

## **NEW AGE IN ACTION (3) The Measured Response**

*Beloved Lord, aid us to the knowing of our Catholic Faith, so that its transforming truths may be operative in our lives. Help us also to an understanding of Thy intimate union with men, by which they not only live in Thee, but also depend upon each other, in such manner that if some relax, others suffer and may perish. Enable us to glimpse the weighty but glorious burden which is thereby laid upon us, and to yearn to bear it for Thee.*  
From: *The Patrician Prayer* in the Legion of Mary Handbook.

### **INTRODUCTION**

We come now to the third and final part of this presentation. The fact that the New Age, in its various guises, is active in the Church has been demonstrated clearly enough. It is equally evident that this is seen by many as the '*spirit of the times*', the 'new policy and direction' of the Church and, as such, acceptable - especially when these ideas and attitudes which are permeating our parishes and seminaries are embraced so enthusiastically by some theologians and pastors. However, that this development is 'anathema' to the Mystical Body of Christ is also beyond doubt. So, the question is: "How do we respond?". How do we, as individual Catholics, make a determined and measured response in our daily defence of the Faith? Many concerned Catholics have expressed the need for some co-ordinated reaction — a central 'strategy' perhaps - which will reinforce the localised 'guerilla action'. In this context one thing is clear: we are involved in a long-term action. There cannot be any overnight solutions. That is why I want to recapitulate now on some of the activity already taking place which may give an indication of the possibility of combined efforts in the future.

### **CONFERENCE CONSENSUS**

Currently, the National Committee of Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice in Britain organises an annual weekend conference which provides an opportunity for like-minded Catholics to come together to hear authoritative lectures on a specific theme and to discuss problems of topical concern. In 1991 the theme was 'Catholic Survival'; this year (1992) it was 'Catholic Formation'. From the platform and from the floor on both occasions came several suggestions which it might be helpful to look at again. Those of you who were at either, or each, conference will be familiar with what I am going to say about these suggestions but I make no apology for repeating it. It bears repetition. Indeed it needs to be repeated because these suggestions form the framework of a strategy or battle plan for our action. We must never forget that we are, after all, the Church Militant! Even so, this action is as much about creating awareness among our fellow Catholics as it is about a direct defence of the Faith - because many of our fellow Catholics do not even realise yet that there is a problem. And, as far as the defence of the Faith is concerned, in the face of continuous onslaughts by the enemy, as one speaker has put it: 'We have to let them know we are still around - they haven't got rid of us yet!' Often today one hears the claim: 'the truth is what you perceive it to be'. This is a New Age lie. But it is a lie which deceives many well-meaning Catholics. In the conferences to which I have referred speaker after speaker illustrated graphically that the Truth of the Church must prevail. The teaching authority of the One True Church is paramount and the Truth must be communicated visibly and audibly by our actions and words, in our worship and in our daily duties. We have to start within the Church to dispel the false teachings of the New Age-style '*spirit of the times*' and to re-establish the acceptance of objective Truth and God-given Authority. If we fail to do this and yet at the same time respond to the call to evangelise then what sort of Church will the lapsed return to, and what will the converts find other than a shadow of the One True Church.

### **CATHOLIC CULTURE**

The idea of, and necessity for, some central strategy or co-ordination was brought out by Dr John Rao at the annual Conference in reply to a questioner who made the point that when those present disperse to their parishes they can easily lose touch with what is going on elsewhere in the 'battle'. The need, therefore, is for a regular flow of information between like-minded Catholics. As we know, there are ways in which this is being achieved already - but we all have to participate. As far as any international co-ordination is concerned Dr Rao outlined his thoughts on what might be termed a central clearing house for receiving and disseminating information - probably located in Rome - at some future date. Meanwhile he stressed the importance of the Catholic culture being present in every aspect of our lives - whatever our circumstances. We should make, what he called, a psychological break with the world in the sense of avoiding being affected or tainted by its attitudes and values - or even, unwittingly, adopting its terminology. It was stressed also that we must be prepared for the future by knowing, for example, how to serve a Low Mass and learning to sing a Missa

Cantata, in anticipation of the time when these abilities will be needed more widely. This is all part of fostering a Catholic world-view - ensuring that the Faith in all its fullness permeates every aspect of our home life and working life. It is a long-term programme. It is one in which all of us can - and must - become actively involved.

### **PRAYER, PENANCE - AND PATIENCE**

The most important weapon in our armoury is prayer. It has been said that Catholics today must 'kneel down and be counted'. It has also been said that the loyal Catholic is identified by four marks: prayer; patience; great charity toward those who do not share our views; and a sense of humour! Whilst many of us might find the last two extremely difficult, we would all agree that prayer is the most important. Prayer as exemplified by the reverent and dignified offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; prayer as expressed through frequent confession; adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; time-honoured processions and devotions - both public and private. At the Conference a contributor from the floor also emphasised the need for fasting and the importance of behaviour in church such as absolute silence and the ladies' wearing of mantillas as part of our 'good example'. Also we do need to look very seriously at the possibility of establishing Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration in our parishes. Already some parishes in England and Wales are achieving this - but very few in comparison with Ireland and the United States. The fruits it will yield are beyond measure. And each local programme can be geared to the number of pledges offered by parishioners. Help is readily available for the organising of such a project.

Mention was made just now of those time-honoured devotions and traditional processions (especially those of Our Lady) which have been at the heart of the Catholic Church for so long. They are important so that not only our children but non-Catholics will, by the grace of God, come to see that the Catholic Church is necessary for salvation and not just another option among many options. As someone ended a letter to me recently: 'Keep the Faith - but not to yourself!' So, public witness is vital. And we can demonstrate our Faith in so many simple and effective ways. For example, in the home (the 'ecclesia domestica' - the 'domestic church') by the use of sacramentals, holy pictures and statues prominently displayed, and a formal consecration of the home and family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and/or to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Who knows what effect it will have on a modern priest when he is asked to come and consecrate a home and family. It cannot be over-emphasised how important it is to create an environment in which our young people can come to know and love God and His Holy Church. In such a home there will be prayers for the blessing of a vocation from among sons and daughters, nieces and nephews or godchildren. And such prayers will take precedence over those for a well-paid job or for the making of a 'good' marriage. The importance of the Rosary - and especially the family Rosary - must not be overlooked. It should always be included in any action plan and it is appropriate, therefore to mention here the Confraternity of the Rosary and the Universal Living Rosary. Membership of these associations is not only possible but essential for all orthodox Catholics today and, perhaps, especially valuable for those who are elderly, sick or housebound.

### **RELIABLE READING**

Every Catholic home should take at least one reliable, orthodox Catholic publication - and I stress the word reliable. *Christian Order* is an obvious choice. Ten issues a year at £2.50 per copy is within the reach of most pockets. We need to promote this splendid publication and try to generate more subscribers. Of course, there needs to be a genuine interest, or potential interest. It is pointless foisting the magazine on someone who is likely to throw it into the bin without even opening the envelope. That is a waste. There are several other reliable publications the titles of which are often mentioned in *Christian Order*. Another way to obtain reliable reading material is to ensure that your name is on the mailing list of the regular newsletters of orthodox organisations such as Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice and the Association of Catholic Women. Your support of organisations like these means that you are in regular contact with like-minded Catholics. Fr John O'Connor said at the Conference that in this way we share our Faith and nourish our Faith as well as informing ourselves about exactly what is going on. And we should join with other groups actively upholding the teaching of the Church - such as the Pro-Life movement.

The publications and newsletters that we receive in this way will enable us to build up our own library of references and information which can be used when going 'into battle' on a particular topic. Mention of orthodox organisations prompts me to mention another practical suggestion here. That is to form a local branch of the Society of the Patricians. This Society runs under the auspices of the Legion of Mary so you would need to contact the nearest Praesidium of the Legion to find out if there is already a branch of the Patricians in your area. If there is not, then do try to get one started because it provides an excellent way of ensuring that the voice of authentic Catholic teaching is heard in your parish at least once every month.

### **INFORMED INTERVENTION**

Becoming a school governor or a member of your parish council is another way of making sure that the orthodox Catholic voice is heard where it matters. But you should try to enrol the aid of one or two like-minded Catholics - and do some lobbying - then you have a better chance to steer the meetings around to considering serious matters. (Unlike the parish council meeting, reported in a North of England Diocesan newspaper, where the members debated one evening whether or not the use of incense represented an environmental hazard!). This type of involvement is not for everyone so for those who do not feel comfortable in the public arena there is always letter writing. In this activity we must make our points factually and with charity. Nothing vitriolic - just clear and unambiguous statements of Catholic belief to counteract some of the plausible disinformation which is aimed at adapting Catholicism to suit the world. And you can quote authoritative sources. For example, the Pope has clearly repudiated the notion advanced by some Catholic leaders that social sin has replaced personal sin...and Cardinal Ratzinger reminded us not long ago that, for the Church, freedom means 'freedom to do good not to do as one wishes'. When the redoubtable Fr Crane (R.I.P.) was taken to task for what one critic called 'bishop bashing' he made it quite clear that true loyalty consists not in sycophantic platitudes but in working for the good of the Church - using all one's strength to advance and propagate the Church. 'If the bishops are not doing that', said Fr Crane, 'then it is our duty, in charity and loyalty, under God, it is our duty in season and out of season, for as long as we live, to reproach our bishops as often as is necessary.' That was Fr Crane's view and, as any reader of *Christian Order* knows, that is what he did - consistently and courageously — as Editor of that fine journal.

So, letters to the bishops are to be encouraged. But we should do things in the proper order. For example, if it is a matter of controversy over the sequence of First Confession and First Holy Communion and attempts are being made to reverse the sequence, go first to the parish council, then to the parish priest. If satisfactory answers are still not forthcoming then go to the bishop with the relevant evidence. For those who are not drawn to letter writing and who, for their own good reasons, prefer anonymity there is work to be done in the distribution of leaflets. As was pointed out earlier, much of our measured response must be about creating awareness - awareness that there is a problem and that it needs to be dealt with. That is why M.A.Associates has been publishing a series of leaflets on matters of topical concern. One lady wrote to us recently to tell us that the one hundred leaflets she had obtained from us had been sent - one each, individually - to one hundred different priests. That is really helping to create awareness - even if some of them do finish up in the waste-paper bin. Anyone should be able to address an envelope and stick a stamp on it - or, at least, persuade someone else to do it for them.

Participants in the Conferences from which these suggestions came were unanimous in their concern about Catholic education. It goes without saying therefore that parents, godparents, grandparents and, indeed, any concerned Catholic must keep a close watch on what the children are being taught in our Catholic schools. But if we are going to challenge anything we must do so from a position of strength by arming ourselves beforehand with information to support the challenge and, if possible, we should provide details of suitable alternatives. For this reason it is helpful to have some of our leaflets on hand together with addresses of some suppliers of reliable teaching materials. References from Canon Law, and other official Church documents could also be referred to when pressing your case. Remember, this is all part of our activity, individually and collectively, not only in defence of the Faith but in our efforts to restore a truly Catholic culture. No effort, however modest and localised, is wasted. Divine Providence will make use of every effort on our part to make Holy Mother Church and her authentic Teaching better known and loved.

## CONCLUSION

The New Age in action in the Church presents difficulties and obstacles for all of us. But I believe there are signs of hope. When any Catholic voices his or her concern over a matter on which we may have remained silent for too long - when one voice is raised - others are now being heard in support. There is a growing response to the well-publicised voices of dissent - a response which, perhaps, the dissenters did not expect and which they certainly do not relish. This response will gather momentum if we each play our part and if we communicate more effectively with one another through the clearly recognisable channels of publications, associations, local groups, national conferences and so on. The *'spirit of the times'* has held centre-stage for too long with its beliefs, practices and attitudes that are in direct opposition to the authentic teaching of the One, Holy, Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. The declaration of 'anathema' is long overdue.

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