



AD CLERUM

VETUS ROMANUS APOSTOLATUS



"Imperativum est"

A PASTORAL EPISTLE TO THE CLERGY

Beloved sons

It is imperative during these times of great crisis in the Church and for the faith that you remain true to your vocations first and foremost as priests of Jesus Christ!

We realise that you labour under a greater burden than many of your calling has ever had to contend with before, being as most of you are, worker priests. Unlike other Traditionalist groups, we are without the benefit of legacies and bequests, God in His infinite wisdom has ensured we are preserved unencumbered by materiality and convention. Remember, however, that it is only in the past five hundred years that the clergy have enjoyed the benefit of seminaries and canonical provision.

For over a thousand years before the Counter-reformation, the apostles themselves and our predecessors in the sacred ministry had also to earn their keep or rely on the charity of benefactors and patrons. Remember St Paul employing his tent-making skills to support himself [cf. *Acts 18:1-4*]. Perhaps it is only right that the faithful remnant today should find themselves in a similar condition to those who laid the foundations of our great endeavour so many centuries ago.

Ours is truly a realisation of the sacrificial nature of the priesthood. Contending as we must with the conventions and values of our modernist society while balancing our calling and the requisite giving of ourselves to the sacred ministry. But while doing so we must be on guard not just for the flock entrusted to us, but ourselves also, so that we do not succumb to the insidious nature of modernism.

The sure sign of a modernist mindset is the preoccupation with "self"; If always we consider ourselves first before our calling and the needs of the flock, then we have already strayed from the path and betrayed our Saviour Jesus Christ. If always our first thought is, "*What about me*" i.e., *my* feelings, *my* wants, *my* desires, *my* opinions, *my* time, etc, in *any* situation, then we have already lost the battle; for the major emphasis of modernism is on the individual and the promotion of personal interests. Modernism is the epitome of pride which is ultimately distrust of God and the presumption of self-reliance.

As the saintly Cure d'Ars taught the faithful in his Little Catechism, "*... the priest is not ordained for himself but for you.*" This is important for us as priests to remember, we were not ordained to serve ourselves, and there is no point in our ordination if we seek only to please ourselves. Remember the apostle's admonishment to St Timothy, "*Having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid.*" [2 Timothy 3:5] We were not ordained to offer Mass for ourselves, to dress up in vestments, to enjoy the adulation of the faithful for simply being priests; we were ordained to be "*alter Christus*" another Christ.

In modelling our Saviour we should have the same mindset as He, first and foremost concerned with the duty in love we owe to God through worship, prayer and obedience, and then the salvation of the other, before any consideration of ourselves. Likewise, we are called to imitate Christ in our lives, as an example to the faithful, He Who came *"not to be served but to serve"* [cf. *Matt.20:28, Mk.10:45, Jn.13:1-17*]. Fulfilling the first and greatest commandment [*Matt.22:37,38*] always putting God first - our duty to Him *always* before ourselves.

This is the great burden of our office, to be living examples of Christ's love and humility, so that our flock may see the truth of His words in our lives. The antithesis of the gospel is to think of oneself before God and the other. Few of us are of an age to be untainted by the all-pervading influence of modernism in our generation, and it is a constant struggle to remain true to our calling by correcting the defects of our malformation by the world around us. But by keeping our focus on God and the flock, we can remain true to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As the great Bishop Challoner wrote, *"... in order to perseverance in grace, it will be also necessary to set out and to continue in a full persuasion and conviction that we have not a more dangerous enemy to our souls than our own self-love, with all its branches and passions; that the gratifying our own humours is gratifying a mortal enemy; that we must deny ourselves, renounce ourselves, and hate ourselves in this life, if we would save ourselves for eternity. In a word, the mortification of our passions, and the total victory over ourselves, is the sovereign means of perseverance."*

Therefore, beloved sons, be ever mindful that your first and foremost duty is to serve God and His Church as He has commanded us. Put aside your own concerns and needs, trust in God, for in doing so you will be serving Him best. When you are called upon, respond with dutiful submission surrendering all thoughts of yourself. When you are commanded, receive obediently and fulfil loyally the order being entrusted to you, comply sacrificially. To do otherwise is to fall prey to modernism and reject the very crux of the faith itself, the sacrifice of self for God on His terms, *"... not my will but Thine be done."* [Cf. *Luke 22:42*]

Remember the wisdom of St Benedict who in his holy Rule directs the subject to obey the Abbot's commands immediately, as if they are God's commands. The obedience must be prompt, without any hesitation, delay, reluctance, grumbling, or complaints. This is because the obedience given to Abbots is considered obedience given to God. For he himself says to the teachers, *"Anyone who hears you hears me"* [*Lk. 10:16*]. Disciples must obey with good will, *"for the Lord loves a cheerful giver"* [*2 Cor. 9:7*]. If they obey with ill will, and murmur with their lips and in their hearts, even if they fulfill the command, it is not acceptable to God, who sees the heart of the murmurer.

St Ignatius, the "Doctor of Unity" states, *"Let all things therefore be done by you with good order in Christ. Let the laity be subject to the deacons; the deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop; the bishop to Christ, even as He is to the Father."* (*St. Ignatius: Letter to the Smyrnaeans; Ch 9*) It is clear that the path to true spiritual growth lies in our submission to the will of God and His Church. We should never forget that our ultimate goal is to be united to Him, and this requires us to put aside our own desires to trust and accept His will, whatever it may be. Only then can we hope to experience the fullness of His love and grace. Let us all strive for holiness, so that we may one day stand before Him in perfect unity and harmony.

We should not think that submission to God's commands means a lack of freedom, but rather that it is the very essence of true freedom. We are liberated from the tyranny of our own passions to serve God and His people in truth and love. Let us all strive to be faithful servants of Our

Lord, putting Him always before ourselves. Let us use the godly power entrusted to us by our ordination to allow God's grace to work in us, so that we may be worthy of His love and mercy. Let us surrender our hearts and minds to Him, trustingly, so that He may use us as vessels to spread His love and truth to those He has called us to serve.

We must check our attitudes regularly to purge ourselves of the influence of modernism and remain vigilant in our defence of the faith and ensure that we remain true to our vocations as priests of Jesus Christ. Let us overcome ourselves for love of Him! We must remain steadfast in our commitment to the traditional Mass and sacraments and continue to seek out new ways to spread the true faith. It is also important that we continue to support each other in prayer and fellowship, so that we may be a source of inspiration and strength for one another.

Finally, let us never forget that our ultimate goal is not just the preservation of Tradition, but rather to bring souls closer to God through Jesus Christ. May He bless us all with His grace and mercy!

Oremus pro invicem.

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