an "indult" Mass, which most did not. But

^{1E}ALATV, p. 117.

until 2002, the Vatican would not admit this.²⁰

Thus in 1995, I still mistakenly believed that we were forbidden from attending Mass with the SSPX, and that if the bishop did not allow it there was absolutely no alternative, and that to attend Mass in the SSPX chapels was an act of schism. This misunderstanding laid the groundwork for what was to follow.

²⁰Letter from Msgr. Perl, *Ecclesia Dei* Commission. Available online: <http://www.-unavoce.org/articles/2003/perl-011803.htm>.

Chapter 7

The General's Exec

SHORTLY AFTER MY exchange with Fr. Kaising, I received the long-awaited reply from the Vatican. My normally stable hands, which can squeeze off a bulls-eye nine times out of ten, trembled as I opened the letter. It was from Cardinal Felici's assistant, Msgr. Camille Perl. I had never received a letter from the Vatican before! The letter was dated 23 April 1997. After apologizing for the lengthy delay, Msgr. Perl said:

We note that you have respectfully and consistently explored every possible avenue in order to secure permission for the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass at Fort Bragg and that this permission has been consistently denied. If the commission were to address anyone about your request, it would be Archbishop Dimino of the Military Services. It is not the practice of this Pontifical Commission to write to a military superior, even if he happens to be Catholic. . .

Further, we do not judge that a letter to Archbishop Dimino would serve any useful purpose at this time. We say this particularly in light of the fact that those petitioning the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass number only twenty-eight persons which include five members of your family and seven members of the Donnelly¹ family. If, at some time in the future, a significantly larger number of the faithful should manifest a desire. . .

¹This is a pseudonym, due to the fact that the author was unable to secure permission from the family to use its true name.

It seemed that there was always some very good reason that our request could not be satisfied. If a priest were not available, that would serve as a convenient excuse. If a priest were available (there were several by now), then the fact that the local ordinary was opposed to the Latin Mass could be employed against us. If not that, there were too few signatures. Had we sent him a thousand signatures what would the excuse have been?

It is important to note that it is not considered proper for an officer to be engaging in a petition drive. I was the commander of a company when I began collecting the signatures, and at this moment I was the Executive officer of a battalion of several hundred soldiers. I could have easily used my influence to get a large number of signatures, but instead I actively sought out people who genuinely desired the presence of the Latin Mass. And I avoided doing it while on the job.

I decided that I would try to discretely collect more signatures anyway, since this insufficient number was the latest excuse. Let them continue to make excuses; I would take each of them away, one at a time until we prevailed. But first, perhaps it would be best to wait for Fr. Marceaux to leave; he would be gone soon and things would be better for sure.

Fr. Marceaux departed for Belgium soon thereafter, and we were glad to see him go. His replacement, Fr. Frank Whalen, arrived a couple of months later sometime in the spring of 1997. Hoping to get off to a good start with him for a better result, I contacted his office with an informal request and an offer to discuss the request with him. The answer that came back, through a mediator, was "absolutely not." It seemed that he was just as hostile as his predecessor!

The reason he cited for denial of the request was that the Bishop of Raleigh did not allow the Tridentine Mass so he could not either. Since this was the logic he was using, I called the office of the Bishop of Raleigh to see whether he really cared one way or another about us having a Latin Mass on Fort Bragg. He didn't care. In fact he didn't care one bit:

"I don't care what you do on the military base," he said.

"Would you allow a Latin Mass in the Diocese of Raleigh?" I asked.

"I won't allow it in my diocese, but Fort Bragg is not in my diocese."

Armed with the words right from the Bishop, I prepared a petition and a cover letter to send to Fr. Frank Whalen. But soon I began to see the hopelessness of dealing with him. We quickly noted that he was not being careful, as Fr. Marceaux had been, to make all of his actions appear correct, and in accordance with Church doctrine or Canon Law. No, in fact he was quite reckless. He went out of his way to disrupt the daily Mass crowd, for

example. My wife had been taking our three children to daily Mass once a week as part of the home school routine. It was easier to go to the Novus Ordo Mass on the base than to the Maronite Church which was a twenty-five minute drive, and during the week there were no major liturgical buffooneries by the retired priest who offered Mass. He was opposed to the Latin Mass, for unknown reasons (probably because he knew he would not be welcome if he didn't publicly oppose it), but he seemed orthodox.

Apparently this little bit of orthodoxy was too much for Fr. Frank Whalen to tolerate. Upon his arrival, Fr. Whalen took over the daily Mass and ensured that those faithful old war widows, soldiers wives, homeschooling mothers and their families, and one-legged veterans wouldn't be coming for much longer to seek comfort in *his* chapel. "This is *not* the Church of Archbishop Fulton Sheen! This is the church of the 90's!" he proclaimed on one occasion. "This is *not* the Church of the 50's, this is the church of the 90's!" he proclaimed on another occasion.

If someone didn't get up to do the reading, which nobody who attended daily Mass wanted to do anyway, he just sat there. For ten minutes, if necessary. Waiting for one of them to make a move, and finally instructing them that "those old days are *over!* *They're over!* It's *your* responsibility now!"

Once I had to work rather late in the evening, and it so happened that Fr. Whalen would be speaking that evening on a variety of issues with any Catholics who wanted to listen. He was to address some obscure topic in the auditorium of the chaplain center at Fort Bragg. I walked in just in time to witness the most unbelievable sight. My dear wife stood near the back of the conference room holding one child, while one slept on the floor and another played nearby. There were about 150 people there listening as she debated the senior Chaplain. My wife was upholding the teachings of the Catholic Church on some very key issues as he attacked them ruthlessly. This bizarre confrontation was taking place in front of stunned military Catholics of all ranks. It had to do with several issues, including women's "ordination," which he was convinced would happen soon "for the good of the Church." A Byzantine Catholic friend was standing nearby and he witnessed the entire episode. Since I walked in when it was halfway over, I asked him to write a summary, which I then forwarded to the Military Archdiocese. The letter, exactly as it was written by this courageous young man, reads:

Thursday 2 April 1998

After the events of last nights. . . Catholic discussion at Fort Bragg,

led by Chaplain Whalen, I decided once again to put pen to paper. . .

At 7 p.m. Chaplain Whalen and Chaplain Honor opened it up, after a prayer, for general Q&A. A lady immediately asked "what do you think is the prospect of women ordained to the priesthood, and what's in store for the future. . . what is needed to allow women to be ordained?"

Chaplain Whalen answered very straight-forward "A dead Pope!"

The audience was stunned. . . Chaplain Whalen gave the exact same answer. Mrs. Sonnier immediately protested, saying that this Pope (as others before him) has stated that the Church has no authority to ordain women to the priesthood, and that priests represent Christ as the groom to the bride, the Church, and that women "priests" are an oxymoron . . . Chaplain Whalen said that the Church can change. . .

There is much more that I could tell of his behavior, but it would be beside the point. One did have to wonder why the Military Archdiocese did nothing about it; I certainly took the time to report these incidents, and others did as well.

In the mean time, I had been selected to be the executive officer for the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Lieutenant General Peter J. Schoomaker. I was quite up-front with him during the interview; he asked me a standard question — whether there was something about me, personally, that he needed to know, and I told him that I was engaged in a battle with dissident clergy who were trying to separate Catholics from the Church of Rome. I told him that we were interested in restoring the Latin Mass, the old liturgy that had existed prior to the Second Vatican Council because some dissidents had taken advantage of the new liturgy for the purpose of spreading doctrinal error. I was quite blunt about it. He offered me the position anyway.

Lieutenant General Keane and Lieutenant General Schoomaker held equal rank, but they had very different responsibilities. LTG Keane had responsibility for the garrison itself and was the commander of XVIII Airborne Corps, which included the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, the 101st Division at Fort Campbell Kentucky, and the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York. LTG Schoomaker had command of all the Special Forces groups and all of the other special operations units scattered, quite

literally, around the world. I was quite overwhelmed by the idea of taking the responsibility of his executive officer, but I'd been around long enough by now to have the confidence that I would figure out how to do the job.

The first few weeks were a blur of activity. As the executive officer, I had the responsibility for prioritizing the general's workload while he was in garrison, handling his correspondence, making his travel arrangements, and keeping his schedule. He traveled frequently, and when he did, it was normally the *aide-de-camp* that traveled with him. The *aide* was experiencing some problems within his family that made it difficult for him to travel. So, it wasn't long before I ended up making some of the trips with LTG Schoomaker. He was a decent and kind man, although he could be tough to get along with if one fouled up some of his paperwork or made arrangements that weren't completely in accordance with his guidance. I appreciated his efforts to instruct me in the finer aspects of being a senior officer, and I hoped, as he seemed to, that one day I would be willing to fill his big Army boots.

Despite his kindness and excellent mentorship, and despite the obvious successes I was having as a career officer, as time wore on I began to wonder why I was even bothering to serve in the U.S. Army. This problem with our chaplains, which should have been so easily resolved by simply appealing to Church authority, was only getting worse. Efforts to work with the chaplains led nowhere. I finally put a written request through to Fr. Whalen to get a straight-forward answer, on paper, as to what his rationale was for not allowing us to have a Latin Mass. His response follows:

August 1, 1997

Major and Mrs. David L. Sonnier,

I want to answer your primary question first. I am not interested in having a Latin Mass celebrated at Ft. Bragg.

Secondly, I am well aware that Bishop Gossman has no jurisdiction over Ft. Bragg. I have been an Army Chaplain for twenty-five years, and understand the relationship between the installation and the local diocese.

This is my fourth assignment at Ft. Bragg since 1982. During that time our Catholic Community has always had a very good and friendly relationship with Raleigh Diocese. We have adopted many of their policies because they are the right thing to do and we avoid contradictions in the mind of our military and civilian communities. We have also used many services they provide which

have been a tremendous spiritual benefit to countless soldiers and families. I am not willing to jeopardize this very good relationship. It would be too great of a loss for too many people.

I have discussed the issue of a Latin Mass at Ft. Bragg with my brother priests now assigned here. We all agree with Raleigh Diocese's policy.

In Christ,

Frank J. Whalen

Chaplain (COL) USA

Corps and Installation Commander

I decided to just go visit Fr. Whalen and discuss this personally. Even though he didn't seem to want to discuss the issue, I would confront him, be kind, but logical, present the argument, and express my love and appreciation for the old Mass. It would not be hard to explain what the Holy Father had to say about it, explain that there were priests living nearby who could help out, and explain that there were now seminaries full of young men who were being ordained to offer Mass in the old rite.

From the moment I entered his office I could tell that I would get nowhere, but I felt obligated to try anyway. He jumped up from behind his desk, crossed his arms, and veins jumped out in his forehead, from which sweat began oozing. He had a wild look in his eyes, like someone had just stepped on his foot. Or kicked him in the pants.

"What do you want!" he shrieked.

"Sir, . . . I . . . I came to talk about our request."

"There's nothing to talk about!"

"But there's plenty; I have some information. . . if you'd like I can leave it with you. . ."

"Anything you give me is going right in the trash can. I won't even look at it."

"But what you said about the shortage of priests — it's not true. There are orders of priests that follow the old rite, and their seminaries are full. . . I can give you the information. . . it's right here. . ."

"I'm not interested in that. That's not the direction the Church is going. Those days are over."

"But with the shortage of priests — we need priests in the military, if you could just accommodate. . ."

"God is not calling men to the priesthood any more. He used to. No more."

“He is, in the old rite. And the Pope, the Holy Father has asked you to be generous. . .”

“He hasn’t asked me *anything!* I answer to one man, and one man alone!”

By now, he was frothing at the mouth. Spit was flying as he shrieked. He wiped his profusely sweating brow.

“But Cardinal Ratzinger. . .”

“*I don’t answer to him! Go to him! Don’t come to me!*”

I was stunned. What can you say to a madman like this? This was a *priest?* I waited for some inspiration, some words perhaps sent from God that would help me to overcome this situation. I slowly prayed the *Ave Maria* while waiting for him to, hopefully, gather his wits. He did, and he sat down behind his desk and pretended to be returning to an Enlisted Evaluation Report. After a few seconds he looked up:

“This meeting is over. *Finished!* Get out of here.”

I didn’t leave. He stood again.

“*Get out of here! Get out of my office! You piss me off!*”

I still didn’t leave.

“*You are dismissed, Major! This meeting is over! Not get out! Go!*”

I stood fast.

He reached for the phone. “Listen, Major, you get the hell out of my office *now* or I’m *calling the military police!*”

I left.

Chapter 8

De Oppresso Liber

America is great because it is good. America will cease to be great when it is no longer good.

Alexis de Tocqueville

ON THE WAY BACK over to USASOC Headquarters I did some serious soul-searching. What was I doing serving in this Army? A mere few years ago I would have happily given my life for what I believed to be the noble cause of defending a great nation, a good and decent people. And now what? Was it really too much to ask for something as simple as a Latin Mass? When there were several priests nearby who would be happy to make it available? Didn't the Pope ask "bishops and [] all those engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church" to be generous in allowing it? "[B]ishops and [] all those engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church"... that included the madman whose office I had just left, didn't it?

The fearlessness, the raw courage I had as a young officer — it was gone. Why would one lay down one's life in the service of an army in which one couldn't even exercise this legitimate option? And what kind of priests were these men? I could just imagine having to go into battle and have my last confession heard by some dissident priest. Would I even be able to do it? Or being stranded out on some battlefield with guys dying all around, and there's a chaplain nearby to hear confessions... it turns out to be Fr. Whalen. Or Fr. Marceaux. Could I ever confide in someone like that, even approaching the moment of death? If we couldn't even agree with our priests on the most fundamental basics of the Catholic Faith, how could we ever work with them

to accomplish something against a common enemy? We would spend all of our time and energy on internal squabbles.

The more I thought about it, these were not the type of chaplains who would have been on the beach of Normandy comforting dying soldiers, or flying through dangerous zones to visit isolated base camps in Vietnam, or any such thing; these men didn't *have* any courage! I would never see one of them on a battlefield. They lacked courage, and that was why they couldn't confront the situation that existed at that moment within the Catholic Church. It was easier to confront some lowly Major who is trying to remain loyal to the Church than to confront the multitude of dissidents clamoring for women priests, insisting on girl altar boys, and trying to bring about radical changes in Catholic liturgy and doctrine. My simple request reminded them that they were supposed to be doing things that they simply were no longer doing, such as working for the salvation of souls in a country that was turning its back on God. Rather than having the courage to live up to their office, and face the ridicule of the liberals and modernists, they chose the easy way out.

Years ago, a priest serving in the Persian Gulf War (1991) had offered Mass in the old rite. Fr. James Jackson was serving with a medical support unit in a hospital with the First Marine Division. He had been enamored with the old Mass from his seminary days. During a liturgy class at Mt. Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, he had to write a paper having to do with the offertory prayers. It was then that he saw the offertory prayers from the preconciliar rite for the first time. The conclusion he reached in his paper caused his professor great concern, and while he received a good grade for the paper he also received a two-page commentary on how "dangerous" his thinking was. He continued to study the old Mass, bringing a St. Andrew's Missal to Mass and saying the old prayers during the new Mass, which his seminary professors forbid him to continue to do. After his ordination in 1985, he continued to study the old Mass, entered the reserves, and was called up to active duty in 1990 for the War. On some occasions he would say Mass for a small group of Navy and Marine personnel (at 4:00 in the morning in a tent, on one occasion). After the war he was released from active duty but stayed in the reserves and continued to drill with them one weekend a month. Eventually he joined the FSSP, at which point Archbishop Dimino, of the Military Archdiocese, told him that he could not continue to drill with the reserves but that he could keep his commission.

Was it that they did not want good priests around servicemen?

By now, I had a good enough relationship with Lieutenant General Schoomaker that I could talk with him about this.

“You know, this has all happened before — in England,” he said.

How was it possible that this General, who was a Protestant, could see so clearly what so many Catholics were unable to see? That’s exactly right. The way the American Catholics were going, the vast majority of them seemed to be separating themselves from the Church of Rome, by their indifference. Dissidents had control of the media, control of many of the chancery offices, control of all of the mechanisms for driving a wedge between the Catholic Church and the American Church — “AmChurch,” as many Catholic loyalists have begun to call it. The only difference was that England had a monarch who had turned his back on the Church. The U.S. is governed by “We the People,” and the vast majority of “Catholics” among this governing body have turned their back on the Church. The effect is the same.

“You should talk with Jack Keane about this.”

“Sir, I sent Lieutenant General Keane a letter last year. He sent back a response, but it was full of mistakes.”

“You mean like . . . typos?”

“No, sir, like he was dead wrong on several points.”

He was suddenly defensive — general officers have to stay on good terms with each other. A public disagreement between a couple of three-star generals at Fort Bragg would be a public relations disaster.

“Let me see his response.”

I pulled it from my increasingly thick file of *Ecclesia Dei*-related correspondence. He read it for a moment.

“What’s wrong with this?”

“Sir, it just says that Colonel Marceaux used the 1970 Missal ‘which suppressed the traditional Latin Mass’ as the basis for his judgement. It doesn’t acknowledge the existence of more recent guidelines — like from 1984 and 1988 in which the Pope asked bishops and clergy to be generous with allowing the Latin Mass. Also, he’s telling us to drive to Virginia or Atlanta to attend the Latin Mass.”

“Where? I don’t see that.”

“He says ‘I understand that you have a schedule of traditional Latin Mass celebrations in the United States, and I encourage you to pursue these as a means of meeting your personal religious needs.’ But since the Bishop of Raleigh is not in compliance with *Ecclesia Dei*, that means we have to drive to either Virginia or Atlanta. Those are the nearest locations in which the bishop has allowed the Latin Mass in accordance with the Pope’s instructions. I can’t drive four to six hours away.”

I told him about the existence of Society of Saint Pius X chapels in Raleigh

and Goldsboro, and the Independent Traditional Catholic chapels nearby, which we had been instructed to completely avoid. We were trying to be loyal Catholics and work with the visible Church structure, which was turning out to be impossible. The bishops simply were not allowing the Tridentine Mass in the Carolinas.

“Sir, I gave General Keane the information he needed to make a decision. He just listened to a dissident chaplain instead.”

“Jack Keane is a good man — I don’t think he would have done that intentionally. You need to go talk with him.”

I made an appointment to see him, and I even prepared some briefing slides. He was cordial, offered me some coffee, and I sat across a small table from him and flipped through the briefing slides. He listened patiently as I showed him key text from *Ecclesia Dei*, read quotes from Vatican II, showed statistics about the growth of Latin Mass communities around the country, statistics about the growth of the FSSP seminary, the history of the series of requests I had provided to the XVIII Airborne Corps chaplains. I listed all of the objections they had raised, in the order in which they had raised them, and showed why it was that each of them was wrong:

“The Latin Mass is just for the elderly and infirm. . . .”

“On the contrary it is for anyone who desires it. No such age limitation is ever mentioned in any Vatican document.”

“There is not a priest available.”

“No, there are several.”

“It would be divisive.”

“It would bring many disillusioned Catholics back into the Church. I, for one, would probably not be Catholic at this moment were it not for the restoration of the Latin Mass to a certain Church in Ohio.”

“The Bishop of Raleigh doesn’t allow it.”

“I spoke with him myself, and he doesn’t care what we do. I’ll call him now if you’d like to speak with him.”

He looked as if he were about to go to sleep. Was he following the shifting logic of the denials?

“Do you remember the old Mass, sir?”

It took a few seconds for him to respond. He had the thousand-mile stare. Finally, he stirred and answered without looking at me. “Remember it well,” he mumbled, as if talking to the floor.

“Do you go to Mass now?”

“No.”

What kind of Catholic was this general, anyway?

“Sir, would you be willing to help us?”

“Why is it that you don’t just go to one of those other places on your list to attend Mass?”

“The nearest one is four hours away, sir. All three bishops in the Carolinas are refusing to allow the old Mass. They’ve all received plenty of requests, and they’re all refusing. North Carolina and South Carolina alike.”

“Pete Schoomaker told me something disturbing — that you’re considering declining command so that you can request a transfer away from Fort Bragg.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Why?”

“I don’t believe I should have to drive four hours away for something the Pope told bishops and clergy everywhere to generously allow. If the bishop of Raleigh is going into rebellion, then that’s one thing. But for the Military Archdiocese to emulate his misguided example and force his policy on us is wrong. For Catholic officers to allow it to happen is wrong. Our troops deserve better than this, and I can’t live with it. I can’t be a part of it. Anyway, I’m just doing what you and Chaplain Whalen told me to do. You said to go to one of the places on the *Ecclesia Dei* list, and I’d have to move to do that. So I’ll move.”

“I said that?”

“Yes, sir.”

There was a long, very hopeful pause. Then. . .

“The Catholic Church needs to change. Why is it that after all these years they’re still, still, to this day, not ordaining women?”

“The Catholic Church doesn’t have the authority to do that, sir.”

He talked and talked. He talked about himself, his job, he talked about Fordham, and I don’t recall what else. Then suddenly, the time he had allocated for this office call expired. Urging me to “hang in there,” he escorted me out of the office.

LTG Schoomaker was signing a stack of awards when I returned to the office. “What did Jack say? Is he going to help you out?”

“I don’t think so, sir.”

There was one last hope. Archbishop Dimino, who never answered a single letter from me, went into retirement and suddenly we had a new Archbishop of the Military Services, Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien. Perhaps, maybe, he would be willing to help out. My wife and I both wrote appeals to him, asking him to assist us. We wrote separately, but he replied to both of us in the same letter:

September 2, 1997

Dear Major and Mrs. Sonnier:

Thank you for your materials received two weeks ago and for the generous and understanding tone of your correspondence. Thank you for your call last week during my vacation.

I have reviewed the material you have sent as well as the policies of the Archdiocese for the Military Services on this matter.

I regret to have to inform you that I will not overrule your local priest's decision. Father Whalen has long been a most respected priest chaplain as was Father Marceaux before him and I must concur with the prudent judgment of the pastor on the scene in such matters.

Hopefully — and this is my genuine prayer — the energies to [sic] generously expended in pursuit of this request can be graced in the direction of the full Fort Bragg Catholic Community.

In the Lord,

+Edwin F. O'Brien

Archbishop for the Military Services

At this time all I could do was feel sorry for him. There was nothing I could do to tell him. He had no way of knowing me, any more than he knew these two priests. I had given him all the information he needed to make the decision. He will have to answer to God.

Later that week, Lieutenant General Schoomaker struggled with the issue for nearly an hour and a half. In the end, he discovered that there was nothing at all he would be able to do. There was no way that he, a general officer who happened to also be a Protestant, could dictate policy to the Catholic chaplains. What we were requesting was only allowed by "indult," or by exception. The "Catholic" chaplains unanimously didn't want to do what the Pope had asked them to do, and they had a convenient way to get out of it. The Bishop of Raleigh, who had nothing at all to do with the Army, refused to allow the Tridentine Mass, and so they would as well under the umbrage of "maintaining good relations with the Diocese of Raleigh." In our case, all the reams of "Equal Opportunity" policies didn't apply. Even if it was clear that these "Catholic" chaplains were opposing a request coming from the highest authority in their "denomination," there was nothing General Schoomaker could do to correct the situation.

Any correction to the situation would (and will) have to eventually come from the Pope. For now, it was clear. Those Catholics at Fort Bragg who took the Church seriously had very few options:

- Go to Mass on the military base, and just suffer the liturgical abuses.
- Attend Mass outside of Fort Bragg — perhaps in the Byzantine or Maronite Rite
- Attend Mass outside of Fort Bragg — in the SSPX Chapel or an Independent Traditional Catholic Chapel

The fact was that for any soldier who took the Catholic Church seriously, and therefore found the modern liturgy repulsive in its actual manifestation, there were no acceptable options. The first option could have serious consequences for those raising children, as exposing children to liturgical abuses would have serious consequences, such as depriving future generations of vocations. The second and third alternatives were not serious alternatives unless you had an automobile. For those unable to drive, there should be an option, and yet there was none. For those attempting to attend only “licit” Tridentine Masses, these were not an option.

God finds ways to cause evil to result in something good, and so it was that, overwhelmed by the evil of the clergy I was confronting, I began studying Gregorian Chant and learned to play the organ. I’m not quite certain how it happened, but it just did and it happened as a result of not being able to have the traditional Mass available. Had I been busy organizing altar boys and scheduling and coordinating for our community that failed to ever exist, I would not have discovered this hidden ability. The second thing that happened was that we had our fourth child, Louis, baptized in the Maronite Rite. As is the case in many of the Eastern Rites, one receives the Sacrament of Confirmation at the same time, so he was confirmed as well as baptized. We invited the Bonomettis to be the God Parents. The fact that the baptism included the Rite of Exorcism, as the preconiliar Latin Rite did, was not lost on us.

A few months later I was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. LTG Schoomaker received his fourth star and left to replace General Hugh Shelton as the CINCSOC (Commander in Chief, Special Operations Command) at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. General Keane left about the same time, and also pinned on a fourth star eventually. The younger officers who had assisted me in circulating petitions and writing letters all left the Army in disgust over

the next few years. One of them took the time to write a letter to Archbishop O'Brien:

Dear Archbishop O'Brien,

The purpose of this letter is to inform Your Excellency of my resignation from the Army due in part by the failure of the Catholic chaplains on Fort Bragg to support my preference for the traditional Mass. I have attended both the post and pre-Vatican II Masses celebrated in English and Latin. My preference by far resides with the Latin Mass. I have increasingly noticed a large number of young persons, both military and their dependents, who share such views.

I have petitioned almost every Catholic chaplain on post, the former senior Catholic Chaplain COL Sydney Marceaux, Archbishop Dimino, and the newest senior Catholic chaplain on Fort Bragg, Father Whalen. In addition I petitioned Bishop Joseph Gossman, of the diocese of Raleigh, NC. All of my requests, although supported by up to fifty signatures, have been denied or re-directed to another source.

*As you know Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II granted the permission for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to be offered again in Latin. His Apostolic Letter, *Ecclesia Dei*, July 2, 1988, calls for the "wide and generous application of the traditional Latin Mass."*

Now I have resigned effective 31 Dec 98 and I will move to another state or diocese, which supports and acknowledges the Pope's instructions. In addition I plan to vacation in Rome, and at such time I will request an office call with the necessary officials to make our dilemma known in person. I can be reached by writing or calling the above address and phone number. With these thoughts in mind I remain

Respectfully Yours In Domino,

Charles P. Cleary¹

1LT(P), FA

Executive Officer

¹This is a pseudonym, due to the author's inability to secure permission to use the true name.

At this point, Lorri and I left, now with four children, for Belgium.

The Bishop's Reply Song

I found your request in the mail yesterday
And hasten to answer without a delay,
To settle your problem and issue a writ
Allowing whatever the Canons permit.
A delicate question you boldly propose
In language intemperate that sounds bellicose.
Ignoring the precepts of Vatican II
You lecture your bishop on what he must do.

We bishops already in solemn conclave
Agreed on a uniform way to behave:
Whenever requested to say the Old Mass,
Ignore the petition and soon it will pass.

For those who request it are often quite old
And suitably brainwashed to do as they're told.
They open their wallets and willingly pay
Since they are conditioned to humbly obey.

But like a good shepherd I offer this boon...
If you can arrange for a Mass on the moon.
Thus, granted you're willing and rightly disposed,
With kindest regards, there's a ticket enclosed:

“Being over 65 and having sworn to the validity of the Novus Ordo Mass the bearer Homer Simplex is entitled to attend one (1) Tridentine Mass on the Moon at any church or semi-public oratory where available on the second Sunday of any month beginning with the letter ‘m’ at 2 o'clock L.T. (Lunar Time), weather permitting. Non-transferable, non-refundable.”²

²Reprinted with permission of Fr. Eugene Dougherty, published in *Christian Order*, Aug/Sept 2000.

Chapter 10

Whither NATO?: Brussels, Belgium, June 15, 1998

WE WERE CAREFUL in choosing from the options given to me by the military personnel office. I was offered several positions in the US and several overseas. When Brussels was mentioned I did a quick web page search to be certain that I wouldn't be moving into a region in which the local ordinary was hostile to the Tridentine Mass. Sure enough, the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter had an apostolate there.

Belgium is a country with a split personality. The northern half of the country, "Flanders," is inhabited by the "Flemish" who speak a variety of Dutch that's not much different from the language spoken in the Netherlands. The typical Flemish adult also speaks several other languages. They're industrious, intelligent, and energetic. In the Southern half of the country, Wallonia, the "Walloons," speak French. This region doesn't differ much from France. Culturally and linguistically it's almost as if it is an extension of France.

Belgium was once a Catholic country but like most of the rest of Europe the vast majority of the Belgians lost their faith after the Second Vatican Council. At one time virtually all Belgians met their Sunday obligation by attending Mass. At the time we arrived, in 1998, Sunday Mass attendance was down to 2%, and was still declining.

We found a house in the town of Overijse, located in Flanders, situated close to the French region of Wallonia. From downtown Brussels, and from the NATO Headquarters in Evere, it was just a fifteen minute drive. That's

provided the drive was made in the middle of the night. During rush hour, it was typically thirty to forty-five minutes, which is still not bad.

Within the US Delegation to the NATO Military Committee, I was in charge of the computers, networks, network administration, telephones, the future video-conference capability (which they had not purchased yet at the time of my arrival), and just about anything else that involved electronics.

From the start it was clear that this would be a good assignment for me to either start over and spend the rest of my career as a “computer guy,” or to just finish with the army and be done with it. After 17 years, retirement was only three away. I was somehow still hopeful that, by some miracle, the disorder in the Church would be corrected, military Catholics who take the Church seriously would be able to use the chapels again, and there would once again be a purpose for my service.

The US Representation to the NATO Military Committee is a 3-Star General (Lieutenant General). His staff was relatively small. There were about fifty-five officers and enlisted from various services as well as some civilian employees — mostly secretaries. The environment in which we worked was fascinating. All of the other military delegations were located within the same building. Since Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO in 1999, some of those offices are located in a different building. The MILREPs, or “Military Representatives” from the various NATO countries met weekly (or sometimes more often) to discuss issues pertaining to NATO military policy. Each NATO country also provides an Ambassador to NATO. The US Ambassador has by far the largest staff, at least three times the size of ours. I was not normally held responsible for providing them with automation support.

Nearby, there was a small US military complex, the NATO Support Activity, or NSA. The NSA, which is commanded by a lieutenant colonel, holds the administrative offices that supported US personnel assigned to Brussels. Their primary mission was to provide Base Operations and Quality of Life support to over 2,250 service members, Department of Defense and Department of State civilians and their family members living in and around Brussels, Belgium. There is a finance office, a transportation office (to arrange for shipment of furniture, etc. to and from Belgium), and a variety of other offices. There is a “shopette,” which is a miniaturized version of a PX (Post Exchange). There was a “chapel,” and a US Army chaplain was assigned to the small complex (NSA). He normally holds the rank of Major, and the position is normally filled by a Protestant Chaplain.

During the first year we were in Brussels the NSA was undergoing massive

reconstruction. The tiny complex consisted of several buildings, some of them located in other parts of the city, and a new, larger building was going up that would make room for all of the various offices.

For a family that was as dedicated to the Army as we had once been, we found it all quite humorous. People seemed to take themselves so seriously. It never seemed to have dawned on them that NATO had lost its *raison d'être*. NATO was originally established as a trans-Atlantic alliance to assure smaller European countries that they would not be abandoned should the Soviets roll across Western Europe. The NATO constitution included Article 5, which basically stated that an attack on any of the NATO countries would be considered an attack on all (and therefore all NATO members, the US included, would be obliged to pitch in.)

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1990 and 1991, the threat of a Soviet attack, which had brought NATO into existence, no longer existed. The various members of the Soviet Union began making cautious advances toward better relationships with the West, and the Russians, depleted by nearly a century of trying to be a workers paradise, struggled just to survive from one day to the next.

So, what to do about NATO? It would have been possible in 1991, one could suppose, to organize a big parade in which representatives of all of the NATO militaries parade down Rue des Regents in Brussels, or in Mons, or wherever, and then send all of the NATO military and civilians back home. But that was not what happened. NATO redefined its mission — from Cold War to . . . just . . . whatever. Since the mid 1990's difficulties had been festering in the Balkans, and that seemed to some people to be just what NATO needed. Meanwhile, when NATO was trying to prove the need for its continued existence, I decided to test the commitment of the US Army to all of the things our country takes seriously — for example, freedom of religion.

Chapter 11

Quo Vadis?

THE PROBLEM WE HAD ENCOUNTERED AT Fort Bragg was due to the fact that the Bishop of Raleigh had been adamantly opposed to the use of Latin in the liturgy or the restoration of the 1962 Missale Romanum. And the military chaplains, out of “respect” for the Diocese of Raleigh, had the right to reflect the same policies within the military base and they were only too happy to do so.

In Brussels, the local ordinary was no mere bishop. It was none other than Godfried Cardinal Danneels. What would the military chaplains do if we were to initiate a request to use the NATO Support Activity Chapel for a weekly Tridentine Mass? They would not be able to say, as they had done at Fort Bragg, “No, the local bishop doesn’t allow it so we can’t either.” They would not be able to claim that there was not a priest available. We met several very good priests during the first year we were in Belgium who spoke English perfectly well and followed the old Rite.

Over the course of the first year we were there, we got to know both of the FSSP priests assigned to Belgium. They held a catechism class on Tuesday evenings at their residence, and I made it a point to be there as often as possible. It gave me the double pleasure of learning about our Catholic Faith and honing my French skills.

It just so happened that the 10th anniversary of *Ecclesia Dei* was just around the corner, and a series of activities were scheduled for the weekend of October 23–26 in Rome, the Eternal City. This looked like a good opportunity to go and speak personally with the *Commissio Ecclesia Dei* about the predicament they were putting us in by not assisting us in our efforts. It

seemed that, if they wanted to, someone in that office ought to be able to make phone calls, provide information, talk to bishops, and do whatever was necessary to clarify the situation for the Bishops and others engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church. Surely the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission could do something about it.

I contacted Michael Davies, and he helped me to arrange an appointment. I would have a meeting with Msgr. Arthur Calkins on the first day of the anniversary festivities.

“What should I say?” I asked him.

“Say whatever you want to; just explain the situation.”

“Should I wear my uniform?”

He laughed. “No.”

I brought the entire stack of letters, correspondence, a few notes I made to myself, and rang the bell outside of Msgr. Calkins office. I was met at the door by both Msgr. Calkins and Michael Davies. Msgr. Calkins said something in Italian to the secretary as we walked by her on the way to his office. I had to wonder how long this American had been here, and why it was that Msgr. Perl had been the one to answer my correspondence rather than Msgr. Calkins.

As I started talking he interrupted,

“I’ll listen to what you have to say, but there’s nothing I can do about the situation in Montgomery.”

“Montgomery? I came to talk to you about Fort Bragg,” I said.

“Alabama?”

“No, North Carolina.”

“Oh. Go ahead. There’s still nothing I can do, but go ahead anyway.”

I explained the situation in as few words as possible.

Msgr. Calkins had once been a priest in the Diocese of New Orleans. He had been there in the 1970’s, and that was his recollection of parish life—the situation that existed in the 1970’s. It was clear from the start that we had no common framework for understanding the problems that exist for a Catholic parent in 1998 trying to raise children and pass on to them the same Catholic Faith we had received, not something entirely different. When I spoke of the situation that existed in the *Novus Ordo*, he thought I was exaggerating; he thought I was making it up. But then suddenly, he admitted that he had heard it all before and he believed me. But he thought I should just accept it as it is instead of trying to restore the old liturgy. It was never clear to me what his indifference or hostility was to those of us who were making these requests for the Tridentine Mass to our bishops, but it was clear that

he didn't like the people that he had to deal with in his job. He seemed more interested in getting me to just accept things the way that they were, and stop making an issue of the liturgical problems. He tried to convince me that the FSSP should begin offering the Mass in the new rite.

"Perhaps if the FSSP were to meet people's expectation of a priest, in the way that they offer the Mass, they would be accepted in the military."

I had to wonder why in the world he had been assigned to this position. If he had been more energetic, answering letters with honest concern, paying visits to the SSPX seminaries, trying to coax them into discussions with the bishops, trying to persuade the bishops to make concessions — if he had a bit more interest in the situation, it seemed to me that things could have improved years ago.

"There's not enough support to have a Latin Mass in a small, Southern, rural town," he said. I pointed out that there were some 40,000 servicemen and families in the general vicinity of Fort Bragg and Pope AFB, if not more, and that many of them were not Southerners. Many of them were Catholics — lapsed Catholics, and some of them could easily be retrieved by the presence of an orthodox Catholic community based on the Latin Mass. I pointed out that there were 400 formerly Catholic families in one of the local Protestant churches.

"We don't interfere in the decisions of the local bishops." I had to wonder what his job was, in that case. The bishops were at least partially responsible for the continuation of the schism and the rampant loss of faith by rejecting the guidance of the Holy Father, and yet he wasn't going to call anyone, clarify, explain, not even write a simple letter?

Perhaps sensing that I was not in the least impressed with his level of involvement in the struggle, he tried to convince me that the people I was working with were a bunch of crackpots. He made some reference to "Christian Order"¹ as "Christian Disorder," and then made a few snide comments about the editors of other traditional Catholic publications. When Michael Davies was out of the office for a few minutes, he became the target of a few similar comments. Then the good Monsignor admonished me to attend the new Mass and offer up my sufferings in doing so. As I left, I had to wonder what he was saying about me behind my back, since he seemed to have spared no one else.

After our uneventful meeting, Michael Davies urged me to just be patient

¹ *Christian Order*, a British international monthly devoted to the defence and propagation of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Faith — through incisive comment on current affairs in Church and State, both at home and abroad. www.christianorder.com.

and try to help him along. “Actually he’s come a long way,” he said.

“Oh, really?”

“It’s because of him that the Society of Saint John now exists in the Diocese of Scranton.”

The Society of Saint John was a group of priests who had been with the SSPX only a year or two before. Under the helpful guidance of Bishop Timlin of the Diocese of Scranton, they established and now had about 15 members. Bishop Timlin had been a friend to people who loved the old Mass from the early 1990’s, and he had taken such interest in the efforts of the FSSP priests that he had decided to travel to Rome for the 10th anniversary. Later that day I actually met Bishop Timlin. He was offering Mass later on that day at the North American College. I arrived early and sat near the front; as he entered the chapel and Mass began I was suddenly quite emotional and choked up. Why was it that more Bishops couldn’t be like him? What was the big deal? He had done so much, and yet, it probably hadn’t cost him that much in time and effort. All he had done was to keep his mind open to what the Holy Father had said, and to ensure that those who desired to continue to follow the old rite had a place in his diocese.

I spoke with Bishop Timlin after Mass, and introduced him to some priests from Spain who fell into the category of “Independent Traditionalist,” meaning that their bishops in Spain did not recognize their order. I translated as Bishop Timlin spoke with their superior, until they discovered that they both knew Italian.

Bishop Timlin celebrated a Pontifical Mass on Saturday as well in the beautiful church of Santa Maria della Scala in Trastevere. I think he was shocked by the large throng that met him outside the Church. He had Catholics from all over the world crowding around him, and thanking him for all he had done. Yet, all he had done was be a good shepherd.

Over the three day period, among other things we were addressed by the Holy Father, who had this to say at a Papal Audience on October 26:

I therefore extend a fraternal invitation to Bishops to show understanding and renewed pastoral attention to the faithful who are attached to the former rite...²

In a lecture given at the Ergife Palace Hotel, Rome on Saturday 24th

² John Paul II, *Address of Pope John Paul II to Priestly Fraternity of St Peter and Pilgrims in Rome for Recent Beatifications*, 26 October 1998, available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1998/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19981026_beatif_en.html.

October 1998, to an audience of about 3000 Catholics, we were addressed by Cardinal Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, who had this to say:

The Council did not itself reform the liturgical books, but it ordered their revision, and to this end, it established certain fundamental rules. Before anything else, the Council gave a definition of what liturgy is, and this definition gives a valuable yardstick for every liturgical celebration. Were one to shun these essential rules and put to one side the *normae generales* which one finds in numbers 34–36 of the Constitution *De Sacra Liturgia* (SL), in that case one would indeed be guilty of disobedience to the Council! It is in the light of these criteria that liturgical celebrations must be evaluated...³

Or, in other words, those who had eliminated Latin from the liturgy were guilty of “disobedience to the Council!” But why was it that what the Pope and Cardinal Ratzinger had to say never seemed to translate into some actual practice at the diocesan or parish level that would make life easier for loyal Catholics? The US Bishops, perhaps?

The Cardinal continued:

We must now examine the other argument, which claims that the existence of the two rites can damage unity. Here a distinction must be made between the theological aspect and the practical aspect of the question. As regards what is theoretical and basic, it must be stated that several forms of the Latin rite have always existed, and were only slowly withdrawn, as a result of the coming together of the different parts of Europe. Before the Council there existed side by side with the Roman rite, the Ambrosian rite, the Mozarabic rite of Toledo, the rite of Braga, the Carthusian rite, the Carmelite rite, and best known of all, the Dominican rite, and perhaps still other rites of which I am not aware. No one was ever scandalized that the Dominicans, often present in our parishes, did not celebrate like diocesan priests but had their own rite. We did not have any doubt that their rite was as Catholic as the Roman rite, and we were proud of the richness inherent in these various traditions. Moreover, one must say this: that the freedom which the new order of Mass gives to creativity is often taken to

³See Appendix A, at page 139, for the full text of the speech.

excessive lengths. The difference between the liturgy according to the new books, how it is actually practiced and celebrated in different places, is often greater than the difference between an old Mass and a new Mass, when both these are celebrated according to the prescribed liturgical books.⁴

So much for the accusations of “dividing the Church,” and “causing disunity.” Most Catholics wouldn’t know the difference between the *Novus Ordo* Mass, properly celebrated with a reasonable retention of Latin, and the Tridentine Mass. All we could hope was that this Cardinal would one day be the Pope.

We were also addressed by Dom Gerard, the Abbot of Le Barroux (a Benedictine Monastery in Southern France) and Michael Davies. When he saw me in the audience he came to where I was sitting, leaned over, and with his characteristic humor said “Whatever you do, don’t abandon your chair for an instant or you will return to find a Frenchman sitting in it!” The French were everywhere, God bless them.

I came away from the 10th Anniversary Celebration knowing and understanding the situation much better than I went into it. I was more resolved, but at the same time I could see how human weakness at the highest levels among the U.S. bishops was at the root of our problem.

A few months later, Pentecost weekend 1999, I took another weekend trip, this time to make the Pilgrimage from Notre-Dame de Paris to Notre-Dame de Chartres. This three-day pilgrimage is the largest annual gathering of traditional Catholics. Normally on the third day of the pilgrimage there are about 15,000 Catholics crowded in and around the Chartres Cathedral. This Pilgrimage dates back to the middle ages. It has been made by kings, queens and saints throughout history. People from all walks of life have made this 72-mile pilgrimage on foot. During various periods the pilgrimage was not possible — during World War I and War World II, for example. It resumed after World War II, but was put to rest after the Second Vatican Council. Then in the early 1980’s a group of tradition-minded French Catholics began organizing the pilgrimage again. Initially the group was small, and for several years when they arrived at the Cathedral they were not allowed to enter to celebrate the traditional Mass, which has been erroneously understood to have been forbidden. As the years went by, however, the group grew in size and numbers and it began to become an embarrassment that they were being

⁴A complete copy of Cardinal Ratzinger’s discourse is included as an appendix. See Appendix A, at 139.

forbidden to enter the Cathedral. The restrictions were dropped and the numbers swelled to the point that only a fraction of the participants would actually fit in the Cathedral.

The participants are organized in “chapters” of anywhere from 20 to 100 pilgrims. I participated with the Belgian Chapter in 1999, along with 8-year old John David, but on the last day we walked with an American (US) chapter. There were numerous priests walking the long route, hearing confessions along the way. The pilgrimage route is extremely difficult, and I ended up carrying John David on my shoulders part of the distance. The route goes through woods, through fields, over blacktop roads, and over some rugged terrain. Breaks are not taken due to bad weather. Pilgrims sleep in tents. Once it rained all night, and there was ice on the tents in the morning. The food consists of soup, bread, fruit, and water. We all suffered from blisters, fatigue, hunger and thirst. But it is an experience that is beyond comparison; for a period of three days, despite this bit of physical suffering, it’s a period of perfect peace. We experience “old Europe,” three days of genuine Christian civilization. Mass is offered each day along the route, and on Pentecost Monday there is nothing that compares to the Solemn High Mass in the Chartres Cathedral. That particular year, the Mass was offered by the Bishop of Chartres. The vast majority of the participants in the annual pilgrimage are French. At the end of my first year in Belgium I was convinced of two things: that the French, generally speaking, are not at all like the Parisians one meets when visiting the capital city, and that despite the best efforts of these dissidents in the Church, the Latin Mass will not die.

Chapter 12

The Big Lie

SAFELY BACK IN BRUSSELS, I took stock of the situation. A friend and colleague had recently taken command of the NATO Support Activity, Lieutenant Colonel Don Isbell. His wife Emmy got along well with Lorri and they had worked together in the Cape Fear Valley Regional Hospital in Fayetteville, during a previous assignment at Fort Bragg. Now that they had re-encountered each other in Belgium, they often walked early in the mornings together for exercise along the quiet residential streets in Overijse. Don was a good commander, and he took interest in all of the servicemen assigned to Brussels. He was doing his best to succeed in his new position as the NSA Commander. His chaplain was a Protestant, and in addition to counseling family members who happened to find themselves in some difficult situation, he held a non-denominational Protestant religious service on Sundays in the NSA chapel. He also did a variety of other things as a staff officer.

It turned out that one of the noncommissioned officers who worked in the personnel office down the hall from me at the NATO headquarters had been a preacher prior to coming into the army. At his request, a second religious service, a “Gospel Worship Service,” was established at the NSA chapel, and this Sergeant First Class was placed in charge of it. So now, there were two Protestant religious groups meeting at this NSA Chapel: one lead by the Protestant Chaplain, and the other lead by this Sergeant First Class who had once been a pastor.

It was easy to do! “We pushed the paperwork through and it happened in no time at all. . . maybe a month or two,” Don said.

I asked him if he would be willing to assist us in establishing a Latin Mass community there. It wouldn't cost a cent, since I would be glad to cover the costs of bringing our priest there, buying whatever was needed, such as purchasing some missals or hymnals; I could take care of all of that.

"You don't have to do that — there are funds available for that!" Don said. He was excited about the idea. "I used to go to the Latin Mass back when I was Catholic," he said.

These "former Catholics" were everywhere!

Soon we presented the idea to the Deputy MILREP, who was an Air Force Brigadier General, Earnie Callender. In addition to being the Deputy MILREP, which meant that he had to attend the NATO Military Committee meetings when the MILREP was unavailable, General Callender held the responsibility for all the US Community Support activities. In this capacity, he was Don Isbell's boss. He took this responsibility seriously, and he was one who would go "by the book," but do whatever he could to make life as livable as possible for military families assigned to Brussels.

We discussed the idea of having a Latin Mass at the NSA Chapel. He asked a few questions, then told me about the process through which he had recently established the "Gospel Worship Service" there. He was rather surprised that there were priests around who still offered Mass in Latin. He was even more surprised when, on 5 August 1999, I brought Fr. Gerald Duroisin, FSSP, in to meet him. Fr. Duroisin, at the time, was about forty or forty-one years of age. I think General Callender was expecting to meet someone in his seventies or eighties.

General Callender was interested in ensuring that Fr. Duroisin's command of the English language was sufficient for him to be involved in the US military facility in this capacity, so he wanted to meet him before taking any further steps. The two of them had a pleasant discussion. Fr. Duroisin, just because of who he is, was immediately accepted by the people he met along our hallway. A couple of the secretaries kept him for a few extra minutes and fawned over him. He is a very dedicated and serious priest, and anyone who spent more than a few seconds talking with him could immediately detect that he is not focused on things of this world, but the next.

With the assistance of our Staff Judge Advocate he drafted a letter. More precisely, a memorandum. Our Staff Judge Advocate, Lieutenant Colonel Kleinfeld¹, was one of these people who seemed to know everything about everything. He had a mind like an encyclopedia, and over the last two weeks

¹This name is a pseudonym, because the author was unable to obtain permission from the individual to use his real name due to an inability to locate him.

he had already researched canon law, provisions made for the Indult Mass in various locations throughout both the US and Belgium, the history of the Latin Mass movement, and a variety of other matters related to this issue. I had given him some information. He took it and turned up much more than I had expected, and he had done all of this in the middle of handling some difficult questions pertaining to NATO, environmental law in Europe, and a variety of other legal problems both large and small. He was an extraordinary individual.

The memorandum, dated August 5, 1999, was a major accomplishment in that it came from a general officer and therefore would have to be answered in writing. . . to a general officer.

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE
MILITARY COMMITTEE
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
PSC 80, BOX 200
APO AE 09724

MEMORANDUM THRU: 80th ASG, ATTN: CHAPLAIN (COL)
SYDNEY MARCEAUX, UNIT 21419, APO, AE 09708

MEMORANDUM THRU: HQ USAREUR, ATTN CHAPLAIN
(COL) JAMES J. JAGIELSKI, UNIT 29351, APO, AE 09014

FOR: THE ARCHBISHOP FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES,
USA, P.O. BOX 4469, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20017-0469

SUBJECT: Religious Service at NATO Support Activity Chapel

1. I am writing to enlist your assistance in establishing a traditional Catholic Mass in the Brussels American military community. The Brussels American community includes over 2000 military, civilians, and family members from numerous U.S. government and NATO activities to include NATO Headquarters, the U.S. Embassy, and the U.S. Mission to the European Union. The NATO Support Activity (NSA), 80th Area Support Group, is responsible for providing chaplain services to this community.

2. Three months ago, the NSA moved into a newly constructed building, which includes the first-ever, dedicated chapel complex in our community's 32-year history. The complex includes a co-located chaplain's office, chapel, and fellowship room. It represents a quantum leap in the ability of our leadership to provide the community with appropriate religious support.

3. Historically, this community has been served by Protestant religious services in the NSA Chapel, even prior to completion of the new facility, but to the best of my knowledge we have never held Catholic services there.

4. As the Community Coordinator, I recently received a request from Catholics in this community for a regularly scheduled traditional Mass. Catholics in our community often accommodate themselves with one of the various English-speaking congregations in the area, which follow the modern rites of the Catholic Church. The traditional Mass is available to French and Flemish-speaking Catholics in Brussels, with the permission of the local Bishop, but there is no traditional Mass available for English-speaking residents.

5. The request from community members was followed by an office call with Fr. Gerald Duroisin, of the Fraternity of Saint Peter (FSSP). I was impressed with Fr. Duroisin's sincerity in his desire to offer the traditional Mass to our community, as well as his excellent command of the English language. I have always associated a high Quality of Life with choice, and I believe this community would be well served by having the opportunity to participate in a religious service that is not currently available.

6. I understand we must coordinate this request through your office prior to holding services in our new chapel. I am forwarding this request through the 80th ASG and HQ USAREUR for your final consideration and approval.

On behalf of the Brussels American community, thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter. Please feel free to call me if you would like to discuss this initiative further. I can be reached at DSN etc. etc.

M. E. CALLENDER, JR.
Brigadier General, USAF
Community Coordinator

The observant reader will notice the name of a familiar character from Fort Bragg, Fr. Sydney Marceaux. After leaving Fort Bragg he was assigned to SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers in Europe) at Mons, which was about a forty-five to fifty minute drive southwest from Brussels along

the route to Paris. Fr. Marceaux, in his position, was the only Catholic priest assigned as a US Army Chaplain in Belgium. There were not many US military assigned there, so he was the only priest and he technically had responsibility for the Catholics assigned to Brussels. To this point he had never visited the U.S. Catholics in Brussels as far as anyone could remember. He had never concerned himself one bit about where Catholics in Brussels attended Mass, or what went on in Brussels. I doubt he knew that I was assigned there.

Most US Catholics in Brussels attended Mass at St. Anthony's, a nearby parish that had an Irish priest and an international community of Englishmen, Irish, Americans, and a few English-speaking Africans. The liturgy there had taken the same horrible turns over the last years as had the majority of modern parishes, so I couldn't even think of taking my family there, but the point is that Fr. Marceaux never concerned himself with where any of the Catholics in the Brussels area were attending Mass. We, the Sonnier family, had become very attached to our parish in Cortil-Noirmont.

Suddenly, within two hours of his receipt of the above memo, all of this was of the utmost importance to COL Marceaux. He dropped whatever important work he was doing that had kept him from every having the opportunity to visit Brussels, and within two hours he was standing in General Callender's office.

Since the beginning of my assignment to NATO, I had been trying to live somewhat like the Europeans. I knew I would never do it, but at least I could try. I tried having a glass of wine with lunch once, but found that I couldn't stay awake and focus on my work that afternoon, and half my day was a complete waste of time. Regardless of what was happening, I did take about 10 minutes every afternoon and go to the NATO Cafeteria for an espresso. The place was always packed. I would visit with some other American who had the same idea, or some European colleague I recognized, or just sit for a few minutes and read the *Stars and Stripes* or the *Early Bird*, a compendium of noteworthy articles from US news sources.

On this particular day, the same day Fr. Marceaux received the memo and scheduled an emergency meeting to counter the "Tridentine Threat," I walked down the hallway and saw him checking in with the security guards. He obviously hadn't been in this building before, since he came through the wrong door. They gave him directions in French, and he responded in French. In fact his French was quite good. I was tempted to stop and ask if I could help him, but I was also concerned that this would arouse his anger, or have some other unpredictable consequence since he didn't seem to be rational

when it came to issues involving the Latin Mass. I avoided attracting his attention, and just watched from a few feet away, comfortable that he would not recognize me in a business suit.

I enjoyed an espresso and returned to my office. About an hour later, General Callender called me in to his office.

“This may be harder than I thought,” he said.

I wasn’t surprised, but I pretended to be. “Why?”

“I was just visited by none other than COL Marceaux. He’s . . . he’s . . . very much opposed to this, and he remembers you from Fort Bragg. He tried to tell me about Fort Bragg, and I told him that I didn’t want to hear it; that this is a different time, a different place, and a different assignment.”

“Well, do you want to know about that, sir?”

“I’ll tell you the same thing I told him. No.”

Silence.

“I also caught him in a lie.”

Now this was interesting.

“He said that you and Fr. Duroisin are with that excommunicated French Archbishop Le . . . whatever his name is. You know who I’m talking about. At first I believed him, and I didn’t care, I just thought, ‘well, so what,’ but then he spilled the beans. He said that Fr. Duroisin’s order is the Society of Saint Pius.”

I was intrigued. “So how did you know Fr. Marceaux was telling a lie?”

He leaned over on his desk and lowered his voice. “Fr. Duroisin told me that his order was the Society of Saint *Peter*, not Saint *Pius*.”

He jumped up from behind his desk and began pacing the room; he had a tendency toward being animated when he was making a point.

“So I said to him, ‘No, Colonel Marceaux, it’s *not* Saint *Pius*, it’s Saint *Peter*. I have it written down right here in the notes from my meeting with him.’”

I was amazed. Now *this* was a general! There are many men with physical courage, but to have the moral courage seemed to be such a rare thing these days. “So then what, sir?”

“So then, Colonel Sonnier, he began backpeddling. He began stuttering. He said something like, ‘Well . . . well . . . what I meant to say was, well . . . they have the *spirit* of the Society of Saint Pius.’ But I knew better. I knew I had just been lied to by a priest. A Catholic priest.”

Actually this was not good. We all look bad when our priests get caught telling lies. But at least Fr. Marceaux had been caught, and General Callender knew what was going on. From here on out he would know, as I had come to

know, what kind of characters he was dealing with. I had given Fr. Marceaux plenty of information about the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter when we were at Fort Bragg. I had explained it all to him. I had given him brochures, information about their seminary, and their various apostolates. I had made it clear to him that I was having nothing to do with the Society of Saint Pius X, and that I was trying to play by the rules and establish a Latin Mass community within the jurisdiction of the visible Church structure.

Is this what loyal Catholics get for trying to do things the right way? For playing by the rules? Why would he go as far as to try to associate us with the Society of Saint Pius X? I had never even been to one of their churches. Perhaps he thought that by doing so he could discredit our efforts. Is this what he had done at Fort Bragg? Anyway, what difference did it make to the US Army? The Society of Saint Pius X should have had access to the military chapels just as any other group of Christians had — just as the Protestant group now using it for their “Full Gospel Service.”

“So what do we do now, sir?”

“We wait. He said that he has to first get permission from the Military Archdiocese. We’ll wait and see what they have to say.”

Chapter 13

Letters Across the Atlantic

[I]n virtue of Our Apostolic authority, We grant and concede in perpetuity that, for the chanting or reading of the Mass in any church whatsoever, this [Traditional Latin] Missal is hereafter to be followed absolutely, without any scruple of conscience or fear of incurring any penalty, judgment, or censure, and may freely and lawfully be used. Nor are superiors, administrators, canons, chaplains, and other secular priests, or religious, of whatever title designated, obliged to celebrate the Mass otherwise than as enjoined by Us. We likewise declare and ordain that no one whosoever is forced or coerced to alter this Missal, and that this present document cannot be revoked or modified, but remain always valid and retain its full force.

Pope St. Pius V, *Quo Primum*¹

A FEW WEEKS LATER, the date was August 2nd 1999 to be exact, I received e-mail from Don Isbell; it was forwarded from Fr. Marceaux; a courtesy copy of correspondence from Fr. Marceaux to Brig. Gen. Callender:

Sir, . . . Prior to leaving, as your [sic] are aware, I requested a meeting with Cardinal Danneels. When I returned, there was a letter from his Vicar General (i.e., Deputy Commander!) stating that the Cardinal does not support the request. Now that I know the Cardinal's feelings, I will include it in my memorandum for the Archbishop for Military Services, USA. I plan to have this, along with your memorandum, in the mail by COB Friday 3, August. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks for your patience in the delicate matter.

¹The entire text is available at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius05/p5quopri.htm>.

Sidney J. Marceaux
Chaplain (COL) USA
80th ASG Staff Chaplain

A delicate matter indeed! One had to wonder exactly how and in what manner he had presented the request to Cardinal Danneels.

A few weeks later Brigadier General Callender called me into his office. Walking around his desk, he took a seat across from a small coffee table and proceeded to tell me the bad news, which I was already aware of. "I received this e-mail from our friend in Mons, and he says the Cardinal doesn't want us to have a Latin Mass."

"Oh?"

"But, based on my own conversation with COL Marceaux a few weeks ago, I'm not sure I trust him."

"I'm not sure I trust him either, sir."

"He gave me this. . ." he said, handing me a photocopy of something that looked like a page out of a regulation. It appeared to be guidance to the military chaplains:

1. *The Tridentine Mass* - A letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship dated 3 October, 1984 authorizes the bishop to permit the Tridentine Mass under certain conditions when he is petitioned to do so. Such a Mass should not take the place of any normal Liturgy that is regularly scheduled but it should be offered at intervals determined by the bishop for a specific group of people. Such groups should not be composed of those who impugn the validity or correctness of the revised liturgy. The Mass must be in Latin, with no interchange of texts or rites from the new Missal. Full details about the circumstances should be sent to the Archbishop, who will then determine to what extent such a request can be accommodated. Such a Mass at any installation should not be in opposition to the policies of the local diocese, lest the Sacrament of Unity be a cause of division.

"Sir, this is outdated. This letter is based on *Quattuor Abhinc Annos*,² which was issued in 1984. It says nothing about *Ecclesia Dei* and the more recent guidance we've had."

²*Quattuor Abhinc Annos*, Indult for Use of the Roman Missal of 1962, Congregation for Divine Worship, 3 October 1984. A copy can be found online at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdw62ind.htm>.

Kleinfeld walked in the office while we were talking.

Callender continued: "I'm not sure that he didn't just run to the Cardinal and get the answer he wanted to tell us. Anyway, he said that permission had to come from the Military Archdiocese, so that's who I wrote to. And that's who will answer me."

I couldn't yet see where he was going with this. I was so accustomed to getting denials that I just assumed that virtually everyone in the Catholic hierarchy had come to detest the Tridentine Mass and there was no way around that.

As was his practice when he was about to make a point, he stood quickly and began pacing the room. "I am *not* in the habit of writing to someone, whoever that someone may be, and getting a response in the form of a poorly typed e-mail from someone else. I wrote to Archbishop O'Brien, in Washington D.C. I got this response from COL Marceaux in Mons, Belgium in the form of an e-mail! Is that how you Catholics do things???"

I had to laugh. In fact, I laughed until my sides hurt! I wanted to tell him that, apparently, it was how we did things when we were requesting the Tridentine Mass. But I wanted to give Archbishop the benefit of the doubt since it was possible that all of this was going on without his knowledge. Clearly enjoying putting on the show he continued, in a low voice:

"I'm not sure my letter ever got to Archbishop O'Brien. These 'consultations' took place with Msgr. Callaghan, whoever that is, and he says right here. . . "

As he looked for whatever he was looking for I had to wonder if Msgr. Callaghan had ever given Archbishop Dimino our requests from Fort Bragg.

"...Here it is. It says that...that the request is not appropriate since the local ordinary opposes it. This came to me this morning. In the form of an e-mail! So I send a request to Archbishop O'Brien and what do I get in return? An e-mail . . . from someone named Callaghan I've never heard of or never met. Forwarded to me by Marceaux in Mons!"

He slapped the papers on the table. "Nowhere do I see anything about what Archbishop O'Brien thinks of our request."

I was sure by now that they had hidden it from the Archbishop. Good thing a General Officer was involved in this.

"I'm drafting another letter with the assistance of my lawyer. I'm not sure what it will say, but it will say something. . . and I'll send it, and our previous request, to his private fax number which my lawyer will find for me."

It would be a few weeks before Brigadier General Callender would send the appeal to Archbishop O'Brien, on November 5, 1999. In the mean time,

I decided that there was nothing to stop me from sending a personal letter myself, expressing my concerns about the way it was being handled:

*Most Rev. Edwin F. O'Brien
Archdiocese for the Military Services
P.O. Box 4469
Washington, D.C. 20017-0469*

Your Excellency: 22 October, 1999

Enclosed you will find a copy of correspondence BG Earnie Callender sent to you through the offices of the 80th Area Support Group (ASG) Chaplain and the USAREUR Chaplain requesting your approval for a regularly scheduled Traditional Mass within our community. This Mass would be offered at the NATO Support Activity (NSA) chapel.

Two days ago, BG Callender expressed his concern to me. He asked whether or not it is typical in the Army, or in the Catholic Church, to send a letter to someone and to receive no letter in response, but rather an e-mail from a different person. I assured him that you always answer your mail, and that perhaps his letter had not arrived in your office until recently, or that you were traveling and had not had a chance to respond.

Being satisfied with that, he began to read to me the contents of the e-mail he had received from the 80th ASG Chaplain, Fr. Marceaux. What I heard was quite disturbing, and I must now express my concerns. The correspondence originated with Msgr. Aloysius Callaghan, and had no reference to Your Excellency. It merely stated that the request was not considered appropriate since the local ordinary opposes it.

This is that same rationale used previously to deny petitions for the Tridentine Mass at Fort Bragg. If it were the case that the Belgian bishops were opposed to allowing the Traditional Mass as the Bishop of Raleigh is, there would be some merit to this statement. To the contrary, however, Cardinal Danneels has allowed the Tridentine Mass to be offered in a number of places. It is rather common to find Latin Masses in both the old and new rite within Flemish-speaking Flanders, French-speaking Wallonia, and multi-lingual Brussels. The Fraternity of Saint Peter offers daily Mass during the week at a location close to the EU buildings, and on

weekends they travel to other locations while diocesan priests offer the Tridentine Mass at several locations in and around Brussels. Currently there is no Tridentine Mass offered for the Anglophone community, and apparently Cardinal Danneels does not see us as his responsibility.

Your Excellency, BG Callender and I announced this initiative at the last Town Hall meeting, publicized it and had every expectation that it would receive your approval with ease. We simply cannot make a public announcement that the request is denied due to opposition by the local ordinary, because there is no such opposition. The Catholics interested in this initiative know that. They are familiar with, and have attended Tridentine Masses offered in the French and Flemish speaking parishes; some attended the Notre Dame de Foy Pilgrimage. They just don't understand the sermons in French or Flemish, and would like to have the same Mass offered in the NSA Chapel. To publicly announce the response BG Callender received via e-mail would be confusing to the faithful.

I concluded the letter by inviting him to offer the first Mass for us, and informing him that we had an organist, a choir, and well-trained altar boys.

About a month later General Callender received the following letter from Archbishop O'Brien:

ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA

December 6, 1999

BG M.E. Callender, Jr.
Community Coordinator
Brussels, Belgium
PSC 80, Box 200
APO, AE 09724

Dear General Callender:

Thank you for your letter of 5 November which reached me two days ago.

I would like to grant the permission you seek for the traditional Latin Mass. I would not do so, however, unless the local bishop approves. I have a letter from Cardinal Danneels which states his desire that there not be a traditional Mass in English within his

Archdiocese. I have written him for clarification in the hope he would reconsider.

Finally, while I know nothing of Father Duroisin, I presume he enjoys the faculties of Mechlin-Brussels. I have asked the Cardinal about this as well.

As soon as I hear From His Eminence, I shall be in touch with you. Meanwhile, thank you for your patience, your strong Faith and your interest. Do know of my prayers.

In the Lord,

+Edwin F. O'Brien

Archbishop for the Military Services

Finally, a few weeks later, on 6 December 1999 a response came through:

ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA

December 6, 1999

BG M.E. Callender, Jr.
Community Coordinator
Brussels, Belgium
PSC 80, Box 200
APO AE 09724

Dear General Callender:

First, my thanks to you for patience in awaiting this response to your request for a Tridentine Latin Mass on behalf of some American military Catholics serving in the Brussels area.

The clarification I awaited arrived today in a letter from Godfried Cardinal Danneels. It leaves little doubt as to what my response to your request should be:

Quote the Cardinal:

The unanimous advice of my collaborators, is Not to grant another permission, in order to avoid all kind of divisions in the Church in Belgium, based on liturgical preferences. This is also my personal opinion. Therefore, I would regret that such a permission be granted to the NSA chapel.

His Eminence offers further reasons for his position but in substance, he is quite definitively opposed.

I must, therefore, refuse your request. I hope that those who looked forward to this privilege will see the will of God working in spite of their preferences, and find the enrichment promised by the Lord in and through the sacraments of our Church.

In the Lord,

+Edwin F. O'Brien
Archbishop for the Military Services

Brigadier General Callender called me in to his office to show me the letter. It was late in the day, and there were a million other things going on, but I think this situation disturbed him, as it would disturb anyone watching these events unfold. It just didn't all add up, of course. The Pope had asked for generosity from "bishops and [] all those engaged in the pastoral ministry," the General had seen and read the key text of the document *Ecclesia Dei*, and yet there seemed to be such stubborn resistance. It wasn't a healthy, Godly, holy resistance to something wicked, but rather it seemed to be precisely the other way around. It was a resistance based on bureaucracy, maneuvers, slander, and lies. He must have found it all quite revolting.

"Dave, this looks like bad news, but it's really not anywhere near over. It just means that I have to take a bit of my time at some point during the next two weeks."

I couldn't say much at this point that would help. The rationale looked ridiculous; I had heard Cardinal Ratzinger and the Holy Father himself put down the notion that it would be somehow "divisive" to have a Latin Mass. What were these "divisions" Cardinal Danneels was referring to?

"Sir, did you know that Mass attendance is down to 2% on Sundays in Belgium?"

He pretended not to be interested in such statistics, but they're hard to ignore.

"Sir, it was around 80% just a few decades ago, if not higher. I'm not sure I understand what the Cardinal is referring to when he says that he wants to 'avoid all kinds of divisions in the Church in Belgium.' There's hardly anything left."

"That may be, Colonel, but it's irrelevant to my job here. I'm in the business of ensuring that everyone gets treated the same. I believe in 'equal

opportunity,’ and I think that applies to everyone. It appears that you, and your family, and your colleagues whoever they are — and I don’t care to know who they are — are caught in the middle of some mischief.”

“What can we do at this point?”

“You don’t need to do anything. I’m going to pay a visit to the Cardinal.”

It would be a few weeks before the meeting took place. On February 4th, *Anno Domini* 2000, two blue-suited officers in the United States Air Force pulled up outside the residence of Godfried Cardinal Danneels in Mechelen, just northeast of Brussels.

They entered, and the receptionist attempted to separate Lieutenant Colonel Kleinfeld from the General. He politely but firmly remained with his boss, as the two of them were escorted into a large room.

“What is the purpose of your visit?” the Cardinal asked. As General Callender would later recount the story, it was by far the coldest reception he had ever had from a “man of the cloth.” As he talked on, explained the situation, explained that the NSA Chapel was on a closed compound that only ID-card holders had access to, explained that nobody outside of the compound had to know anything about it, and explained who knows what else, finally. . . finally he detected a faint smile on the Cardinal’s face.

“So. . . that’s it?” the Cardinal asked.

“That’s it.”

His Eminence asked General Callender to put the same request into writing, send it to him, and he would give it consideration.

It took some time for his approval of the request to go through, but finally, five months after the meeting, we received his approval dated 7 July 2000.

Meanwhile, in April 2000 our fifth child, Annie, was born. Her Godparents were Alexandra Colen, a member of the Belgian Parliament who we had met through the homeschool group, and none other than Kleinfeld, who, as it turned out, was a very devout Byzantine Catholic.

Chapter 14

Finally!

AFTER ONE YEAR OF making requests in Montgomery Alabama, three years in North Carolina, and now two years after my arrival in Belgium, *finally* we had succeeded! This was too much, too good to be true!

My confidence in the US military had been restored. It was, after all, an institution that valued the service of all its members equally! So what if this struggle had cost me so much in time, effort, having to decline command and relocate. Now it was over. We had followed the shifting logic of denial to its final point, in the Cardinal's office, and there it met its death. There could be no more denial of our requests from the hierarchy; those days were over. It had been well worth the struggle, well worth it. The victory had been on the side of God's Church.

We began looking for a priest that would be able to take responsibility for our Sunday Latin Mass. Fr. Duroisin was being transferred to Lyon by the FSSP, which was now under new leadership, but the Institute of Christ the King was assigning an English-speaking priest to Havré, just outside of Mons, and it appeared likely that he would be able to take responsibility for our Latin Mass.

General Callender sent notification to everyone he had spoken with on previous occasions: Archbishop O'Brien, the Chief of Army Chaplains, and the USAREUR and 80th ASG Chaplains.

As had become our custom, we kept General Callender in our Rosary intentions that evening. But almost as soon as we finished our prayers of thanksgiving, the saga took a new twist.

Chapter 15

The US Army vs. The Catholic Church

THERE WAS A MOMENT of uncertainty. Although Archbishop O'Brien had seemed to indicate that all would be well as soon as we received permission from Cardinal Danneels, it was now unclear as to whether or not he had the ability to give such permission. My heart sank as we read the following letter from Cardinal Danneels:

Malines, August 18, 2000.

Brigadier General M.E. Callender
Office of the United States
Representative Military Committee
1110 NATO-BRUSSELS

Dear General,

The archdiocese for the Military Services of the United States informed me that I didn't have the authority to grant the permission for the celebration of the Eucharist according to the rite of John XXIII.

This privilege has to be granted by Archbishop O'Brien in Washington as the NATO-offices in Brussels belong to his authority.

I regret that I wasn't aware of this canonical regulation. The permission I granted on July 7th wasn't valid. With my best wishes, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,
 +Godfried Cardinal DANNEELS,
 Archbishop of Malines-Brussels

I had to wonder what was going on at this point. Everyone had said until now that it required Cardinal Danneels' approval. Well, we had his approval. Now what? What was the hold-up? Another month passed, and we received the following letter from Archbishop O'Brien:

August 22, 2000

...

Dear General Callender:

Please excuse my delay in responding to your letter of some weeks ago. I have written to Cardinal Danneels but have not received a reply.

I am disposed, unless I hear otherwise from the Cardinal, to grant the request you asked. I will ask Monsignor Marceaux to make inquiry of interested individuals to ascertain the nature of the Mass desired, celebrant, frequency, etc. However it takes place it should be carried out according to military and AMS expectations.

I hope this can be accomplished without too much time lapse or red tape.

Thank you for your patience and good will and do be assured of my prayers.

In the Lord,

+Edwin F. O'Brien
 Archbishop for the Military Services

EFOB/cga

This message was dictated but not signed by Archbishop O'Brien

Well, what did that mean? We were not sure, but it could not be good. Not only had considerable time elapsed already, but now we had to wait for Fr. Marceaux to make an inquiry? Now he was going to check with Marceaux about some important issues? Why didn't he just say "go ahead?" That was

the way they had handled the girl altar boys issue, and all of the variety of other radical, destructive liturgical changes over the years.

Vatican II was supposed to have rid us of this kind of clericalism; now we had it worse than it had ever been prior to the council!

It was becoming increasingly clear. The *excuse* given for not allowing the Mass had been, up until the Cardinal gave his blessing, that we didn't have his approval. Now that we had his approval, they were scrambling to find another excuse. What would it be? Was Archbishop O'Brien just going to let the local priest make the decision, instead of working with them to help them to understand that this was something they were supposed to allow...generously? It seemed to be his responsibility to convince them of the need to allow the Tridentine Mass.

Soon we heard a rumor that USAREUR would not approve of our request because of lack of funds. This was patently absurd.

"*What?* The same Army that buys \$500 hammers? Can't afford it?" I couldn't believe my ears. One could only laugh at the sad spectacle of the US Army not having \$50 per week to spend on a contract chaplain. Or, to be more precise, "another" contract chaplain, since they were employed at so many of the bases throughout Europe. I told General Callender that I would happily pick up the cost myself, and that no funds were necessary. "Never mind," he said. "If that's the best excuse they can come up with, this ought to be easy to fix."

Finally we received the answer we were looking for, in the form of an e-mail from the NSA Chaplain to LTG Callender:

Yesterday (6 Sept, Wednesday) the USAREUR Chaplain, Ch (COL) Haberek, sent an inquiry/guidance to my office through the 80th ASG Chaplain's office RE: the proposed Tridentine Mass at NSA. Bottom line: **he's against it**. He said (I paraphrase), 'NSA/Brussels does not have his permission to conduct a Tridentine Mass.'

Let me preface the rest of this by saying that I think it would be nice to have a Catholic Mass at NSA, to draw the Catholics and Protestants together in this community. HOWEVER, I HAVE NO AUTHORITY OR SAY IN THIS MATTER. I'LL SUPPORT THE DECISION EITHER WAY. (I started collecting Catholic sacramental items for the sanctuary a year ago should we be directed by the Church to conduct Mass in the future.)

The following I share with you, not because I have a side in the

argument, but because LTG Weisman will have to take the matter up with LTG Jordan or GEN Meigs in short order. Chaplain Haberek affirms that he will carry the matter to them if there's not a resolution at our level.

First point: A commander, any commander or government official DOES NOT (Repeat: Does NOT) DICTATE TO ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITIES WHAT THEY WILL AND WILL NOT DO. Doesn't matter if the ecclesiastical authority is Protestant, Catholic, Muslim or Buddhist. The government does not prescribe the activities of ecclesiastical bodies or their chaplains. Chaplains will be removed from a post before they violate their convictions or church policies.

Second: **Permission** from the Cardinal of Belgium and the Archbishop of the Military to conduct the Latin Mass **is not the same as a mandate** to conduct the Mass. The matter still remains with the senior chaplain authorities (in the Army). Chaplain (COL) Haberek just happens to be (probably) the most senior Roman Catholic chaplain on active duty in the Army.

Third: The comparison of Fort Hood's support for Wiccan services with Latin Masses in Brussels is an apples and oranges comparison. What Wiccans do and Roman Catholics do doesn't even remotely relate to each other. The military doesn't prescribe to either group how they will conduct their meetings, unless the requested meetings are viewed to be contrary to the good order and discipline of the military.

Fourth: The mission of the military chaplaincy is to **perform and provide** for the religious needs [sic] of its members [sic]. Your role as a commander (LTG Weisman's role) is to 'support the free exercise of religion for all Army personnel.' (AR 165-1, [sic] para 1-16, d)–**NOT** dictate the terms of surrender. The chaplaincy's role is "to hold religious services for members of the command to which they are assigned, **when practicable.**" (AR 165-1, para 4-4) The USAREUR chaplain, for a number of reasons that are both ecclesiastical and practical, does not believe that this service is required on a military installation where Roman Catholic services are readily available in the local community in English and Latin. He does not wish to abridge LTC Sonnier's right to a Latin Mass. The Latin Mass is available in the local

community. However, he does not have the requirement to provide it on US government property any more than he's required to provide Southern Baptist services, Lutheran services, LDS, or any other.

When you argue that Wiccan's meeting at Fort Hood justify Tridentine Catholic's meeting in Brussels, he's going to ask you "Why then should we not provide 25 other distinctive services?" Your answer????

Finally, Chaplain Haberek is not "blowing smoke" when he says he'll go to the USAREUR commander on this issue. Is this the issue which you and LTG Weisman wish to "fall on your sword" over?

The threatening tone of the e-mail, particularly the last couple of lines, were rather irritating, but that was not the worst of it. There was no rationale here. At the moment there were not twenty-five different requests for distinctive services, there had been precisely two. One was for a Protestant "Full Gospel Service" and for that, permission had been granted quickly and with much enthusiasm. The other was for a Latin Tridentine Mass, and it had resulted in over a year's worth of lying, whining, heel-dragging, back-stabbing, bureaucratic obstacles, and now threats.

It must have been irritating to Brigadier General Callender to see this as well. He took advantage of a trip to USAREUR Headquarters in Germany to meet with Lieutenant General Larry Jordan about the subject. There he was ordered to back out and not have anything at all to do with the issue.

I obtained a copy of the private e-mail sent from Lieutenant General Larry Jordan, the Deputy Commanding General of United States Army, Europe, to Lieutenant General Dave Weisman, who was the US Military Representative to the NATO Military Committee, and who Callender and I both worked for, and whose office was just down the hall from both of us. This e-mail correspondence explains what happened perfectly well. Even though it is private e-mail from one Lieutenant General to another, it is important to know the details of how the Tridentine Liturgy has been suppressed within the US Military:

Dave,

I am aware of a bubbling issue involving priest support for the Catholic community in Brussels. At the European School Council, BGen Callender hit me with the subject. I had a brief conversation

with him on the general issues, and later obtained more extensive background and details from Steve Hayward and the USAREUR Chaplain. My intent at this time is to clarify the USAREUR position and avoid any further misunderstanding.

It appears to me that Earnie Callender may have misinterpreted my willingness to receive and objectively consider the request to hire a contract priest, and my acknowledgment of his report that the Cardinal of Brussels and Archbishop of the Services (O'Brien) did not object, as an indication of my support or tentative approval of the request. Such was not the case. I could not, and would not make a decision based on that brief conversation and general outline which lacked complete details.

Several facts weigh on this issue:

- Catholic priests are significantly in short supply across the Army and the command (and indeed, the country).
- The reported number of Army and USAF Catholic personnel assigned to Brussels is reported as 35.
- Catholic mass in English is available in at least two locations in/about Brussels (1.5 and 10 miles, respectively). Latin mass is available in at least four locations (closest is 4 miles).
- USAREUR QOL [Quality of Life] standard is 30 min travel time for religious services. However, several places across the command have many more Catholic personnel, are more distant from available services, but have neither military nor civilian priest [sic] available.
- While the Cardinal of Brussels and Archbishop O'Brien may not object to hiring a contract priest from Italy in this specific circumstance, it is the Chief of Chaplains who is responsible for Army religious programs, and US Army Europe who is responsible for resourcing religious programs here.

BGen Callender alleged that past disagreements between the USAREUR Chaplain and one of the field grade officers in Brussels requesting this support may have contributed to the current impasse. Even if that were true, which is not certain to me, the point would be moot. I have not based my decisions on input from any single source.

I am not prepared to support this request. Adequate religious support appears readily available (with both English and Latin mass offered). The request is not supportable based on the USAREUR QOL standard; the number of assigned personnel does not justify the hiring; and it would be impossible to justify given the level of priest support across the command and in other specific locations where identical or worse levels of support are available. I see no rationale for an exception to policy, and the extra expenditure would deny needed support elsewhere.

If I have not stated the facts correctly, or if additional relevant information is available, I will gladly consider it.

Regards, Larry

LTG Larry R. Jordan
Deputy Commanding General
United States Army Europe

After General Callender read the e-mail above to me, I could hardly contain my anger.

“Sir, who is feeding him these lies? Can we tell him he has a lot of erroneous information?” I said. General Callender wasn’t his usual animated self. I didn’t know where to begin. General Callender had been frustrated from day one in his dealings with USAREUR on a variety of other, completely unrelated issues. Due to some outdated records they refused to update, USAREUR thought that there were far fewer U.S. Military personnel assigned to Brussels than were actually there. Disagreement over the number of personnel assigned to Brussels had been an ongoing issue for him.

Did LTG Jordan have the idea that we were trying to hire a priest from Italy? A recently ordained, English-speaking priest of the Institute of Christ the King had just finished his studies at Griciliano and had been assigned to Belgium, and Cardinal Danneels had given consent to letting him take responsibility for our Mass. Did General Jordan think we were trying to fly someone up from Italy on a weekly basis or something?

Sure, there were Latin Masses in the area, but the homily was always in French or Flemish. That was fine for us, in the Sonnier family, but what about those who didn’t speak French or Flemish? They couldn’t understand the homily. And *of course* priests were in short supply everywhere; that’s why I was trying to get the Army to become open to and accepting of this idea!

“Sir, for pete sake, tell him it won’t cost a dime!” I said. Even if it did cost anything, I would pick up the expense.

“I’ve been ordered to stay out of it.”

“Who do I go to now? Should I write to him myself and tell him I’ll cover any costs?”

“I’m sorry, Dave. I’ve been called down on this one. I did my best.”

Over the next few days I made some unsuccessful attempts to convey through the chain of command some of the problems with what was in General Jordan’s e-mail. In one such attempt, the Staff Judge Advocate, Lieutenant Colonel Kleinfeld, called General Jordan’s Chaplain, who was the senior chaplain for the US Army Europe, COL Jerome Haberek, a Catholic chaplain. Kleinfeld pointed out the problems with the case General Jordan was trying to make. Somewhere in the conversation he was interrupted:

“I can stop this Tridentine Mass from happening!”

“Why would you want to do that?” Kleinfeld asked.

“You just watch. I’ll stop it.”

It really was fruitless. Lieutenant General Jordan had spoken, and that was all that mattered. It didn’t matter what the facts were. It didn’t matter that there would be no cost. It didn’t matter that we weren’t trying to fly in a “priest from Italy,” but rather one nearby was volunteering to assist us without pay. None of that mattered. He was going to follow the advice of his chaplains, and Fr. Haberek didn’t want it to happen, Fr. Marceaux didn’t want it to happen, and they didn’t care what Cardinal Danneels and Archbishop O’Brien had to say. They *certainly* didn’t care what the Holy Father had to say. They were going to ensure that there was no Tridentine Mass, ever, in one of their chapels. They would, of course, permit witchcraft, “wicca” services, most anything at all, but not a Tridentine Mass. On July 9th, 2000, for example, the feature article of the *Stars and Stripes* had been “Pagans Celebrate Diversity, Togetherness,” featuring photos from the Mannheim military Pagan coven at the Taylor Barracks Chapel in Mannheim. “In February 1998, the Pagans in Mannheim took control of the keys to the chapel at Taylor Baracks.”¹ This could not have been done without the full consent of the Catholic clergy in the chaplains corps. They were willing to turn over a chapel to the Wiccans, but they would go as far as to lie to prevent a Tridentine Mass.

Now, with over nineteen years in the army, and a possible retirement less than a year away, and most likely a reassignment less than a year away, I

¹ *Stars and Stripes*, Sunday July 9 2000, p. 5.

knew what needed to be done.

Chapter 16

Meet the Press

I BEGAN TRYING TO CONTACT Senator Lott's office almost immediately. At that time Senator Trent Lott was the Senate Majority Leader, but he was from my home state. Any serviceman has a right to bring a grievance to their congressman or senator. Furthermore, he had nominated me to West Point about twenty-four years earlier when he was the 5th Congressional Representative from Mississippi.

I was put in contact with one of his assistants who handled everything that had to do with the military. I explained the problem to him, and sent him, by fax, a copy of some of the documents related to our situation. I also sent a copy of a letter I would be mailing to Senator Lott.

"You'll hear back from someone within two to three months," he said.

"That's too long," I said. "Time's running out on me here and I'm going to end up getting reassigned within a year. We need to handle this right away."

He paused. "Well, if you really want to get it resolved, and you want to do something about it right away, I'd pass it to the press."

What did I have to lose at this point? Why not?

"Call Rowan Scarborough," he said. "He's a reporter for the *Washington Times*. He's got a way of turning things around in a situation like this. He'll make sure it meets the public eye in the right light. But I've got to warn you. . . there are sometimes repercussions for settling it this way, even if you're right."

By now, I could care less what the repercussions were. I didn't care if they stood me up in front of a firing squad and shot me. Here I was serving

in an Army in which the Catholic chaplains had gone into rebellion, and turned against their legitimate Church authority. If my little military career was a casualty I would be quite glad to see it go.

He gave me Rowan Scarborough's number. I thanked him and called Mr. Scarborough immediately. It was another day or two before he got back with me. When he did he was quite efficient. Without spending much time at all on the phone, he was able to get the essential facts together. I imagined that he was actually writing the article as he spoke with me! He wanted me to fax a couple of other documents such as the e-mail from Lieutenant General Jordan to Lieutenant General Weisman, and the letter from Archbishop O'Brien.

Scarborough was such a pro. He was very careful with the timing when he submitted it, knowing that it would be best for it to hit the papers on a week day rather than on a weekend. The reason? If it made the papers on a week day it would end up in the "Early Bird," a condensed summary of all of the days articles that gets circulated through the Pentagon and throughout the Department of Defense every morning.

The following article appeared on page 7 of the Washington Times, October 10, 2000, as well as in the widely read *Early Bird*:

Washington Times

October 10, 2000

Pg. 7

Catholic Denied Mass In Army Chapel

By Rowan Scarborough, The Washington Times

The U.S. Army in Europe will not allow traditional Catholics to use a base chapel, although the military has opened similar facilities around the world for witchcraft and pagan rituals.

The officer seeking to use the chapel blames the denial on a "politically correct Army."

But an Army spokesman says the branch's European command does not want to pay the cost of hiring a priest when personnel can go off base to churches where Mass is conducted in Latin. Catholics have the option of attending Mass that is celebrated in the vernacular, meaning the local language, or in Latin. The vernacular is the most common choice.

Lt. Col. David L. Sonnier, an information management officer, said in an interview that his request was turned down by Lt.

Gen. Larry R. Jordan, deputy Army European commander. Col. Sonnier serves at the NATO Support Activity, a small Army base in Brussels that provides logistics and personnel support for the U.S. delegation to NATO headquarters in Brussels.

The colonel says the chapel hosts two Protestant services weekly. He said he was told that Gen. Jordan refused the Catholics' request because he feared a multitude of other religious groups then would want chapel time.

"Just let us have access to it," said Col. Sonnier, estimating that 20 Catholics want the service. "All we want is the Army to allow us to use chapels like the Wiccans and pagans. This is politically correct to an extreme when pagans and Wiccans are allowed into a chapel and traditional Catholics are blocked entry."

The Army says it's not a question of access, but of cost. The pagan sects supply their own ministers. "In order to (have a Catholic priest say a Latin Mass), the Army would have to contract out to a private priest," said Col. Carl Kropf, a spokesman in Heidelberg, Germany. No Catholic Army chaplain was available.

Col. Kropf said Gen. Jordan "didn't deny the use of the chapel, which someone may have alleged. But he wasn't going to let the contract for something that is available elsewhere. It's a resource issue."

The colonel denied that Gen. Jordan is concerned that many other religious groups subsequently will want chapel space. "I think this is a situation where a service is available in the local community that serves the needs of the people."

Col. Kropf said the Army suffers "a tremendous shortage of Catholic chaplains in particular."

On the cost issue, Col. Sonnier said: "They don't have to pay. We made that clear. That's not an excuse. If the Army doesn't pay the cost for a priest, I will. Also other members of the community. What is their next excuse?"

He estimated the weekly cost at \$120.

Col. Sonnier, a 19-year officer who is married and has five children, has written to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, Mississippi

Republican, seeking his help. Col. Sonnier, a Mississippi native, was nominated to West Point by Mr. Lott.

“One has to wonder whether the same standards that were applied for the pagans and wiccans are being applied in our case,” the colonel wrote, adding:

“It appears that serious, orthodox Catholics in good standing within their denominations are now being denied access to the chapels by military leaders who supposedly want to avoid having too many different religious services.

“I am quite certain that our fellow Mississippians will be interested in keeping their children away from the recruiting stations until our morally disoriented military undergoes some serious reform.”

The colonel says he gained approval for Latin chapel services from Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien of the U.S. Military Archdiocese, and Cardinal Godfried Danneels of the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels. Permission from the Catholic hierarchy is required before Latin Masses may be celebrated rather than the more common vernacular Mass.

As Col. Kropf pointed out, “The Catholic service for people in the U.S. and Europe is an English-based service. That’s what you get when you are in Fairfax, Virginia.”

Archbishop O’Brien’s Washington office said he was traveling and unavailable for comment.

Defense Department regulations urge commanders to accommodate different religious groups: “Commanders should provide for the faith needs of all service members and accommodate their requests to conduct religious observances on military installations when these observances will not adversely impact military readiness, unit cohesion, or standards of good order and discipline or violate health or safety standards.”

A July 9 article in *Stars and Stripes*, a newspaper for military people, said Army pagans in Mannheim, Germany, have the keys to a base chapel where they hold regular gatherings.

Col. Kropf said the chapel in question is excess property, and there is no extra cost in providing the building.

The military's tolerance of Wiccans and pagans became national news in 1999, when it was reported that the Army base at Fort Hood, Texas, the largest U.S. base, provided a Wiccan coven a campsite to hold regular ceremonies.

The military's 20-year-old chaplain handbook recognizes more than 200 religious faiths, including Wiccans, the Church of Satan and Rastafarians.

Col. Sonnier said his research shows that at least 12 military bases worldwide host pagan or Wiccan ceremonies.

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Soon there were other articles. This one appeared in various locations:

U.S. Army in Europe Won't Make Room for Latin Mass

Colonel Sees Bias, But Military Says it's a Cost Issue

WASHINGTON, D.C., OCT. 11, 2000 (ZENIT.org).- The U.S. Army in Europe will not allow traditional Catholics to use a base chapel, although the military has opened similar facilities around the world for witchcraft and pagan rituals, The Washington Times reported.

The officer seeking to use the chapel blames the denial on a "politically correct Army," the newspaper said Tuesday.

But an Army spokesman says the branch's European command does not want to pay the cost of hiring a priest when personnel can go off base to churches where Mass is conducted in Latin, the paper said.

Catholics have the option of attending Mass that is celebrated in the vernacular language or in Latin. The vernacular is the most common choice, the Time [sic] reported. Lieutenant Colonel David L. Sonnier, an information management officer, said in an interview with the Times that his request was turned down by Lieutenant General Larry R. Jordan, deputy Army European commander.

Sonnier serves at the NATO Support Activity, a small Army base in Brussels, Belgium, that provides logistics and personnel support for the U.S. delegation to NATO headquarters in Brussels.

The colonel says the chapel hosts two Protestant services weekly. He said he was told that General Jordan refused the Catholics' request because he feared a multitude of other religious groups then would want chapel time, the Times said.

"Just let us have access to it," said Sonnier, estimating that 20 Catholics want the service. "All we want is the Army to allow us to use chapels like the Wiccans and pagans. This is politically correct to an extreme when pagans and Wiccans are allowed into a chapel and traditional Catholics are blocked entry."

The Army says it's not a question of access, but of cost. The pagan sects supply their own ministers, the Times said.

"In order to (have a Catholic priest say a Latin Mass), the Army would have to contract out to a private priest," Colonel Carl Kropf, a spokesman in Heidelberg, Germany, told the Times. No Catholic Army chaplain was available.

A July 9 article in *Stars and Stripes*, a newspaper for military people, said Army pagans in Mannheim, Germany, have the keys to a base chapel where they hold regular gatherings.

The military's tolerance of Wiccans and pagans became national news in 1999, when it was reported that the Army base at Fort Hood, Texas, provided a Wiccan coven a campsite to hold regular ceremonies, the Times noted.

The military's chaplain handbook recognizes more than 200 religious faiths, including Wiccans, the Church of Satan and Rastafarians.

Chapter 17

Excuses, Excuses

SHORTLY AFTER THE FLURRY of articles, I was informed that I had never submitted a formal request to use the NSA chapel. I was directed to submit a request, but that it would be under the provisions of a “distinctive faith group service.”

I did so, even though I didn’t see the need for a request. It seemed to be one of those technicalities that I had to go through with in order to make this Latin Mass finally happen. By now, I could see the strategy. This request would be submitted and then there would be nothing done, for an incredibly long period of time, as I sat and waited for some response.

The request was submitted October 19th; it would be several weeks before an answer would finally come through.

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE
MILITARY COMMITTEE
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
PSC 80, BOX 200
APO AE 09724

REPLY TO ATTENTION OF

USDELMC IMO 19 October 2000

MEMORANDUM THRU Commander, 80th Area Support Group,
ATTN: Staff

Chaplain, Unit 21419, APO AE 09708

FOR Commander-in-Chief, USA Europe and Seventh Army,
ATTN: AEACH-CH,

USAREUR and Seventh Army Chaplain, Unit 29351, APO AE 09014

SUBJECT: Request for use of the NSA Chapel Facilities

1. I request use of the NSA Chapel facility for a weekly Traditional Mass, according to the 1962 *Missale Romanum* under the provisions of *Ecclesia Dei*, as authorized by Godfried Cardinal Danneels and Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien. I understand that this "distinctive faith group service" would need to be held or contracted on an exception to policy basis because the Army is unable to provide a military chaplain, DOD civilian, or volunteer to meet this request. This service will be attended by 20+ service members and their family members. I understand that this exception must be approved by the USAREUR Chaplain.

2. I also understand that this service must be sponsored and supervised by an assigned chaplain. This service and the offerings that may be received will require the support of Army personnel to fulfill the requirements of AR 165-1.

3. P.O.C. for this request is LTC David L. Sonnier, US Delegation IMO, at Ext. 365-9445.

DAVID L. SONNIER
LTC, US ARMY
IMO, USDELMO

On the morning of 3 November 2000 COL Jerome Haberek, the USAREUR Chaplain, arrived from USAREUR headquarters to give a verbal answer to our request. He had been one of the priests assigned to Fort Bragg who had refused to speak with me about our petition there.

Upon his arrival he met in private with Lieutenant General Weisman and Brigadier General Callender. I was not allowed to attend this meeting, so I have no idea what he told them. More importantly, I was not allowed to defend our case. There's no telling what he told them until Judgement Day...I'm looking forward to finding out at that time.

Meanwhile, I gathered some friends, colleagues, and associates; some interested in attending the Latin Mass, others just to be witnesses to this meeting. One of the individuals who came to the meeting was a Missouri Synod Lutheran who seemed to be finding it difficult to believe that we were not allowed to use the chapel. He had to come and see what the big deal was for himself.

COL Habarek clung doggedly to his position that we would not be allowed to use the NSA Chapel for the Traditional Mass, but rather should attend Mass in a local parish. He nervously read from a prepared statement which was full of false assumptions, errors, and exaggerations. I was able to obtain a copy of it so that the rationale used to prevent the Latin Mass on this tiny military installation may be examined:

THE AVAILABILITY OF CATHOLIC SERVICES IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IS A NECESSARY PART OF OUR IDENTIFYING NEED. WE ACCOMMODATE RELIGIOUS SUPPORT HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON WHETHER THE LEGITIMATE NEEDS CAN ALREADY BE SATISFIED OR NOT, EITHER ON POST OR OFF- POST. WE USE THIS RULE FOR ALL FAITH GROUPS. IN THIS CASE BECAUSE OF A SHORTAGE OF MILITARY PRIESTS, WE DO NOT HAVE A CATHOLIC MASS SUPPLIED AT NSA CHAPEL. OUR REQUIREMENT AND DESIRE IS EITHER TO PERFORM THE SERVICES [sic] FOR OUR PEOPLE (WHEN A MILITARY CHAPLAIN OF THE APPROPRIATE FAITH GROUP IS AVAILABLE) OR TO PROVIDE A SERVICE WHEN WE DON'T HAVE THE ASSETS AND/OR WHEN THE FEWNESS OF PEOPLE DO NOT JUSTIFY AN ENTIRELY NEW SERVICE. IN THIS CASE, THE FACT THAT CATHOLIC NEEDS ARE TOTALLY SATISFIED IN THE COMMUNITY (WHERE THE MAJORITY LIVES) ANSWERS OUR REQUIREMENTS AND DOES NOT FORCE US TO MAKE ALL SORTS OF DUPLICATE EXPENDITURES OR ADMINISTRATIVE WORK.

THUS IN THIS CASE (AS IN ALL OTHERS), THE TWO ENGLISH MASSES CONVENIENT TO OUR PEOPLE AND THE LATIN MASS, UP UNTIL NOW HAVE FULLY SATISFIED OUR REQUIREMENTS [sic]. IF WE WERE TO DISCOVER THROUGH A NEEDS ASSESSMENT, THAT WE NEEDED A CATHOLIC MASS AT NASA, [SIC] WE WOULD MOST LIKELY HAVE TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO PROVIDE AN ENGLISH MASS THERE TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE VAST MAJORITY. THAT ENGLISH MASS, AFTER ALL, WOULD HAVE TO SATISFY COMPLETELY THE REQUIREMENTS AND PREFERENCES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND FULLY RESPONDS TO THE OBLIGATIONS

OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING CATHOLICS.

WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION (NOR COULD WE EVER BE) TO ATTEMPT TO SATISFY THE PERSONAL LITURGICAL PREFERENCES OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE WITHIN ANY RELIGIOUS TRADITION. WE USE WHATEVER FLEXIBILITY WE REASONABLY HAVE (INCLUDING PROVIDING OFF-POST CIVILIAN SERVICES WHEN THEY ARE UNIQUE), BUT WE CAN'T CREATE A POLICY TO SUPPLY ALL AT ALL TIMES. IN FACT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ADVICE OF THE CIVILIAN CHURCH ENDORSERS (NCMAF), OUR POLICY AND MINISTRY IS EXECUTED WITHIN THE REALM OF THE PRACTICAL.

IN THIS CASE, THE OFF-POST OPTION IS PERFECT, LANGUAGE IS NOT A PROBLEM SINCE LATIN IS USED. INDIVIDUALS CAN FIND THEIR PARTICULAR BRAND OF LITURGY AS WELL AS STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT THE EXISTING SMALL COMMUNITIES. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S PREFERENCE FOR NON-PROLIFERATION OF UNNECESSARY LITURGIES (ESPECIALLY LATIN ONES) WHEN VERY FEW PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED IS SATISFIED. IT SEEMS A WIN-WIN AS LONG AS SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF ALL IS THE CRITERION.

After reading the statement, he asked us for our questions on the issue.

I asked him to repeat the line "... Catholic needs are totally satisfied in the community..." Referring to the local English-language parish, I asked "are you aware that the parish does not have First Confession prior to First Communion, in violation of the Code of Canon Law? There are other serious problems as well..."

Before I could finish, he snapped nervously: "I don't want to get into difficulties you're having with your parish."

Referring to his text: "Were we to discover, through a needs assessment, that we needed a Catholic Mass at NASA [sic] we would most likely have to figure out a way to provide an English Mass there to serve the needs of the vast majority."

I pointed out: "We are not requesting an English Mass."

"The vernacular is the standard," he responded.

"Can you give us a source for that statement?" I asked.

He could not. “Call Phil Hill at the Office of the Chief of Chaplains.” Phil Hill, we found out later, was a priest.

Kleinfeld pointed out that “that’s in contradiction with Canon 928, which states that ‘Latin is the typical language of the Latin Rite...’”

“We don’t want to get into Canon Law,” he snapped.

I responded to his statement that “We are not in a position (nor could we ever be) to attempt to satisfy the personal liturgical preferences of every individual or small group of people within any religious tradition” by pointing out that we were not asking that they do that. By now, all in the room could see that this priest was more generous to the Wiccans than he was to tradition-minded Catholics.

Referring to his statement that “...The Catholic Church’s preference for non-proliferation of unnecessary liturgies (especially Latin ones) when very few people are involved...” I asked him, “What is your source for this statement that the Church prefers a non-proliferation of unnecessary liturgies?”

There was no answer.

At the end of the meeting it was quite clear that he had no legitimate arguments, he could offer no clear reasons for his decision, and that it was all based on personal bias. Fr. Haberek concluded this meeting with a room full of only Catholics (to his knowledge... he had no way of knowing I had invited a Missouri Synod Lutheran) by turning to the Protestant Chaplain seated by him and letting the Protestant lead the prayer.

After the meeting I immediately contacted Archbishop O’Brien by phone to inform him of the situation. The first question I asked was whether we had permission to proceed with the Mass. He affirmed that we did, but then when I informed him of Fr. Haberek’s objections, he said “I was told that it was the command that was opposed to it.” I assured him that “the command” did not care one way or another, and that in fact it was COL Haberek and COL Marceaux who were opposed. Due to the limited amount of time he had available to discuss the issue over the phone, we hung up and I sent him the following letter by fax. In the cover letter I enquired as to whether we could proceed despite COL Haberek’s objections.

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE
MILITARY COMMITTEE
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
PSC 80, BOX 200
APO AE 09724

REPLY TO ATTENTION OF

USDELMC IMO 3 November 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA

SUBJECT: Request for Permission to Proceed with Traditional Mass

1. A meeting was held on 3 November 2000 with the USAREUR Chaplain, who denied permission to proceed with the Traditional Mass at the NSA Chapel, but offered no substantial reason for doing so.
2. At this point, we are unable to proceed due to what appears to be the personal bias of the USAREUR Chaplain. No commander at any level of command presents any objections at all, since no resources are requested other than the space of the chapel. This initiative has the approval of the NSA Commander, and apparently the 80th ASG Commander. The USAREUR Deputy Commander stated publicly (through his PAO) that he is not stopping us from using the chapel.
3. Request your ecclesiastical permission to proceed with the Traditional Mass on a trial basis. This permission will be for Fr. William Hudson, Institute of Christ the King, who has been invited to Belgium by Cardinal Danneels for this purpose.
4. POC this request is LTC David L. Sonnier, DSN 314-365-9445.

DAVID L. SONNIER

LTC, SF

Information Management Officer

I immediately sent e-mail to Lieutenant General Weisman and Don Isbell, with a courtesy copy to the NSA Chaplain:

Sir:

I just got off the telephone with Archbishop O'Brien, and he said that we have ecclesiastical approval to go ahead and use the chapel. He agreed that there were no reasonable arguments presented in the meeting today with COL Haberek, and he insisted that he was being told that it was only "the command" that was

presenting an obstacle. I don't know who is telling him this, since no commander at any level has any objections.

He asked me to go ahead and fax a request directly to him and he will respond to make it formal. LTC (Kleinfeld) came in to hear the last part of the conversation.

I sent the fax, along with a recommendation that he contact the Army Chief of Chaplains and let him know that he should let us proceed despite COL Haberek's objections.

LTC Sonnier

The response from Archbishop O'Brien came in the form of a letter sent by fax:

Dear Colonel Sonnier:

Thank you for your fax, just received.

I am not giving anyone "permission to go ahead despite Colonel Haberek's objections." Nor was that the terminology used by either of us in our telephone conversation this morning.

I have called Monsignor Hill in Ch. Gunhus' office to let him know the nature of my permission:

Since there is no objection from the local diocesan bishop, Cardinal Danneels; and since there is no evident and convincing pastoral reason to forbid the Traditional Mass; I am willing to grant permission for such a Mass on a trail [sic] basis, the nature of which is to be addressed.

In the Lord,

+Edwin F. O'Brien
Archbishop for the Military Services

A few days later, on November 6, I received the following e-mail from the NSA Chaplain in response to the e-mail I had sent to LTG Weisman and Don on November 3:

Sir:

Thanks for copy of email. Perhaps LTG Weisman told you, but in case he didn't let me. General Meigs is about to distribute policy guidance in support of Chaplain (COL) Haberek's position.

With such guidance, it keeps the decision out of our hands and the answer is still ‘No service.’

I don’t have the freedom to ignore that counsel, and unless LTG Weisman tells me to do it, my hands are tied. Presently, my Chief of Chaplains has told me “No service”. He has command authority over my activities.

Archbishop O’Brien is a player in this matter, but not the only player. I can proceed when Chaplain Haberek, my Chief of Chaplains, or LTG Weisman tells me to. As of Friday’s meeting, LTG Weisman is in unison with General Meigs.

...

Now it was becoming clear. COL Haberek, a Catholic priest, was telling Archbishop O’Brien that it was “the command” that didn’t want the Latin Mass. But what was he telling “the command” that would convince them that we had to somehow be treated differently than any other group of soldiers? Who could possibly know? We had not been allowed into the discussion he held with Lieutenant General Weisman. I could only imagine. Once again, I look forward to hearing an explanation of this on Judgement Day.

Soon I received a letter from Senator Lott, along with a letter from Major General Lennox, Chief of Legislative Liaison.

Dear Lieutenant Colonel Sonnier:

Thank you for writing to me to request my assistance in helping you to get authorization to conduct traditional Mass services at the NATO Support Activity (NSA) Chapel in Brussels. Attached is a letter from the Army which responds to my inquiry on this matter.

U.S. Army commanders are responsible for providing religious, spiritual, moral and ethical support to authorized personnel in their command. In this light, the Deputy Commander of U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army (USAREUR), Lieutenant General Larry R. Jordan, has determined that your religious needs are already being satisfied through existing services within the community. He notes that Latin Mass is conducted at four different parishes within a 15-mile radius of NSA which complies with the Quality of Life Standard for having religious services available within a 35-minute drive.

Please review the Army's response and determine whether this response is satisfactory. Thank you again for affording me the opportunity to assist you with this matter. With very best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Trent Lott

Enclosed was a letter to Senator Lott from Major General Lennox, Chief of Legislative Liaison, stating the same thing.

Soon thereafter I also received a copy of a new policy letter, USAREUR Command Policy Letter 28, Accommodating Religious Needs:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE, AND
SEVENTH ARMY
THE COMMANDING GENERAL
UNIT 29351
APO, AE 09014

AEACH-ZA (165) 18 December 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: USAREUR Command Policy Letter 28, Accommodating Religious Needs

1. Reference AR 165-1, 27 February 1998, Chaplain Activities in the United States Army.
2. Chaplains are responsible for accommodating the religious needs of all personnel, regardless of their religious affiliation. Each individual must be provided the opportunity to practice his or her religious beliefs freely.
3. Chaplains need not establish worship services to accommodate each religious affiliation. They may, however, help individuals grow through prayer and scriptural study, and provide literature that supports the individual's faith or denomination. Distinctive faith group leaders (DFGLs) also may provide ministry support as an exception to policy if a military chaplain is not available to meet the requirements of a distinctive faith group. Requests for distinctive faith group support should originate from soldiers.

a. AR 165-1 prescribes policy on DFGL certification, DFGL use of chapels, and guidelines for conducting distinctive faith group services. To request certification, DFGLs will send the information specified in AR 165-1, paragraph 5-5, to the area support group (ASG) chaplain. The ASG chaplain will review the request, prepare a recommendation, and forward both to the US-AREUR Chaplain, the approval authority for DFGL certification in USAREUR.

b. DFGLs are authorized to conduct worship services, but may not establish a church, parish, congregation, or mission. DFGLs are not authorized to provide a full range of programs or activities normally expected in a civilian parish, church, or mission for a particular denomination or faith group (for example, youth ministry, religious education); nor are DFGLs authorized to assume control or management of military facilities.

4. Commanders usually can accommodate the religious needs of personnel in their command. If resources restrict the religious support that can be provided, accommodation may be limited to providing the essential elements of religious services required by a distinctive faith group, or by offering a broad or collective service that combines the needs of several distinctive faith groups.

MONTGOMERY C. MEIGS

General, USA

Commanding

Unbelievable. This policy letter had apparently been generated as a result of the stir I had created. But what was I doing that was so unusual, that had caused all the commotion? Nothing but request to worship as Christians had for nearly two thousand years, and as we were supposed to be allowed to as Catholics if we chose to do so.

At this point I was starting to get e-mail and phone calls from the Special Forces branch field grade assignment officer. They were going to reassign me in just a few months, and there was no position in Brussels for a Special Forces Lieutenant Colonel. But there was no reason at this point to stop pushing the issue. If I could hold out long enough, remain in Brussels, there was no way that they could continue on like this.

There was one possibility for me to take a command as a Lieutenant Colonel — Don Isbell would be leaving within a year, and I was as qualified

as anyone else to be his replacement. That would allow me to stay on in Brussels and wrestle this problem to its logical conclusion. They couldn't keep traditional Catholics out of the Army Chapels forever.

Don and I discussed the idea. "Are you sure you can convince General Weisman to agree to this?" I asked him.

"Sure thing. I think I can convince him."

We agreed upon a timetable for change of command, finding a replacement for myself as the Information Management officer, and even a two week vacation for each of us.

"You're *nuts!*" my wife shrieked, when I told her about the plan.

"You don't want to stay in Brussels and pursue this until we win?"

"Absolutely *not!* This stupid Army has gone to hell in a handbasket. You tell me what's so hard about having a Latin Mass in that chapel. . . they don't want Latin Mass Catholics in their Army! Too politically incorrect! They want a liturgy they can control and manipulate! They *don't want people like you in the Army!*"

Whew! This had obviously taken its toll on my family. I knew I wouldn't be able to stick around in the Army much longer without her support.

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you out. I want you *out by this summer*. I think God wants you out. If God wanted us to have a Latin Mass within the Army He would have made it happen by now. He would have turned the hearts of some of these Novus Ordo priests you've dealt with. I think He wants you out, because our country has turned against Him. How can you conclude otherwise when we end up with a sleazeball like Clinton for president? And just by being in the Army you're defending a country that's turned against God. Why serve in an army that forbids the Latin Mass, promotes Wicca, and defends a nation that's turned against God? Why? *You tell me why??*"

After a glass of wine, a long discussion, some flowers, and extra attention I convinced her that I should stay in the Army a while longer and try to make the best of the situation. Meanwhile, I would have to just continue to work on the Brussels problem until my reassignment the following summer.

But reassignment for what? The more I thought and prayed about it the more I came to the same conclusion — there was no reason for me to be in the Army. My wife was right. If they couldn't do something as simple as allow the Latin Mass again for those of us having such "rightful aspirations," to use the Pope's own words, then there was no sense in being a part of any of it. It was a waste of time. Defend what? A corrupt America, whose corrupt President was fond of fondling women in the Oval Office? An America whose

Catholic clergy could pull the kind of stunts I was witnessing and get away with it?

No, if I was going to stay in, I would remain in Brussels and see this issue through to the finish. If that didn't work out, I would leave the service. Don and I presented the plan to Lieutenant General Weisman.

Soon thereafter, General Weisman came by my office to give me his decision on the matter:

"Dave, I can't have you take command of the NATO Support Activity. First of all, you don't have your children in the DODDS school, so you're not supporting our program there, and second, you're in the middle of this public pissing contest with USAREUR and a bunch of chaplains. I just can't do it."

I decided to continue to pursue the issue anyway, whatever the case. It was a just cause. It dawned on me that there had been no response to our 19 October request to use the chapel as a "distinctive faith group." Certainly under this new policy there could be no denial. I began prodding for a response.

But the denial of our request came anyway. The rationale? "This service is available within two miles of the installation and is able to accommodate the religious needs of those requesting this service." In other words, since the local ordinary allowed the Latin Mass, we didn't need it.

So... let's get this right. At Fort Bragg, where we had a desperate need for relief from the liturgical atrocities, the Latin Mass could not be allowed because the local ordinary didn't allow it. Now, the Latin Mass could not be allowed because the local ordinary *did* allow it. Either way, regardless of what the local ordinary was doing, the Latin Mass would not be allowed in a military chapel. In other words, to have a Latin Mass approved in a military chapel, you had to first prove that you didn't need one.

To whom could I appeal?

- Archbishop O'Brien would do nothing, because his chaplains were telling him it was "the command" that was causing problems. He would never take my word over that of a priest.
- The General Officers, aside from the courageous General Callender, would do nothing, because the chaplains were telling them... who knows what? We will all know on Judgment Day, but presently I had no way of knowing.
- Senator Lott had been assured by the Military Liaison that there was no need for such a thing.

Over the next few weeks I considered legal action. At the recommendation of a local priest (by now we had a close relationship with several very good priests in the Brussels area) I dropped it and instead initiated an Inspector General Complaint, the results of which were unfortunately predictable. But through the Freedom of Information Act, a lawyer helped me to obtain some information. Some interesting information. It turns out that, although we were never able to use the NSA Chapel under the “distinctive faith group” category, some other groups were given access without any problem. The USAREUR Chaplain, COL Haberek, certified Janet L. Cassle as a Distinctive Faith Group Leader for the Wiccan service at Taylor Barracks in Mannheim, Germany. Janet replaced Tammy Stracke, the previously certified Distinctive Faith Group Leader. I was also provided with letters from a mission coordinator of the Temple of Isis, including one ironically sent on the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception:

ISIS INVICTA MILITARY MISSION
Temple of Isis (California)

Mission Coordinator Rev. Rona J. Coomer-Russell
P.O. Box 2036 Cookeville TN, 38502

December 8, 2000

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to thank you for taking the time to work with Janet Cassle in her efforts to assist Military Pagans in your area. We hope that she may serve both the military and her local community well.

We have chosen to assist Janet in her quest to begin religious services IAW AR 165-1 Chaplains Activities in the US Army section 5.5. Our Temple is an IRS tax-exempt religious organization. Our EIN# is 94-2820642. We were incorporated in the state of California in June of 1996.

Included is Janet’s Certificate of Sanction. She is hereby authorized to officiate religious services in accordance with our Military Mission Guidelines. She is given the authority to perform all duties required of a DFGL. She will be under the direct supervision of Rev. Lisa Mickles, our European Secretary.

If you have any questions about the Temple of Isis, Isis Invicta Military Mission you are welcome to contact me at the above

addresses or call me collect at (931) 858-7711. You are also welcome to contact Rev. Mickles at 0621-724-6698

In Service,

Rev Rona J. Coomer-Russell
Mission Coordinator.

How it was that my simple request could possibly be denied when this was allowed? How could that be? This was how the “Distinctive Faith Group” clause was to be used? The Institute of Christ the King and the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter could not offer Mass in our chapels?

As I stood there scratching my head, General Callender walked into my office and closed the door.

“Sir!”

“Sit down, Dave.”

I was not accustomed to having a flag officer walk into my office, so I nervously sat down, waiting for what I knew would be bad news, by the look on his face.

“Dave, you told me something a few weeks ago that I thought was rather odd at the time, but I want to ask you about it now.”

“Yes, sir?”

“You said, at the time that you wrote to Senator Lott, to let me know if there were any repercussions and that you would let the Senator know.”

“Yes, sir, I recall saying that.”

“I couldn’t believe you told me this. In fact, at the time, I thought that it was inappropriate to suggest such a thing. How could there be any repercussions for just doing my job? But then later when I was at USAREUR Headquarters COL Haberek told me that I would regret having become involved in this issue.”

My heart sank, as it dawned on me what he was telling me.

“Well, I just got off the phone with General Officer Management, and it’s not looking too good for me. Basically I’m being asked to retire. And I’m being told that the officer behind it, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, is a ‘staunch Catholic.’”

“Sir, if he’s a ‘staunch Catholic,’ he has no problem with doing as the Pope says and reallowing the Latin Mass to flourish. Everywhere. Even in the military. If there’s someone taking revenge against you for ensuring that we get treated like anyone else serving on active duty, he is certainly not a ‘staunch Catholic.’ Anyway, you will never regret what you’ve done, I assure you of that.”

At this point it was too much for me to bear any longer. This kind, courageous, decent man had ended his career as an Air Force General Officer by insisting that traditional Catholics get the same treatment as any other group of servicemen.

I submitted my retirement paperwork.

Chapter 18

Farewell Letter

HAVING THE permission of Archbishop O'Brien to use the chapel had turned out to be useless. What good was his permission if we were not able to act on it? None the less, I submitted a simple request with my notification to His Excellency that I was retiring.

Most Rev. Edwin F. O'Brien
Archdiocese for the Military Services
P.O. Box 4469
Washington, D.C. 20017-0469

Your Excellency: 9 May, 2001

I have made the decision to retire from the US Army this summer. My retirement will be on 29 June 2001 at the NATO Support Activity, and on that day I would like to have Mass celebrated for my family and friends who will be in attendance at the retirement ceremony. Given that permission has already been given by yourself for the celebration of the Mass according to the classical roman rite (*Missale Romanum* 1962) I would like to request that this farewell Mass be celebrated according to this rite.

In attendance will be over one hundred friends, who would greatly appreciate a Latin Mass. I have asked Father William Hudson, a friend of the family, to celebrate the Mass if your permission is given. As he knows Mgr. Marceaux well, I imagine that no opposition would be presented by the Army chaplains. I envision a

celebration of the Mass at about 1:30 with the retirement ceremony at 3:00.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for the permission that you granted regarding the celebration of the Latin liturgy. I deeply regret the circumstances that proved an obstacle to this permission being applied. Be assured of my prayers and devotion.

Very Respectfully Yours in Christ,

David L. Sonnier, LTC, U.S. Army
USDEL / PSC 80, Box 55
APO, AE 09724

Cc: Commission *Ecclesia Dei*

Chapter 19

Introíbo ad altáre Dei

On June 29, 2001, on the day of my retirement from the US Army, we finally succeeded. Through a series of mishaps, mistakes, absences, screw-ups in “the command,” and oversights we were able to use the NSA Chapel for a Latin Mass according to the 1962 Missal one hour prior to my retirement. Both the NSA Chaplain and the 80th ASG Chaplain were new, neither of them seemed to have a good handle on what had been happening, the issue had not been raised for several weeks, and suddenly neither of them seemed willing to offer any resistance. I scheduled the chapel just like any ordinary, non-Catholic serviceman could do, just as we should have been able to do all along, I invited a priest, and about 20 people who happened to find out about the hastily-scheduled Mass. Knowing the infinite value of just one Mass, I was able to breathe a sigh of relief. While this might all look like a failure to some, it was clear that God had answered our prayers, even if at the last minute, and that our labors and efforts on behalf of what Fr. Faber¹ had once referred to as “the most beautiful thing this side of heaven,” were not in vain. Our little group prayed the same prayers that so many have prayed before us — St. Thomas More, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. John Vianney, St. Joan of Arc, and all of the other Saints who labored to build a Christian Civilization in their time.

Finally, after 6 years, 23 meetings with general officers, over seventy-five letters, at least ten of them to the Vatican, a personal trip to the Vatican, an appeal to the Senate Majority Leader, and an Inspector General complaint, finally, those dangerous and forbidden words, such a threat to our unbelieving

¹Fr. Frederick Faber, an English convert and Oratorian from the 19th Century.

age, were uttered in prayer within a United States Military Chapel on the Feast Day² of Saints Peter and Paul:

Introíbo ad altáre Dei.

Ad Deum qui laetíficat juventútem meam.

²It is interesting that our success was on the 29th of June, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, in view of the admonishment in decree *Quo Primum*, St. Pius V, July 14, 1570: “We grant and concede in perpetuity that, for the chanting or reading of the Mass in any church whatsoever, this Missal is hereafter to be followed absolutely, without any scruple of conscience or fear of incurring any penalty, judgment, or censure, and may freely and lawfully be used. Nor are superiors, administrators, canons, chaplains, and other secular priests, or religious, of whatever title designated, obliged to celebrate the Mass otherwise than as enjoined by Us. We likewise declare and ordain that no one whosoever is forced or coerced to alter this Missal, and that this present document cannot be revoked or modified, but remain always valid and retain its full force. . . [N]o one whosoever is permitted to alter this notice of Our permission, statute, ordinance, command, precept, grant, indult, declaration, will, decree, and prohibition. [Anyone who does so] [s]hould know that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.” The entire text is available at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius05/p5quopri.htm>.

Part 2

*Je n'expose rien; je
propose.*

Chapter 17

A Modest Proposal for an Immodest Era

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS JUST described is not at all unique or unusual. Catholics who know their faith and (therefore) insist on Catholic liturgy are typically subject to some very harsh treatment by modern clergy. I would challenge anyone who believes that this is an exaggeration to make an attempt to have Gregorian Chant included in the Mass next Sunday. Or next month. Or any time in the future. Tell your priest that you'd like to organize a schola, so that the *Kyrie Eleison*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei* will be given "pride of place" in the liturgy, in accordance with the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, #116, or any of the other documents on the liturgy that have come since.¹ There will certainly be a multitude of reasons for which it is not possible. Perhaps your priest will begin by saying that "Latin is not the norm," and "we've become accustomed to doing it this way." Or, perhaps, tell your parish priest that you believe that the presence of girls on the altar is a problem, and that it's aggravating the shortage of priests that the Church is suffering. See what kind of response you get. Never mind that this liturgical practice was condemned in the strongest terms throughout the history of the Church, and again in both in 1970 and 1980² and it's still not allowed in the Diocese of Rome.

¹ *Liturgicae Instaurationes*, 7, September 5, 1970, and *Inaestimabile Donum*, 18, April 17, 1980.

² *Id.*

When the Holy Church repeats a particular theme over and over and over, at some point it becomes an act of disobedience to disregard it. Consider the following, list of references to the use of Latin in the Liturgy from 1963 to the present, which is by no means comprehensive³:

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963):

1. “Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.” (art. 36)
2. “[S]teps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them.” (art. 54)
3. “The treasury of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care.” (art. 114).
4. “The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services. But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action.” (art. 116)

Instruction *Musica Sacram* (1967)⁴:

1. “Large choirs (*Cappellae musicae*) existing in basilicas, cathedrals, monasteries and other major churches, which have in the course of centuries earned for themselves high renown by preserving and developing a musical heritage of inestimable value, should be retained for sacred celebrations of a more elaborate kind, according to their own traditional norms, recognized and approved by the Ordinary.” (art. 20)
2. “Where the vernacular has been introduced into the celebration of Mass, the local Ordinaries will judge whether it may be opportune to preserve one or more Masses celebrated in Latin — especially sung Masses (*Missae in cantu*) — in certain churches, above all in large cities, where many come together with faithful of different languages.” (art. 48)

³All notes and translations following are taken from the Vatican’s own website, <http://www.vatican.va>, unless otherwise noted. Any citations in any of the following quotations have been omitted.

⁴Text appearing at the Adoremus website, <http://www.adoremus.com/MusicaSacram.html>.

***General Instruction of the Roman Missal, March 27, 1975*⁵:**

“Since the faithful from different countries come together ever more frequently, it is desirable that they know how to sing at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin, especially the profession of faith and the Lord’s Prayer, set to simple melodies.”

Letter to the Bishops on the Minimum Repertoire of Plain Chant *Voluntati Obsequens*, Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, April 14, 1974⁶:

“Our congregation has prepared a booklet entitled, ‘*Jubilate Deo*’, which contains a minimum selection of sacred chants. This was done in response to a desire which the Holy Father had frequently expressed, that all the faithful should know at least some Latin Gregorian chants, such as, for example, the ‘*Gloria*’, the ‘*Credo*’, the ‘*Sanctus*’, and the ‘*Agnus Dei*’.

It gives me great pleasure to send you a copy of it, as a personal gift from His Holiness, Pope Paul VI. May I take this opportunity of recommending to your pastoral solicitude this new initiative, whose purpose is to facilitate the observance of the recommendation of the Second Vatican Council “. . . steps must be taken to ensure that the faithful are able to chant together in Latin those parts of the ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them. . . their unity finds particularly apt and even sensible expression through the use of Latin Gregorian chant.”

Dominicae Cenaе, On Mystery And Worship Of The Eucharist, Pope John Paul II, 24 Feb 1980:

“The Roman Church has special obligations towards Latin, the splendid language of ancient Rome, and she must manifest them whenever the occasion presents itself.”

Apostolic Letter on the 25th Anniversary of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, Pope John Paul II, December 4, 1988:

⁵Text appearing at <http://www.intratext.com/X/ENG0012.htm>. A substantially identical passage occurs in the 2003 GIRM; this can be found on the USCCB’s website, <http://www.usccb.com/liturgy/current/GIRM.pdf>.

⁶Text appearing on the Adoremus website, <http://www.adoremus.com/Voluntati-Obsequens.htm>.

“Given that the Liturgy is the school of the prayer of the Church, it has been considered good to introduce and develop the use of the vernacular — without diminishing the use of Latin, retained by the Council for the Latin Rite.”

Apostolic Letter *Ecclesia Dei*, Pope John Paul II, given Motu Proprio (at his own initiative), July 2, 1988:

“To all those Catholic faithful who feel attached to some previous liturgical and disciplinary forms of the Latin tradition I wish to manifest my will to facilitate their ecclesial communion by means of the necessary measures to guarantee respect for their rightful aspirations. In this matter I ask for the support of the bishops and of all those engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church. . . by virtue of my Apostolic Authority I decree the following: . . . respect must everywhere be shown for the feelings of all those who are attached to the Latin liturgical tradition, by a wide and generous application of the directives already issued some time ago by the Apostolic See, for the use of the Roman Missal according to the typical edition of 1962.”

***Ad Limina* Address of Pope John Paul II to Bishops of the United States on Active Participation in the Liturgy, October 9, 1998:**

“The use of the vernacular has certainly opened up the treasures of the liturgy to all who take part, but this does not mean that the Latin language, and especially the chants which are so superbly adapted to the genius of the Roman Rite, should be wholly abandoned.”

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Liturgiam authenticam*, 28 Mar 2001:

“Consideration should also be given to including in the vernacular editions at least some texts in the Latin language, especially those from the priceless treasury of Gregorian chant, which the Church recognizes as proper to the Roman Liturgy, and which, all other things being equal, is to be given pride of place in liturgical celebrations.”

Pope Pushes for Wider Use of Latin, 21 Feb 2002⁷:

“Pope John Paul II has recommended the use of Latin in the Roman liturgy and in seminary training. In a message to a conference being held at the Salesian University in Rome, the Holy Father emphasized that Latin remains the official language of the Catholic Church, and expressed his desire that ‘the love of that language would grow ever strong among candidates for the priesthood.’ The Pope’s message itself was written in Latin, and read by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican Secretary of State. The conference to which the Pope addressed this message was commemorating the 40th anniversary of *Veterum Sapientia*, the apostolic constitution in which Pope John XXIII wrote of the importance of Latin as an important part of ‘the patrimony of human civilization.’ Pope John Paul underlined the same message, pointing out that the use of Latin ‘is an indispensable condition for a proper relationship between modernity and antiquity, for dialogue among different cultures, and for reaffirming the identity of the Catholic priesthood.’”

Chirograph on the Centenary of the Motu Proprio *Tra le Sollecitudini* on Sacred Music, Pope John Paul II, 22 November 2003:

“Among the musical expressions that correspond best with the qualities demanded by the notion of sacred music, especially liturgical music, Gregorian chant has a special place. The Second Vatican Council recognized that ‘being specially suited to the Roman Liturgy’ it should be given, other things being equal, pride of place in liturgical services sung in Latin. St Pius X pointed out that the Church had ‘inherited it from the Fathers of the Church’, that she has ‘jealously guarded [it] for centuries in her liturgical codices’ and still ‘proposes it to the faithful’ as her own, considering it ‘the supreme model of sacred music’. Thus, Gregorian chant continues also today to be an element of unity in the Roman Liturgy.”

Does it not become an act of disobedience to continue to ignore such liturgical guidance from the highest authority of the Church? Something is

⁷Found at the EWTN news website, <http://www.ewtn.com/vnews/getstory.asp?number=24106>.

seriously wrong.

Imagine that you're taking a family trip across the countryside. It doesn't matter whether you're the father, the mother, or one of the children. Most people can relate to this example. Suddenly one of the family members, usually the mother, begins to notice that something is wrong. Somewhere along the route, a wrong turn has been taken and the father, not noticing, is playing with the radio while enjoying the drive. Several family members begin to study the map. The mother asks the father to stop. Yet he doesn't; he just keeps driving. Now certain that he is going the wrong way, she begins to plead.

"We can get there this way," he responds. "Why all the gloom? It's springtime! I know where I'm going. There's another shortcut right up here."

Of course, there's no short cut, but more confusion; more guessing; more wandering in the wilderness. "We're not even going the right way!" the wife pleads, knowing that her only hope is to convince him. She can't just jump out of the car and send members of the family in separate directions. The entire family must stay together.

At this point, what can we conclude? We can speculate that one of two things went wrong. The first theory is that the map is correct, but it was not followed carefully enough. The second theory is that map is in error and it was followed, but since it was flawed it led to the present state of confusion.

Likewise, we can conclude that one of two theories of the postconciliar era must be true:

1. The first theory holds that what is happening in the Church is not at all what was intended by the Second Vatican Council. This view hypothesizes that the Second Vatican Council proposed some modest changes in liturgy, administration, etc., but that the whole agenda has been hijacked by renegade liberals who steered the Church onto a collision course which ended up in the present debacle. In other words, it was a fine road map, but it was not followed carefully enough and now we're lost. This is the view favored by many conservative Catholics, who will say that the solution is to bring about a true implementation of the Council, somehow, working with the present hierarchy of Bishops. The collective record of shortcomings of our bishops, as well as experiences of attempting to work with them such as that described herein, makes it seem quite difficult to see how any such thing would ever happen. But just as the family members in the example above must work to convince the father to return to the last known point, so must we work

with our bishops.

2. The second theory holds that the Second Vatican Council was fundamentally flawed. Some will go as far as to say that what is happening is exactly what was intended by the Second Vatican Council. Oddly enough, many liberal Catholics will say that this abominable state of affairs is exactly what was called for. Similarly, some traditional Catholics hypothesizes that some of the Second Vatican Council fathers held a secret agenda, which was ultimately the destruction of what was left of Christian civilization in the West. They point to the suspected Freemasonry of Archbishop Bugnini, the mocking and ridiculing of Cardinal Ottaviani and other Council Fathers who tried to suggest patience, adherence to the traditional Faith, avoidance of scandalizing the faithful, or modesty in implementation. They will point to the document on religious freedom, and its inconsistency with timeless Catholic teaching.

From our point of view as lay Catholics, it does not matter which theory is true. One of them is true, or perhaps they're both true to some extent, but it really just doesn't matter which one is true or whether one is true to a greater extent. The essential fact is that the current state of affairs is beyond crisis. It is impossible to raise a future generation of Catholics in the knowledge of the "Faith of our Fathers" with the current state of the liturgy and the doctrinal chaos that exists. Cardinal Danneels once stated that the vocations crisis has become so severe that the Church in Europe could disappear: "Without priests the sacramental life of the Church will disappear. We will become a Protestant Church without sacraments. We will be another type of Church, not Catholic."⁸ Already we can see this pattern developing as one parish after another is turned over to "Lay Administrators." Often we see that a bishop who will not allow a single instance of a Tridentine Mass will, none the less, begin turning over parishes to "Lay Administrators."

We're lost, and we need to return to the last known point — that last point at which we knew that all was well. This is not the time to debate what went wrong; we are not competent to determine that anyway. All we know is that we are off track, and that by returning to the last known reference point, we can avoid further disaster. But we must do so with our father, who is driving the car! He must somehow be convinced that he should stop taking shortcuts and guessing which way to go and just swallow his pride

⁸Godfried Cardinal Danneels, *The Catholic Times*, May 2000.

and return to the last known point. He must somehow be convinced that there is a problem.

At this point the Catholic Church in the West is beyond crisis, beyond collapse, and is entering into a state of terminal struggle for life or death. Our Lord's promise did not guarantee that the Faith would survive on each and every continent, or in each and every state of a future political entity called the United States. The bishops, with few noble exceptions, have shown extreme reluctance to allow the restoration of the ancient liturgy as a means of protecting the Faith of their flock. They have likewise shown absolutely no inclination to resist the continued perversion of the new liturgy through the feminization, imposition of banal language, and politicization of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, sending it farther and farther away from sound Catholic dogma. To expect that the solution can be to work with a collective body of these same bishops does not seem realistic. But it is our only choice. And by the plain language of Cardinal Ratzinger prior to his election as Pope Benedict XVI, it is exactly what he expects us to do.⁹

Given the gravity of the crisis, its depth, its devastating effects on our country and our military, and its magnitude and scope, there is only one way that there will ever be a restoration of Christian Civilization. There is one possibility, and only one that I can think of, that would lead to a resolution of the crisis. The following steps, if taken quickly, will lead to an end of the crisis, but most likely will lead to some degree of persecution of the remaining loyal Catholics in the West. This persecution we should all accept willingly if we want to be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God.

This course of action equates to a "return to the last known point":

- All restrictions on the Tridentine Mass should be lifted as quickly and expeditiously as possible.
- The excommunication of the Bishops of the Society of Saint Pius X should be lifted as quickly and expeditiously as possible.
- All requests for the Tridentine Mass, regardless of the number of petitioners, should obligate the bishop to make the Mass available. Denials of the Tridentine Mass should be considered a grave offense to the unity of the Church.
- An apostolic administration should be established to provide for those Catholics who have been abandoned by their bishops.

⁹See Appendix A, at 139.

- All those Catholics who are so inclined should be actively encouraged to return to the preconciliar rite and practices. Those who, for whatever reason, cannot do so should be allowed to continue the practices of modern Catholicism, under the careful watch of their Bishops in order to avoid further schism.

Then, and only then, the issue of what went wrong can be studied. If Theory 1 is true, that Vatican II was hijacked by liberals, then this course of action will protect us from further false implementations of Vatican II. When the Holy Father and those bishops loyal to him are able to bring about a true implementation of Vatican II, we or our children will be able to participate in good conscience. This eventual implementation would be based on an interpretation of the Vatican II that is consistent with unchanging Catholic tradition; the current implementation clearly is not.

If Theory 2 is true, that the Second Vatican Council documents are fundamentally flawed in some way, whether it be through ambiguity or deliberate malfeasance, the course of action I have recommended will protect us from errors emanating from a council that was fundamentally flawed. We can carry on as if Vatican II never happened, as much as that is possible, and when the Holy Father and those bishops loyal to him are able to uncover the flaws they can condemn them publicly. There are some very beautiful passages from the documents of Vatican II, as even Archbishop Lefebvre noted, so there will likely be no condemnation of the entire set of documents forthcoming. But those passages the Holy Father or his successor deems inconsistent with previous Catholic teaching must be purged.

Either way, we must have protection from the modern wing of the Catholic Church. If it were to be the case that in the very near future that traditional Catholic piety and devotion were held up as models that Catholics everywhere should attempt to follow, instead of as acts of schism which should be avoided at all costs, the end of the crisis would be within reach.

Long Live Christ the King!

Appendices

Appendix A

Ten Years of the Motu Proprio “Ecclesia Dei”

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

Translated by Fr. Ignatius Harrison, Brompton Oratory, London

A lecture given at the Ergife Palace Hotel, Rome on Saturday 24th October 1998, to an audience of some 3000 traditional Catholics.

Ten years after the publication of the Motu proprio “Ecclesia Dei”, what sort of balance-sheet can one draw-up? I think this is above all an occasion to show our gratitude and to give thanks. The divers communities that were born thanks to this pontifical text have given the Church a great number of priestly and religious vocations who, zealously, joyfully and deeply united with the Pope, have given their service to the Gospel in our present era of history. Through them, many of the faithful have been confirmed in the joy of being able to live the liturgy, and confirmed in their love for the Church, or perhaps they have rediscovered both. In many dioceses — and their number is not so small! — they serve the Church in collaboration with the Bishops and in fraternal union with those faithful who do feel at home with the renewed form of the new liturgy. All this cannot but move us to gratitude today!

However, it would not be realistic if we were to pass-over in silence those things which are less good. In many places difficulties persist, and these continue because some bishops, priests and faithful consider this attachment to the old liturgy as an element of division which only disturbs the ecclesial

community and which gives rise to suspicions regarding an acceptance of the Council made "with reservations", and more generally concerning obedience towards the legitimate pastors of the Church.

We ought now to ask the following question: how can these difficulties be overcome? How can one build the necessary trust so that these groups and communities who love the ancient liturgy can be smoothly integrated into the life of the Church?

But there is another question underlying the first: what is the deeper reason for this distrust or even for this rejection of a continuation of the ancient liturgical forms?

It is without doubt possible that, within this area, there exist reasons which go further back than any theology and which have their origin in the character of individuals or in the conflict between different personalities, or indeed a number of other circumstances which are wholly extrinsic. But it is certain that there are also other deeper reasons which explain these problems. The two reasons which are most often heard, are: lack of obedience to the Council which wanted the liturgical books reformed, and the break in unity which must necessarily follow if different liturgical forms are left in use. It is relatively simple to refute these two arguments on the theoretical level. The Council did not itself reform the liturgical books, but it ordered their revision, and to this end, it established certain fundamental rules. Before anything else, the Council gave a definition of what liturgy is, and this definition gives a valuable yardstick for every liturgical celebration. Were one to shun these essential rules and put to one side the *normae generales* which one finds in numbers 34 – 36 of the *Constitution De Sacra Liturgia* (SL), in that case one would indeed be guilty of disobedience to the Council! It is in the light of these criteria that liturgical celebrations must be evaluated, whether they be according to the old books or the new. It is good to recall here what Cardinal Newman observed, that the Church, throughout her history, has never abolished nor forbidden orthodox liturgical forms, which would be quite alien to the Spirit of the Church. An orthodox liturgy, that is to say, one which express the true faith, is never a compilation made according to the pragmatic criteria of different ceremonies, handled in a positivist and arbitrary way, one way today and another way tomorrow. The orthodox forms of a rite are living realities, born out of the dialogue of love between the Church and her Lord. They are expressions of the life of the Church, in which are distilled the faith, the prayer and the very life of whole generations, and which make incarnate in specific forms both the action of God and the response of man. Such rites can die, if those who have used them in a

particular era should disappear, or if the life-situation of those same people should change. The authority of the Church has the power to define and limit the use of such rites in different historical situations, but she never just purely and simply forbids them! Thus the Council ordered a reform of the liturgical books, but it did not prohibit the former books. The criterion which the Council established is both much larger and more demanding; it invites us all to self-criticism! But we will come back to this point.

We must now examine the other argument, which claims that the existence of the two rites can damage unity. Here a distinction must be made between the theological aspect and the practical aspect of the question. As regards what is theoretical and basic, it must be stated that several forms of the Latin rite have always existed, and were only slowly withdrawn, as a result of the coming together of the different parts of Europe. Before the Council there existed side by side with the Roman rite, the Ambrosian rite, the Mozarabic rite of Toledo, the rite of Braga, the Carthusian rite, the Carmelite rite, and best known of all, the Dominican rite, and perhaps still other rites of which I am not aware. No one was ever scandalized that the Dominicans, often present in our parishes, did not celebrate like diocesan priests but had their own rite. We did not have any doubt that their rite was as Catholic as the Roman rite, and we were proud of the richness inherent in these various traditions. Moreover, one must say this: that the freedom which the new order of Mass gives to creativity is often taken to excessive lengths. The difference between the liturgy according to the new books, how it is actually practiced and celebrated in different places, is often greater than the difference between an old Mass and a new Mass, when both these are celebrated according to the prescribed liturgical books.

An average Christian without specialist liturgical formation would find it difficult to distinguish between a Mass sung in Latin according to the old Missal and a sung Latin Mass according to the new Missal. However, the difference between a liturgy celebrated faithfully according to the Missal of Paul VI and the reality of a vernacular liturgy celebrated with all the freedom and creativity that are possible — that difference can be enormous!

With these considerations we have already crossed the threshold between theory and practice, a point at which things naturally get more complicated, because they concern relations between living people.

It seems to me that the dislikes we have mentioned are as great as they are because the two forms of celebration are seen as indicating two different spiritual attitudes, two different ways of perceiving the Church and the Christian life. The reasons for this are many. The first is this: one judges the

two liturgical forms from their externals and thus one arrives at the following conclusion: there are two fundamentally different attitudes. The average Christian considers it essential for the renewed liturgy to be celebrated in the vernacular and facing the people; that there be a great deal of freedom for creativity; and that the laity exercise an active role therein. On the other hand, it is considered essential for a celebration according to the old rite to be in Latin, with the priest facing the altar, strictly and precisely according to the rubrics, and that the faithful follow the Mass in private prayer with no active role. From this viewpoint, a particular set of externals [phenomenologie] is seen as essential to this or that liturgy, rather than what the liturgy itself holds to be essential. We must hope for the day when the faithful will appreciate the liturgy on the basis of visible concrete forms, and become spiritually immersed in those forms; the faithful do not easily penetrate the depths of the liturgy.

The contradictions and oppositions which we have just enumerated originate neither from the spirit nor the letter of the conciliar texts. The actual Constitution on the Liturgy does not speak at all about celebration facing the altar or facing the people. On the subject of language, it says that Latin should be retained, while giving a greater place to the vernacular "above all in readings, instructions, and in a certain number of prayers and chants" (SL 36:2). As regards the participation of the laity, the Council first of all insists on a general point, that the liturgy is essentially the concern of the whole Body of Christ, Head and members, and for this reason it pertains to the whole Body of the Church "and that consequently it [the liturgy] is destined to be celebrated in community with the active participation of the faithful". And the text specifies "In liturgical celebrations each person, minister or lay faithful, when fulfilling his role, should carry out only and wholly that which pertains to him by virtue of the nature of the rite and the liturgical norms" (SL 28). "To promote active participation, acclamations by the people are favoured, responses, the chanting of the psalms, antiphons, canticles, also actions or gestures and bodily postures. One should also observe a period of sacred silence at an appropriate time" (SL 30).

These are the directives of the Council; they can provide everybody with material for reflection. Amongst a number of modern liturgists there is unfortunately a tendency to develop the ideas of the Council in one direction only. In acting thus, they end up reversing the intentions of the Council. The role of the priest is reduced, by some, to that of a mere functionary. The fact that the Body of Christ as a whole is the subject of the liturgy is often deformed to the point where the local community becomes the self-sufficient

subject of the liturgy and itself distributes the liturgy's various roles. There also exists a dangerous tendency to minimalize the sacrificial character of the Mass, causing the mystery and the sacred to disappear, on the pretext, a pretext that claims to be absolute, that in this way they make things better understood. Finally, one observes the tendency to fragment the liturgy and to highlight in a unilateral way its communitarian character, giving the assembly itself the power to regulate the celebration.

Fortunately however, there is also a certain disenchantment with an all too banal rationalism, and with the pragmatism of certain liturgists, whether they be theorists or practitioners, and one can note a return to mystery, to adoration and to the sacred, and to the cosmic and eschatological character of the liturgy, as evidenced in the 1996 "Oxford Declaration on the Liturgy". On the other hand, it must be admitted that the celebration of the old liturgy had strayed too far into a private individualism, and that communication between priest and people was insufficient. I have great respect for our forefathers who at Low Mass said the "Prayers during Mass" contained in their prayer books, but certainly one cannot consider that as the ideal of liturgical celebration! Perhaps these reductionist forms of celebration are the real reason that the disappearance of the old liturgical books was of no importance in many countries and caused no sorrow. One was never in contact with the liturgy itself. On the other hand, in those places where the Liturgical Movement had created a certain love for the liturgy, where the Movement had anticipated the essential ideas of the Council, such as for example, the prayerful participation of all in the liturgical action, it was those places where there was all the more distress when confronted with a liturgical reform undertaken too hastily and often limited to externals. Where the Liturgical Movement had never existed, the reform initially raised no problems. The problems only appeared in a sporadic fashion, when unchecked creativity caused the sense of the sacred mystery to disappear.

This is why it is very important to observe the essential criteria of the Constitution on the Liturgy, which I quoted above, including when one celebrates according to the old Missal! The moment when this liturgy truly touches the faithful with its beauty and its richness, then it will be loved, then it will no longer be irreconcilably opposed to the new Liturgy, providing that these criteria are indeed applied as the Council wished.

Different spiritual and theological emphases will certainly continue to exist, but there will no longer be two contradictory ways of being a Christian; there will instead be that richness which pertains to the same single Catholic faith. When, some years ago, somebody proposed "a new liturgical movement"

in order to avoid the two forms of the liturgy becoming too distanced from each other, and in order to bring about their close convergence, at that time some of the friends of the old liturgy expressed their fear that this would only be a stratagem or a ruse, intended to eliminate the old liturgy finally and completely.

Such anxieties and fears really must end! If the unity of faith and the oneness of the mystery appear clearly within the two forms of celebration, that can only be a reason for everybody to rejoice and to thank the good Lord. Inasmuch as we all believe, live and act with these intentions, we shall also be able to persuade the Bishops that the presence of the old liturgy does not disturb or break the unity of their diocese, but is rather a gift destined to build-up the Body of Christ, of which we are all the servants.

So, my dear friends, I would like to encourage you not to lose patience, to maintain your confidence, and to draw from the liturgy the strength needed to bear witness to the Lord in our own day.

Appendix B

Letter from “Tim” to the Chaplains at Fort Bragg

Department of the Army
Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg
ATTN: Chaplain(Col) Sidney J. Marceaux
Fort Bragg, NC 28307 June 11 1996

Dear Fr. Marceaux,

I am a Catholic Judge Advocate recently assigned to Fort Bragg. As a former member of Saint Joseph’s Chapel (Ministry of Saint Benedict Parish) in the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, I have a deep affection for the traditional Latin Mass. In accordance with the Holy Father’s 1988 *motu proprio* “*Ecclesia Dei*”, I am writing respectfully to seek your support for a petition to the Archdiocese for the Military Services requesting authorization of the traditional Latin Mass on Fort Bragg.

As you know, the Holy Father decreed in “*Ecclesia Dei*” that “respect must everywhere be shown for the feelings of those who are attached to the Latin liturgical tradition, by a wide and generous application of the directives already issued by the Apostolic See, for the use of the Roman Missal of 1962” (emphasis added). Those directives, issued in 1984, authorized local bishops to permit the traditional Latin Mass within their respective dioceses. It is my understanding that His Excellency, Archbishop Dimino, defers to

the wishes of post chaplains in granting such permission within the Military Archdiocese.

Opponents of the traditional Latin Mass have argued that "*Ecclesia Dei*" should be construed very narrowly and that permission should be granted only rarely. I believe this interpretation is inconsistent with the plain language of the Apostolic Letter ("wide and generous application"). Even so, the indult's express purpose — "to facilitate [the] ecclesiastical communion" of "those Catholic faithful who feel attached to some previous liturgical and disciplinary forms of the Latin tradition" — would be fulfilled at Fort Bragg, whence a number of soldiers travel to Raleigh and other cities to attend the Latin Mass in schismatic churches.

Many U.S. bishops, ranging across ideological lines, have liberally approved indult Masses within their dioceses. The Coalition in Support of *Ecclesia Dei*, P.O. Box 2071, Glenview IL 60025-6071, reports that weekly indult Masses can be found at 40% of U.S. Dioceses (The Latin Mass, Winter 1996, at 10.) These bishops include such progressives as Bishop Frank Rodimer in northern New Jersey, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Bishop Walter Sullivan in Richmond, Virginia (whom I have seen celebrate the traditional Latin Mass himself on occasion), and Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee (The Latin Mass, Summer 1995, at 4; Winter 1996, at 58–59). Within the Military Archdiocese, I know that the traditional Latin Mass is permitted at Fort Carson, Colorado.

I believe that the indult Mass — far from being divisive — positively contributes to Church unity and vitality. It provides room within the contemporary Church for those who prefer a more structured, aesthetic, and contemplative approach to liturgy. Numerous Catholics alienated by contemporary developments in the liturgy have returned to the Church in the wake of "*Ecclesia Dei*." In the Diocese of Wichita alone, for example, over 120 lapsed Catholics were brought back to the church by the indult Mass within a two year period (The Latin Mass, Spring 1995, at 20). At a time of plummeting Mass attendance and vocations, the Church can scarcely afford to ignore such an opportunity for revival.

This is not to say that the traditional Latin Mass should be

restored as the principle Roman rite. The traditional rite does not compete with the new liturgy; it complements it. Permitting the traditional Latin Mass maintains a sense of continuity between past and present. It preserves the form of religion for which countless ancestors in Britain, Ireland, and other countries suffered death and persecution. It contributes to a better understanding of how our liturgy has evolved. The liturgy that prevailed from the time of Pope Gregory the Great until the Second Vatican Council is part of our Catholic heritage and cannot simply be ignored or discarded.

The traditional Latin Mass is not only part of our religious heritage; it is part of our cultural heritage. Much of the world's greatest art and music would be rendered meaningless without the old Mass. In 1971, over fifty of the world's most distinguished scholars, writers, historians, and artists living in Britain, only a handful of whom were Catholic, petitioned the Holy See "to allow the traditional Mass to survive, even though this survival took place side by side with other liturgical forms." The Mass, they wrote, "belongs to universal culture as well as to churchmen and formal Christians." Signatories of the appeal, which was "entirely ecumenical and non-political," included writers Agatha Christie, Robert Graves, Graham Greene, violinist Yehudi Menuhin, and actor Ralph Richardson.

The traditional Latin Mass also complements the contemporary Roman rite by continuing to emphasize doctrinal aspects of the Mass that are downplayed in the current rite — aspects such as the sacrificial nature of the Mass, and the priest's role *in persona Christi*. The use of Latin in the liturgy helps keep alive the Church's official language and maintains the universal, transnational, and multicultural character of our faith.

I believe that Archbishop Dimino will approve an indult Mass on Fort Bragg if you so request. It is, of course, for you as Post Chaplain to determine the time, place, and frequency of such a Mass. The Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, P.O. Box 196, Elmhurst, P.A. 18416, provides the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass at the invitation of the local bishop.

It would be my privilege to discuss this request with you in person if you so desire. My work number . . . etc.

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Major, U.S. Army