

LETTERS

In Lefebvre's defense

Rather than the disinformation in Henri Tincq's column ("These roots are shallow," July 17) on the impact of the consecrations carried out by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, why not interview either the prelate himself or some priest of the Society of St. Pius X? Why not mention the very favorable report on the society submitted to the Pope in January by Cardinal Edouard Gagnon? Your commentary on the late Hans Urs von Balthasar ("The last great humanist," same issue) ignored his July 13, 1977, lecture at St. Gallen, Switzerland, in which he chastised the French episcopate for inciting the persecution of Lefebvre.

Since he writes for a leftist daily, Tincq naturally explains the situation in terms of secular French politics and fails to consider the consequences of Rome's suppression of tradition, especially the Tridentine Mass.

Archbishop Lefebvre, Bishop Castro de Mayer and many laypeople regard Paul VI's Novus Ordo Mass as one more example of a "new" Church that seeks not heaven but accommodation with the world. The new Liturgy is not a translation of the former Latin Mass. It's a new creation that contradicts everything the Church had taught for 1,967 years.

While Vatican II's "Declaration on Religious Liberty" proclaims that no one is forced to act against his religious convictions, John Paul II tried to make Lefebvre do just that. Embracing a view that all religions, even pagan ones, are equal, Rome rejects not only traditionalist Catholics, but all its own ancestors, including the martyrs.

Tincq assures us that traditionalism is doomed since the society's 100,000 adherents have only 250 priests and 250 seminarians. But ordaining an average

of 14 priests a year indicates vitality. Rhode Island, our nation's most Catholic state, with 980,000 inhabitants, gave us only two priests this year so far. The society's seminaries in Australia, France, Switzerland, Germany and Argentina are full. The American seminary moved to Wisconsin to accommodate growing numbers. The society operates convents, schools and universities around the world.

Both the Register and Tincq concealed the participation of Bishop Castro de Mayer at the recent episcopal consecrations. His involvement lends credence to Lefebvre's arguments. He is like a doctor called in by a patient for a second opinion. The prognosis is the same: Without a return to the traditional sacraments and dogma, the "patient" is doomed.

Tincq argues that as a schismatic Lefebvre is not a great thinker. First, he's not a schismatic. He still accepts papal supremacy and requires that society priests include the Pope's name in the canon. Though a doctor of divinity and philosophy, the archbishop is not offering a new theology nor a personality cult. Rather, he articulates the Church's consistent teaching until Vatican II.

In the fourth century, Catholics almost became Arians. Pope Liberius tacitly collaborated with this heresy. Only St. Athanasius resisted by consecrating bishops loyal to the tradition that helped him oppose Arianism. Like Lefebvre, Athanasius was excommunicated for defending tradition, but was vindicated when Arianism was rejected. Future Catholics will thank God for raising up a humble French archbishop.

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