

# 'Positive Elements'

## Schism seen opportunity to address deficiencies

By AGOSTINO BONO

**E**xcommunicated Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre's schismatic movement has "positive elements" which respond to liturgical, ecumenical and theological deficiencies in the post-Second Vatican Council Church, said the Vatican's top doctrinal official, who unsuccessfully offered terms of reconciliation to the archbishop earlier in the year.

The schism should become "an occasion for an examination of conscience" so that the abuses are corrected, said Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

"We should seriously ask ourselves about the deficiencies in our pastoral programs which have come to light because of these events," he said.

Cardinal Ratzinger said those deficiencies include:

- Liturgical reforms which dilute the sacred element of the Mass, turning it into "interesting entertainment."

- Theological views which regard Vatican II teachings as a "superdogma" erasing previous Church tradition.

- A watering down of Catholic belief, in ecumenical and missionary activities, in an effort to avoid the appearance of claiming sole proprietorship of full divine revelation and the right to judge humanity.

"The problem planted by Lefebvre, however, does not end with the rupture of June 30" when he was excommunicated for ordaining four bishops against papal orders, said Cardinal Ratzinger.

The archbishop's schism "would not be thinkable if there were not positive elements at stake which generally do not find vital room in the Church of today," he added.

Cardinal Ratzinger gave his assessment during a July talk in Chile to the nation's bishops. A copy of his 3,000-word Spanish text was released at the Vatican July 27.

"Many people seek refuge in the old liturgy" because many current practices remove the sacred character of the Mass, the cardinal said.

"The liturgy is reduced, as much as it can be, to language and gestures of ordinary life such as greeting and common signs of friendship," he said.

"The liturgy is not a festival, nor a pleasant gathering," he added.

"It is unimportant, even in the remotest way, that the pastor succeeds in generating evocative ideas or imaginative trappings," the cardinal said.

"The greatness of the liturgy is not based on a person offering an interesting entertainment," he said.

**A**rchbishop Lefebvre also is reacting to a "narrow view which isolates Vatican II," he said.

According to this view, "the Second Vatican Council is not treated as part of the totality of the living tradition of the Church, but directly as the ending of tradition and as an entirely new beginning, starting from zero," said Cardinal Ratzinger.

"Criticism of post-conciliar measures are not tolerated" in this narrow view, he said.

"The only way to make Vatican II credible is to clearly present it as it is: a part of the entire and single tradition of the Church and of the faith," he said.

Cardinal Ratzinger denied that the Vatican took a soft line with the archbishop in negotiations.

The Vatican offered "truly broad concessions" but did not give in on the fundamentals, said the cardinal.

-NC

A MOST SIGNIFICANT CONFERENCE GIVEN BY JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER TO THE ASSEMBLED BISHOPS OF THE COUNTRY OF CHILE (July 1988), IN WHICH HE CLEARLY ADMITS THE SERIOUS ABUSES IN THE CATHOLIC ("mainstream") CHURCH WHICH MUST BE CORRECTED.

*Copies in Back of Church  
Help yourselves.*