



RES

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PRÉSENTATION

In an ever changing world and in a Church constantly in the spotlights, the important informations and the meaning to give them may be buried under a mass of commentaries, opinions and fake news. At a time when it is urgent to restore the magisterium and pontifical authority so that the Church may continue its mission received from Christ, *Res Novae* intends to be an informational and analysis tool at the service of the petrinian power. By subscribing now you will help with the start of *Res Novae* and its development.

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THE ÉDITORIAL

Church: where are the successors to the Apostles ?

To begin resolving the never-ending half a century crisis, which gravity has worsened under the present pontificate, the Church needs shepherds of a high stature and great force, pious, fully aware of their immense responsibility. In Short, the Church needs men true successors of the Apostles. This implies that they take their distance from a weak magisterium adopted by a majority consensus which superimposed itself to the apostolic magisterium which, in the name of Christ, requires our adherence.

A growing centralisation

If one considers the latin episcopate in the long run, one notices that the romanisation operated by the Gregorian reform and Trent had energised a high quality episcopal hierarchy all over Europe, despite many individual or collective weaknesses (Gallicanism, Josephinism and other regalisms). Facing the Revolution and the new political situation which settled to various degrees in Europe and in the world, a political situation hostile to the social form of Christendom, the romanisation grew out of a defensive reflex – the Church has become a citadel besieged, Rome its donjon –, and this has created perverse effects. The fight against the rising perils of modernity has replaced the fights against regalism, an enlightenment version of it. Rome took over the whole and the detail of ecclesiastic discipline, as well as liturgy and its potential changes.

In the same time, the image and the function of the Christian prince having slowly disappeared, the pope found himself, in a way, the only legitimate sovereign in the mist of a new society, around whom clergy and faithful have rallied in a cult of the pope's person that had never existed before. This reverence attained its summit when Pius IX was dispossessed of the Pontifical States, and later never diminished (even after the 180 degree turn of Vatican II, the situation of Catholicism never ceasing to increase).

In this conjuncture of an ultramontanism of survival, the type of noticeably strong subsidiarity that represented the episcopal government has *de facto* decreased. It is actually even more than just subsidiarity, because it is by its divine constitution that the Church is founded on the pope, on the bishops and on the ministers, especially on the bishops having charge of a particular part of the flock.

It is to be well understood : we are not by these remarks questioning the immediate jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff over each shepherd and Catholic faithful. We are not even questioning the doctrine of *mediate* transmission (through the pope) of the episcopal jurisdiction, rather than *immediate* (directly deriving from Christ, as emanating from the episcopal ordination) (1). But precisely, similar to the ones of the Apostles, Paul for examples, regarding Peter, this dependance of the bishops in relation to the pope – they are successors of the Apostles entire, not to one apostle in particular, the pope alone being successor of Peter – does not imply a dissolution of the episcopate that would make it a simple administrative relay of the central Roman authority, like some regional or county representatives can be vis-à-vis their government : « *they are not to be considered [the bishops] as vicars of the*

Roman Pontiffs, because they exercise a power that is really their own, and are most truly called the ordinary pastors of the peoples over whom they rule. » (2)

Since the end of the XIXth century, the Roman centralisation has reached a sort of perfection. As to compensate a diminution of the power ad extra of the pope, symbolised by his temporal power, corresponded to a considerable augmentation of his power ad intra : the line of popes who followed Pius IX represented the ultimate flourishing of the tridentinisation, started in the XVIth century to oppose the protestant offensive, increased in the XIXth century in regards to the revolutionary and liberal upheavals, augmented again in the first part of the XXth century in response to the modernist crisis and its avatars.

Bishops-senior officials

Paradoxically, Vatican II, the council that subverted the Tridentine ecclesiology and liturgy, took advantage of this era of tridentinisation ad maxima to edict its new orientation. For example, to impose over the whole latin Church a new liturgy in all things and in all parts, would have been inconceivable outside this extreme state of centralisation.

But, this is true also, and maybe even more so, in ecclesiology : the collegiality has not deeply modified the centralism of the Church. The teaching of the collegiality doctrine by Vatican II (3) was supposed to reestablish, in favour of the bishops, the balance crippled by Vatican I, incomplete council that had mainly dealt with the powers of the pope. It is obvious that it only remained very theoretical. Certainly, the constitution *Lumen Gentium* had the immense merit to recall that every single bishops on its own had to exercise over the particular Church entrusted to his pastoral authority, but furthermore that he had to participate in the solicitude regarding the universal Church (no. 23). In spite of everything, the Church following Vatican II is more *papalist* than ever.

In the no. 3 issue of *Res Novae*, published in November 2018, we had talked about the synodal institution, in which members of the minority had denounced, during the Council, the institution of a sort of parliamentarism. In reality, the Synod comes from above : Paul VI had established it of his own authority and with only an advisory role. Yet a rather very important role : its regular assemblies, in the manner of what usually takes places in modern societies, get into the game of elaborating a compromise agreement, which, for the Church, replaces the traditional obedience of the faith, cement of communion to Christ. The over whole with a strong dose of what one must call manipulation, either in the sense of moderation, as when the roman idea is one of the « hermeneutic of renewal in the continuity », or in the sense of progress, as when it is inspired, like it is today, by the « hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture. » Considering that the conservative forces are penalised by the fact that the synod, as it was the case for the last council, remains in the pastoral mode, the progressive forces, for the same reason, have leeway to free themselves from the

constraints of traditional doctrine, spreading what we have called a weak magisterium, which requires an assent based on opinion instead of one based on intelligence.

As a matter of fact, the thinkers of a greater democratisation of the authority, no matter what they say, do not call for a modification of the ecclesial centralisation.

Thus, they have totally abandoned the idea they had while not in command to give the episcopal conferences the capacity to choose their bishops, as Hermann J. Pottmeyer put it in « *The role of papacy in the third millennium.* » (4) They are for now completely satisfied with this mode of government of the Church, in the end very authoritarian, which resembles today's democratic regimes where the chief of State or government has a quasi monarchical power, though regulated by the anarchical individualism of the people they govern.

On top of that, we must add the fact that, without practically any exception, the bishops of the latin rite are today appointed by the pope : in France for example, *de facto*, the government nomination of the bishop for the Armed forces, of the archbishop of Strasbourg and the bishop of Metz always follows suggestions from Rome ; also, the liberty of choice in the elections by the canonical chapters of Chur and Cologne is very limited. Actually, the only nomination where the State takes an active role, and yet only in virtue of recent agreements, is the one of bishops in China. Communism apparently still receives special treatment.

And above all, the strange rule promulgated by Paul VI after the Council, a rule which requires the bishops to present the pope a letter of resignation when they reach the age of seventy-five, an age limit which does not apply to pope. This rule offers the Roman authorities an opportunity they have never had before to renew the episcopal hierarchies. The bishop, « spouse » of his Church (cf. Tm. 3, 2), tends to become a sort of senior official-civil servant.

Parish priests – administrators

Yet there is, at the level of the diocese, a sort of « revenge » of the episcopal hierarchy. On this point especially, Vatican II is a council that favoured the bishops : up to the Council, parish priests were, for most of them, irremovable (old canon 454). That is to say that the bishop could never separate them from their parish without their assent. Often they died while still rector of their assigned parish ; but this is no longer. Now, in theory they are indeed appointed ad tempus indefinitum but, with the permission of the bishops conference, which then means always, they are appointed ad certum tempus. In France, for example, that means an appointment of six years, eventually prorogated. (5) In some dioceses, contrary to all rules, the bishop does not appoint the parish priests as rectors but only as administrators. Furthermore, all diocesan responsibilities cease when one reach the age of seventy-five.

Like the charge of the bishop, the charge of the parish priest tends to become one of an administrator. Specially since the number of clerics plunging dramatically, those

that are left are surrounded, sometimes even replaced, by an increasing number of lay persons, men and women. In France, the care of many parishes are entrusted to groups of laity, called *Équipes d'Animation Pastorale* (Team for Pastoral Animation), either because they no longer have a rector per se (canon 517 § 2), or they still have one but the team nonetheless manages the parish with him, which is against or at least besides all rules. In Germany, the bishops employ pastoral referents, paid laities with a degree in Theology, and pastoral assistants, paid lay persons with a technical degree in catechesis or liturgy. They already represent twenty per cent of the « Church employees » (*Res Novæ*, no. 6, February 2019). Hence a tendency of the episcopal offices to exercise over this particular type of staff a more managerial authority rather than pastoral, notably in matters of various nominations and appointments. In that respect, in Quebec, according to Gilles Routhier, the dioceses have seen « *an institutional adjustment to urban and modern society* ». Specialists of diocesan administrations have become true decision-makers, on the model of their counterparts in businesses or state administration offices, eventually experiencing the classic « flaws in operation and parallel hierarchies », manipulation of committees and workshops, influencing of discussions, etc. (6)

The weekly magazine *Golias* and its twice a year report *Trombinoscope des évêques*, both publications of the far ecclesial left, are full of articles denouncing the « tyranny » of bishops business-entrepreneurs against clerics and lay persons affiliated with a leftist agenda. Priests and conservative communities would have themselves all the reasons to also complain, justly, about the same « tyranny ».

But in reality, this authority, no matter the line followed by the bishop, is like wrapped in a climate of consensual agreement. A single move from this agreement and, as a result of « denunciations » to the Roman Congregations, he could become the target of canonical visits as soon as issues arise locally (financial, sexual misconduct, unrests in diocesan communities). But this consensualism is set in place essentially from the top, at the national level, and from the bottom too. From the top, through the Conference of the Bishops and their multiple commissions. All has been said about the parliamentary mould they constitute, their system of operations which squanders energy and discourages personal initiatives : the Conference takes all sort of decisions which before depended on the local Ordinary in his own right.

But it is set in place from the bottom too, notably because of the various councils which surround the bishop. Yet, the government in councils, which can be very profitable in a traditional regime, in a situation where ideology reigns it quickly becomes constraining, even if it is a voluntary constraint since the bishop appoints most of their members : the council for economic affairs ; the presbyteral council, whose half of the members are elected ; the pastoral council, made of clerics and laities. Furthermore, the diocesan synods, conceived as a sort of general assemblies of clerics and lay persons, as it is in France or in the United States, since the end of the XXth century (the first one in France took place in Limoges, in 1985) contri-

buted considerably to promote a culture driven by motions of synthesis, results of fierce manipulations.

Bishops of consensus

Last and foremost, in a Church where the magisterium no longer imposes itself as a function of regulation in accordance with the Creed and where doctrinal sanctions and exclusions, which are absolutely necessary to mark the frontier between what is Catholic and what is not, are no longer exercised, the bishop is, on a faith and discipline standpoint, a sort of manager of the diversity between some Christians, some priests, some communities, giving speeches and starting up practices that have little in common, except the label now formal of « catholic ». It is actually the crucial point of the conformation of the ecclesial community to the society that surrounds it : if ecumenism as a federalist dream of the diverse Christian Churches no longer raises any hope, it has however found its way within the Catholic Church itself, as She has become intrinsically federative (as well as the discourse on religious freedom, that the Church of the Council intended to give to the States, has for that matter mostly been integrated as a general revendication of internal freedom). Whatever the case, institutional, para-institutional, ideological, the bishop of today, the bishop of Vatican II, is thus taken into a vast movement of opinion of the majority, similar to the one that in the end runs modern societies, incorporating to the rest, as it is done in this same societies, extremely violent debates which not only do not reconsider the legitimacy of what could be called a new way of « doing Church » but confirm it. Whether he be, because of his own character, a man of a « happy medium », which is most of the time the case, or whether he be a man of « movement », or of « identity », he plays his role. Or, more precisely, he plays a role in this new context, rather than his own which is marked by the *apostolic succession* he has received.

And yet, he has in his own being of shepherd and doctor, the vocation to heroism and the graces to fulfil it, all that is necessary to « throw fire on Earth », and especially to embrace from the inside the Church Herself. ◆

Father Claude Barthe

1. Pius XII, *Ad sinarum gentem*, 7 October 1954 ; *Ad Apostolorum Principis*, 1958, no. 26.

2. Leo XIII, *Satis cognitum*, 29 June 1896, Dz 3307.

3. The outline remain very impressionistic : the pope and the bishops form a college like the college of the Apostles, but the Council avoid saying the college of the bishops succeeds the college of the Apostles (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 22).

4. *Die Rolle des Papsttums im Dritten Jahrtausend*, Freiburg : Herder, 1999.

5. « A pastor must possess stability and therefore is to be appointed for an indefinite period of time. The diocesan bishop can appoint him only for a specific period if the conference of bishops has permitted this by a decree » (canon 522). Also, in France for example : « Each French bishop will be able to appoint a parish priest for a period of six years with a possibility of prorogation (prorogation meaning additional time, but with no obligation to renew for a time equal to the first appointment) ». (French Conference of Bishops, BO no. 29 of 13 June 1984).

6. *La réception d'un concile*, coll. « Cogitatio fidei », 174, Cerf 2012 (The receipt of a council).

DOCUMENTS

Episcopate 2.0

Ph. de Labriolle

Charity begins at home. At Vatican II, the episcopate was magnified by those who made the Council before – they – started applying it, the bishops themselves. Directly sent by Jesus-Christ, this is the manner in which the actual President of the Conference of French Bishops, Bishop de Moulins-Beaufort promotes his peers in a keynote-address given 24 March 2019, in front of the Conference assembly, gathered in Lourdes. (1)

But there was a momentum there, feudalism was en marche and the Gallican Fronde on the horizon. We are the Church, and it is to us to tell the faith with the words of today. Taught in this way, the clergy, facing these inspired people, had to abide *perinde ac cadaver*. The disaffection of the many who left the priesthood, as of 1966, followed by the drastic decline in priestly and religious vocations, not to mention the desertion of the faithful, was not compensated by any “mundane” recruiting. Indeed, the estranged requirements carried by the Spirit of the Council has led many faithful to place a certain distance between themselves and this revised Church that, notwithstanding an anachronism, one could designate in today’s fashion with the logo « Church 2.0 ».

Entering the mentality of an « old school » priest by virtue of the fullness of the priesthood, and even the mentality of a bishop with same traditional inspiration, is feasible. He has brought order where the world brought disorder. He is happy to guide the searching souls into the Church. The Country priest immortalised by Bernanos hears the dean reminding him this axiom, subsidiarity compels. The bishop governs, indeed but, on a daily basis, he does the same thing, *mutatis mutandis*, that the most humble of his priests. They have the same Father, the same route map, holiness. But, here it is that mobilised by the new wind they thought they were witnessing, the world episcopate, rejuvenated by its unanimity, or close, sets its enlightened despotism to serve modernity and to filter as through a sieve the driving forces. He rejects restiveness, imposes this new norms, saddens the « old believers ». Yesterday’s way of thinking is declared dead. Tomorrow will be born sacrifices whether with assent or imposition. The order of the past was a disorder. Let it be said ! Although universal, the innovators’ love ends at the foot of anyone reluctant to follow. The matter is no small issue : the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, submitted itself to Hegelian dialectic. The truth of today calls false what was held to be true yesterday. Temporarily. Tomorrow is an other day. So weary ! A false thought is, said Descartes, like a bad apple in a basket. It makes the other apples go bad.

Let us reread *Gaudium et spes*. Let’s read it, let’s be simple... Today, the Church has no more enemies. She only knows of ignorants knowing themselves avid of the Gospel, as long as the sprinkler has set itself apart from the

sword. The political influence of the Arch of salvation of the societies collapses, but only a free adherence is accepted. The quality is preferable to quantity, new avatar of elitism. But the collapse is numbers, all so real in the « once Christian Western world », is the result of his episcopate 2.0 ! In the bled dry dioceses, we keep to a distance the communities which have the audacity to belied the « inspired » Henri de Lubac (2). These communities which were condemned to a certain death come back to life, even without acceding to « power » except the one that proceeds from Life itself. It is unbearable, isn’t it ?

Under this indefectible optimism, the tragic appears : the Church is not as reliable as She pretends. Her historic past accuses Her. To be a « conciliar » priest is to detest in itself the priesthood as it separates him from the world and links him to a suspicious historical past. The more conciliar the priest, the more he is inclined to measure the obsolescence of his mission, *a fortiori* if he is convinced of the universality of salvation which, in all logic, assimilates him to the gadfly of La Fontaine, useless but persuaded to be useful. To be a conciliar bishop, does it means having a veneration for the great elders such as Bossuet, Mgr Pie or Mgr Freppel, or is it about breaking away from this strong voices, so annoying to the mundane ? On the contrary, by forcing themselves to never chock the modern faithful and, even more so, the post-modern one, by reminding him of his duties towards God, isn’t the new revised version bishop persuading himself that silence is gold, and that the martyrs who built the Church were only their own victims because of their rigidity and clumsiness ? To renounce affirming the truth to upset no one, isn’t that the price for peace ? But in what respect the silence of the clerics could be interpreted as apostolic signal facing the silence of persons indifferent and negligent ?

Already the program appears a little more clear : the more conciliar the cleric, the more he works towards the demise of clericalure. For the world rejects the cleric, just as it has rejected the Christ Saviour. Peace has no price, but it has a cost. There is no need though for clerical blood to be shed, all that is necessary is that the cleric renounces any words deemed annoying to the world, and that he convinces himself he has been sent by Christ for this alone and nothing else. But, this must remain *in petto*. Hush ! For there are still troops needing formatting and, as is, are dangerous for peace...

The conciliar pole, whether in clerics or regular baptised persons, refuses the fight against the world mirages. The catholic pole pronounces relentlessly the Name of the Saviour, risking crucifixion like their Master. Father de Lubac, finally, paradoxically receives validation from History : the « World » has well entered the Church, massively, but to the measure of the occultation of the Face of the unique Saviour. ◆

1. As a consequence : the lay faithful « must accept that their [the laities] behaviour corresponds to the figure that those [the bishops], to who it belongs to make that determination, want for the Church at this particular time ».

2. One could summarised his *Drame de l’humanisme athée*, Spes, 1944, in this manner : the atheist seeks sincerely God ; his drama is to confuse God that he seeks sincerely and The one that adores the Catholic Church, which he has no intention to join ; the « World » will enter thus massively in the Church when She will cease to hide the Divine Face.