



AD CLERUM

VETUS ROMANUS APOSTOLATUS



"Communis Est"

A PASTORAL EPISTLE TO THE CLERGY

Filii Dilecti

It is quite common for Old Roman clergy to grapple with the affliction of doubt and moral scrupulosity regarding their ministry and ordination. This struggle often stems from the deeply held intention we all share to fulfill our vocations within the Church. We did not envision ourselves as being "outside" the traditional structure of the Church; rather, we sought to serve directly under the guidance and authority of the hierarchy and the Pope.

It is precisely because of our profound sense of *Romanitas* and Catholicity that we may struggle internally to reconcile our status and situation with what we know to be the usual or proper context for our vocations. Our Roman heritage and Catholic identity are integral to our understanding of our roles and responsibilities within the Church. This deep-rooted connection makes it all the more challenging to accept our current position, which diverges from the conventional ecclesiastical framework we revere.

However, our unwavering fidelity to Eternal Rome and its enduring traditions necessitates that we distance ourselves from certain contemporary practices and structures. Though this separation is difficult, it is a necessary step to preserve the sacraments and the perennial doctrine of the Church for future generations. We undertake this arduous path not out of defiance, but out of a sincere commitment to uphold the integrity and purity of the faith as it has been handed down through the ages.

Our current irregular status and situation reflect the validity of our vocations, the sacrificial nature of the priesthood, and our identity through it with Christ. As Archbishop Fulton Sheen noted, *"The priest is not his own"*¹. This echoes our reality that our calling transcends personal desires and aligns with a divine purpose. Although many of us experienced our vocation as a personal calling—arising from our own will and desire in response to God and the promptings of the Holy Ghost—and though it may seem to lack the formal affirmation of the Church, our calling remains valid. St. John Vianney reminds us, *"The priest continues the work of redemption on earth... If we really understood the priest on earth, we would die not of fright but of love"*². It is, in fact, for the Church's sake that God has called us to offer ourselves in this particular context. Just as Our Lord was simultaneously the essential essence and fulfilment of the Jewish religion, yet appeared outside the Jewish Church, so too does our situation reflect His.

¹ Sheen, Fulton J. *The Priest Is Not His Own*. Alba House, 2004

² Gallagher, Patrick V. *The Cure D'Ars Today: St. John Vianney*. Ignatius Press, 1986).

To our younger and newer clergy, I recognize that you face unique challenges, having known only the modernist contemporary Church and hierarchy before discovering the richness of Tradition. This transition is often accompanied by feelings of isolation and the pain of persecution from former friends, colleagues, fellow seminarians, and even family members. Your journey is not an easy one, and the adversity you face can be disheartening. Yet, it is in these trials that your faith is strengthened, and your vocation purified. St. John Eudes once said, "*The greatest blessing God can confer on a soul is to give her a vocation to the priesthood*"³. Your path, though fraught with challenges, is a testament to the profound blessing of your calling.

As you navigate these challenging times, find solace and consolation in the example of Our Blessed Lord. Jesus Christ, Who, though divine, endured misunderstanding, rejection, and suffering from the religious authorities of His time. He remained steadfast in His mission, driven by love and obedience to the Father's will. In His Passion and Crucifixion, He demonstrated the ultimate act of sacrificial love and fidelity to the truth. Jesus Himself reminded us, "*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you*" (John 15:18-19). By reflecting on His life and sacrifice, we can draw strength and courage to persevere in our vocations, knowing that we share in His sufferings for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. St. Francis of Assisi beautifully encapsulates this sentiment: "*The deeds you do may be the only sermon some persons will hear today*"⁴. Let us, therefore, preach through our steadfastness and fidelity, finding comfort in the fact that we follow in the footsteps of our Savior.

You may also encounter faithful whose ignorance, influenced by modernism, leads them to believe that their amateur opinions about ecclesiology and the Church justify their persecution of us. This can be particularly challenging and disheartening. Our clergy should endeavour to educate themselves continually on what the Church *actually* teaches, in order to defend themselves apologetically. As St. Pius X urged, "*The greatest obstacle in the apostolate of the Church is the ignorance of the faithful*"⁵. By deepening your understanding of Church doctrine and history, you will be better equipped to gently correct misunderstandings, uphold the truth, and demonstrate the continuity of our faith with the teachings of the Church Fathers and Councils.

It is natural for younger clergy to feel disaffection due to the deprived nature of our circumstances, especially when comparing themselves to their former peers in the seminary who enjoy the material trappings and security of the institutional Church. This comparison might make you feel somehow lesser than your counterparts under the hierarchy. However, remember that while this means the material context of our ministry is poorer, Christ and the Apostles likewise endured without the trappings of

³ Eudes, St. John. *The Priest: His Dignity and Obligations*. Loreto Publications, 2000

⁴ St. Francis of Assisi. *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*. Various editions

⁵ Pius X, St. Acerbo Nimis. Encyclical, 1905

power and the advantages of societal approval. It is hard to reconcile this lonely path with the joy that is enjoyed by others whose cross seems lighter than ours. But though they may enjoy the liberty of institutionalism and the perks of establishment, they are not destined to heaven without themselves embracing a cross that will seem to them much harder to bear—the cross of their pride, their greed, their ease, and their lack of graces and sacrifice of self. When those crosses come, it will be more difficult for them than it is for us to endure and remain faithful.

Think not that we are less because we are deprived—we are missionaries with all the freedom that comes with being freed from institutional corruption! We are the essence of all the Saints before us who struggled with little means but with great vocations! We too, like them, are being purified now on earth for a speedier entry into heaven! Gaudete, for we will be acclaimed “*good and faithful*” servants and bid to “*enter into the joy of thy Lord*” (cf St Matthew 25:23) when our sojourn through this vale of tears is ended! Did Our Lord not say, “*If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also*” (John 15:20)? So have heart, dear son—wear His Heart, shared and entrusted to you by our hands—and you will rejoice in the heavenly places!

This journey, marked by both challenges and a steadfast adherence to our beliefs, ultimately reaffirms our identity and mission as Catholics dedicated to preserving the essence of our religious heritage. St. Alphonsus Liguori stated, “*When we see a beautiful soul, we must always remember that in the world there are many hidden saints*”⁶. The tension we feel is a testament to the depth of our devotion and the seriousness with which we regard our spiritual responsibilities. It underscores the unique position we occupy within the broader context of the Church, balancing a deep respect for tradition with the necessity of navigating our vocations independently of the conventional ecclesiastical framework.

In essence, the internal conflicts and uncertainties we experience are not anomalies but rather reflections of our profound dedication to maintaining the integrity of our faith. They highlight our commitment to the principles and practices that define our Roman Catholic identity. By remaining true to these principles, even in the face of difficult choices and significant sacrifices, we ensure that the sacraments and teachings of the Church continue to thrive, unaltered and undiminished, for future generations. As Pope Leo XIII emphasized, “*Nothing is more dangerous than heretics who, while conserving the appearances of piety, pervert the sense of faith by their subtle errors*”⁷. This enduring fidelity to Eternal Rome is both our challenge and our calling, driving us to preserve the sacred traditions and doctrinal truths that are the cornerstone of our faith.

Our experience mirrors that of Christ, who fulfilled His divine mission outside the established religious authorities of His time yet was the very fulfilment of their prophecies and the essence of their faith. Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre once said, “*It is*

⁶ Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. Translated by Eugene Grimm, Redemptorist Fathers, 1852

⁷ Leo XIII, Pope. Encyclical Letter *Satis Cognitum*. 1896

not we who are in schism but the modernists”⁸. In the same way, our vocations, though existing outside the current ecclesiastical affirmation, are valid and essential for the continuation and preservation of the Church’s true teachings and sacraments. St. Francis of Assisi advised, “*Sanctify yourself and you will sanctify society*”⁹. This alignment with Christ’s own experience strengthens our resolve and confirms the righteousness of our path, underscoring our commitment to serve the Church with unwavering fidelity and devotion.

By embracing our roles in this unique context, we embody the spirit of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, who said, “*Pray, hope, and don’t worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer*”¹⁰. We continue to serve with the hope and conviction that our efforts contribute to the greater good of the Church, preserving its sacred legacy for the faithful of today and tomorrow.

May God bless you and keep you steadfast in your holy vocation.

Oremus pro invicem.

J.K.


Brichtelmestunensis
S. Leonis Papæ et Confessoris MMXXIV A.D.

⁸ Lefebvre, Marcel. *Open Letter to Confused Catholics*. Angelus Press, 1986

⁹ St. Francis of Assisi. *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*. Various editions

¹⁰ Ruffin, Bernard C. *Padre Pio: The True Story*. Our Sunday Visitor, 1991