



RES

NOVAE

PROSPETTIVE ROMANE - Edizione italiana

International monthly newsletter of analysis and prospective ■ N° 6 ■ February 2019 ■ Année I ■ 3 €
Published in French, English and Italian

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 magistrum 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.

INDEX

Page 1

Paul VI
Lumen Gentium

Page 2

Pope Corneille
Sacrum Diaconatus Ordine ■ *Ministeria quædam*

Page 3

Father H.-J. Gagey ■ Father Joseph Moingt ■ Mgr Albert Rouet
■ Mgr Pascal Wintzer

Page 4

Father Victor-Alain Berto

Subscription : €30.00 yearly ;
E-subscription : €20.00 yearly ;
Donor subscription : starting at €50.00. To subscribe to the print edition outside France, please contact us.
IBAN : FR76 3006 6108 4500 0201 7170 155. The monthly newsletter *Res Novae* is published by EHN (12, rue Rosenwald, 75015 Paris).
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CPPAP : underway
Director of publication : Ch. Sergent.

L'ÉDITORIAL

Worst than clericalism: *secu-calism*

There are certainly worst things than clericalism and if the word existed we would name it *secu-calism*, so to describe a sort of inverse clericalism.

There are no doubts that clericalism is very harmful. It can be understood as the arrogance of certain clerics forgetting that their « portion of my inheritance », *kleros* in Greek, is first priestly ministry and service. More generally, this deviation defines the tendency of clerics, specially prelates of the Church up in the highest levels who intend to direct lay persons in their proper prudential role of organisation of the City, including eventually in the conquest of power. By doing so, they go over their role which only consists in this matter to teach and recall the principles that flow from the Gospel. There is no question that the loss by the Holy See, in 1870, of the Pontifical States, led the popes of the end of the XIX and XX centuries to exercise a very characteristic trait of clericalism. It consisted in strongly inciting lay catholics – even by sanctioning opponents – to enter, in the so-called interest of the Church, in the game of the parliamentary democracy, notably by the formation of catholic parties, and to inspire their action in democracy, pursuing the dream of a sort of demo-clerical christendom.

The cheap desire to please

But today, these attacks against clerics which are launched from the highest ranks in the Church have the intention to harm. Paradoxically, high ranking prelates who are making these attacks appear to be pretty authoritarian themselves. In truth, the present denunciations of clericalism can largely be attributed to a cheap desire to please, *ad extra*, modern society, and *ad intra*, the progressive aisle of the contemporary Church.

In fact, these denunciations act in conjunction with a true *secu-calism*, if we want to call it that. This name echoes the depreciation of the priesthood by the protestant reform, but most of all, it echoes the ideological principles of a society ever more secularised, since the rupture which took place at the end of the XVIII century. A theology, wanting to take into account this downward trend of a social occultation of the priesthood, has once stuttered about the justification of Catholic Action and the « mandate » for the apostolate the hierarchy (1) was supposed to grant. But, this theology has, above all, open infinite debates, since the sixties, on the necessity to note again the importance of the common priesthood of the baptised in regards to the ministerial priesthood. Without a doubt, the constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10, has classically emphasised the « difference in essence, and not only of degree », between these two priesthoods « ordained to one another. » But the acts of absorption of the clerical functions by the laity have greatly increased.

In that respect, Paul VI has reduced to the maximum the field of the clericature. Before, one would enter the clergy through the first tonsure. Then one would receive, progressing towards the priesthood, minor orders (porter, lector, acolyte and exorcist) and the sub-diaconate. What ever the theological discussion on the sacramentality of these orders, they constituted around the presbyterate a sort of crown and sacerdotal extension. But Paul VI, by one of the most astonishing documents of the liturgical reform, the motu

proprio *Ministeria quaedam*, of 15 August 1972, has abolished the minor orders, ostiary, lectorate, exorcist, acolyte, and the sub-diaconate as well, degrees all of them as ancient as the latin liturgy in Rome, as certified in a letter of the year 251 from Pope Cornelius. Only the order of the diaconate was left untouched, by which one became a cleric, and no longer by the tonsure. In place were created two « instituted ministries » of lector and acolyte, new functions which are not conferred by clerical ordinations but by simple mandates given to lay persons who are preparing for the priesthood (or who are not).

As to this clericulture, now concerning only deacons, priests and bishops, it has been symbolically secularised, considering the context of the latin church where clericulture – at least major clericulture – and celibate are traditionally linked. Symbolically secularised because of the possibility given by the motu proprio *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, of 18 June 1967, of Paul VI, to ordain married men as permanent deacons (normally without being able to access the priesthood). Of course, the access given to married men, to the diaconate, but also to the priesthood, as it is possible it will happen after the Pan-Amazonian Synod, would accentuate the dissolution of the clericulture in secular society.

In the same way, secularisation takes over the sanctuary. Once – and this is still true in the celebration of the traditional mass – those who served at the altar could be lay persons, but they were assimilated to tonsured clerics for the time of the celebration. In the ordinary form of the mass, the altar ministers remain clearly lay persons. Those invested in the two instituted ministries of lector and acolyte remain lay persons too. Indeed, the various liturgical interventions during the mass, readings, monitions and commentaries, distribution of communion, are done by faithfuls as lay persons. This is confirmed by the fact that there are men as well as women. Moreover, the direct service at the altar, sensitively closer to the ministerial priesthood, is often handled by girls altar servers.

Retreat to the sacristy

In addition, to the increasing shortage of priest, in the West at least, even more visible with the disuse of the ecclesiastic costume, is added the introduction of lay persons in the pastoral care of the parishes, as we will see in the various articles of this newsletter.

All this, truly constitutes an inversed clericalism : people, although lay-persons, take the position of the clerics in their specific role. This can be explained ideologically, but also by a sort of compensation : because of the constant withdrawal of the Church in front of the secularised society, the christian laity no longer has a political token over society, nor does he have the possibility to intervene in the bodies of government and especially in the higher levels. To go into political life for a christian today comes down to either adopt a « prophetic » attitude and to accept persecution and an overt form of martyrdom, or to renounce *de facto* his faith. Therefore, a number of lay christians abandon the political field and v which is very characteristic of the contemporary

Church : without making the commitments of the clericulture, they have a tendency to want to exercise its roles. They are often encouraged to do so by progressive prelates who, besides the fact they do it for ideological reasons, think that this way they can resolve the dramatic issue of the shortage of vocations. In reality, they only make it worst. This so-called remedy, now becomes itself the cause for the disappearance of these clerics apparently less and less useful, since lay persons can fill their position.

A crisis of resignation

This is actually the worst thing : this secularisation of the Church is wanted largely by the clerics themselves. Not only because they accept it as a fatality or welcome it as a « chance » but also because they have abandoned what constituted their proper role, especially and in adhesion to a sound theology, the predication of a non-falsified Gospel and the orthodox teaching of catechism. In fact, the crisis of the Church since the last council can analyse itself first as a crisis of resignation of its pastors, at all levels, at least a great majority of them.

This induces, thus, a reaction from the part of the faithful, this one totally legitimate, within the implementation of the *sensum fidelium* : these lay persons are eventually called to defend the catechism, the liturgy, and more broadly the catholic faith, in a very active way, sometimes critically and militantly, against erroneous ideas. They feel more obligated to do so than they would have in normal times, when it is good and desirable that lay persons, if able, give themselves to the study and teaching of theology and sacred sciences, under the watch of the pastors of the Church. But it is to be noticed that the same danger of « withdrawal to the sacristy or retreat », as mentioned above, exists here as well : the laity, facing the great difficulty of accomplishing their specific duty, that is to act in the field of the organisation of the City, can favour the now very urgent battle at the service of the Church even to the point of withdrawing from their own combat in the City, hoping to advance a christian society.

We have, here, one of the elements of the situation that a true reform of the Church will have to consider and which it will have to remedy : the theological and spiritual renewal of the priesthood is a key to the reconstruction needed today. The renewal is also, by the establishment of a clear distinction of domains, the condition of a re-evaluation of the eminent role of the laity, including, and foremost in its *political* dimension, caring for the City in a christian way. ◆

Rev. Fr. Claude Barthe

1. Traces of it can be found in n. 20 of the conciliar decree on the apostolate of the laity, which evokes the definition of Catholic Action as « the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy. ».

► In France : Pastoral lay ministry teams

The code of canon law provides a « *pastoral council* » can be established in parishes with purely consultative vote (can. 536), and must have a « *finance committee* » (can. 537). But, for at least thirty years now, the number of priest diminishing, we have seen appearing in France groups of lay people being very active in the direction of the parish. Their existence theoretically comes from canon 519, which says the parish priest exercises the pastoral care of the community « *with the assistance of lay members* », *operam conferentibus laicis*. In reality, these communities are inspired by canon 517 § 2, which has often worried the more serious canonists. It provides that if, because of the shortage of priests the diocesan Bishop has judged that a deacon, or some other person who is not a priest, or a community of persons, should be entrusted « *with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish* », *participationem in exercitio curæ pastoralis*, while a priest – living generally not far from the parish – is appointed « *moderator* » with the powers and faculties of a parish priest.

In the diocese of Poitiers, qualified by the French daily *La Croix* as a « *trial diocese* » (15 March 2012), the archbishop, today an emeritus, Bishop Albert Rouet, had published a decree, in October 2010, reducing the pastoral organisation of the diocese to a few vast parish territories. He entrusted each of them to a team of five lay members, to which the bishop was conferring « *recognised ministries* », and to whom were adjoined ten to twenty other members, the whole forming a « *basis christian community* ». A priest were to accompany this community, without the attributions of each other's being clearly defined. For this reason, eleven priests of the diocese had carried an appeal in front of the Congregation for the Clergy and the pontifical Council for the interpretation of the legislative texts, appeal which had resulted in a suspension of the decree. Bishop Wintzer, successor to Bishop

Rouet, had thus re-written the document, publishing an other decree which reorganised the parishes in the classic way and reshaped the communities in a more modest role.

In many other dioceses under less scrutiny by the media, the care of the parishes by lay members, called Pastoral lay ministry teams, continues to advance slowly. To these communities of laity is entrusted *the share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish* from canon 517 § 2. We would keep within canonical principles if these Pastoral lay ministry only had to manage priestess parishes. But, the judicial coup de force, as practiced in some dioceses, consists in setting up this Pastoral lay ministry based on canon 517 § 2 in the parishes without a parish priest as well as in the parishes where there is actually a priest. The Pastoral lay ministry tend to generalise the existence of lay teams participating in the exercise of the pastoral care in parishes, and relegate the priest to a support role. Many French bishops will soon have at their disposal so few priests that their diocese will be divided in a handful of parishes cared by laity, with a few priests who will travel the diocese to administrate the sacraments.

Pio Pace

► In Germany : Lay pastoral associates

German catholicism is financially very rich, to the point that the Church in Germany along with the one in the United States are the two principal financial sources of the Holy See who, without their financial support would clearly face a difficult situation. In Germany, a Church tax is collected by the Finance Ministry and redistributed to the ecclesiastic institution. 10 % of the income tax is vested through this collection to the Church who take charge of a large number of social institutions : schools, kindergartens, hospitals.

But this German catholicism, like the one in Switzerland or in Belgium, is at the same time in a state of advanced coma : the number of priests and religious has become scarce to the extreme, church attendance is at its lo-

west level ; as for teaching, specially moral teaching, it has distanced itself, for a long time now, from the shores of Catholic dogma.

Vocations are disappearing in a dramatic way (81 ordinations in 2010, compare to 557 in 1962), thus the German bishops employ pastoral referent persons, lay paid associates with a university degree in theology, and pastoral assistants, lay paid associates with a technical degree in catechesis or liturgy. With three thousand pastoral referent persons and four thousand five hundred pastoral associates, which represents more than 20 % of the « *Church employees* » (there are about 23,000 active priests and 3 000 permanent deacons), the German bishops manage a Church evermore secularised and run by paid laity occupying administrative positions formerly filled by Church clerics. **P.P.**

► Penitential celebrations and Sunday celebrations, in the absence of a priest

In France, the dizzy fall of the number of priests has led to the organisations, for a while now, of some Sunday celebrations where lay persons, preside, give the homely, and distribute communion. They are called Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest.

Father J. Moingt, Jesuit from the Sèvres Center in Paris, France, one of the figures of French theology, has even imagined penitential celebrations in the absence of a priest. In a bulletin from *Documents Épiscopat* (September 1999), on the theme « *Ordained ministry and sacraments* », Father H.-J. Gagey quotes Father Moingt (*Letter to Chaplains*, June 1998) : « *We will not doubt that God's forgiveness, celebrated in a liturgical act but in the absence of a priest, is indeed received and even received sacramentally, and it should be signified by an appropriate gesture accomplished by the lay pastoral ministers (in the antic Church the "kiss of peace" was the custom).* » Father Gagey was to conclude that « *the access to grace must be held for certain.* » **C.B.**

DOCUMENTS

The sacerdotal being

The following analysis is from an article published in the review *Tu es Petrus*, winter 2019, pp. 63-70, under the title : « Priesthood, state or function ? »

Chanoine Laurent Jestin

It is at the altar of the mass that the « *fount and apex of the whole christian life* » is found (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 11). It is rightly towards the altar that one must look to see and understand what a priest is. The priest is mediator between God and men : the Holy Sacrifice of the Cross is the act by which the sacred rituals that please God is given to Him, and the merits of the Sacrifice of the Cross are applied to the faithful. And it is indeed the priest who, there, acts *in persona Christi* : not under the mode of a theatrical representation, not as a catalyst of the assembly's faith and piety, not still because he would be invested, at the moment, of a charismatic power either. The priest is not like an actor who ceased to be an actor when he gets off the stage ; he is not only the president of the celebration, his function ceasing when the community disperses, everyone returning to its daily existence ; and what makes him act is not given to him according to an extraordinary and intermittent mode. The priest acts as such, because first he is : a priest. His being has been objectively transformed by the sacrament of ordination : the character, indelible and eternal seal. *Tu es sacerdos in eternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech*, Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech, as he heard during the liturgy of his ordination. Before being the instrument of the sanctifying acts of religion, he participates in the sacerdotal being of Jesus Christ, eternal and sovereign priest ; and it is exactly that which makes it possible.

In this reality which is the mass, there is the cross, the redeeming incarnation of Jesus Christ. This is true for what concerns the sacrament of the eucharist, and it is also true for what regards the priest, his being. By divine institution on the evening of Holy Thursday, in the sacrament of the order, the sacerdotal power comes from the very being of the Savior, true God and true man, and through this way mediator between God and men, *Summus Pontifex*, supreme pontiff. He is the one who poses definitively over the abyss between the infinite Creator and its finite creatures sadly fallen into sin, so that may be realised the first purpose of God when He created man : make him a participant in His blessed life.

[...]

We recognise in Jesus Christ, since his conception in the bosom of the Virgin Mary until his death on the cross, the priest and victim of a sacrifice which, if it is truly the one of the Cross, unfolds in all his earthly existence. When he taught, cured, exorcised, forgave, his actions were sacerdo-

tal. And this is not without consequences in regards to what the priest is.

The relation between the being and the acting in Our Lord must be found in the priest, since what the priest is has its source and its model in the mystery of Christ. In the priest too, the being precedes the acting. This is perfectly clear and imperative in the celebration of the sacred rituals. The sacraments are valid because, on the side of the priest (not to mention furthermore what is required for form and matter), he has the sacerdotal power of conferring them (and, eventually, has received jurisdiction for doing so) : this is the being. And here now is the acting : he must, in addition, have the intention to do what the Church does, what can ordinarily be judged in the respect shown in the ceremonies of the sacrament ; exterior respect without a doubt, but interior as well.

In ordinary life, it does not function exactly in the same way. For it is as instrumental cause that the priest performs the sacramental acts by which grace is dispensed to the faithful. To the point, we know, that the sacerdotal power received at ordination and the intention expressed at the moment of the celebration suffice for the validity of the sacrament and for its fruitfulness in the soul of the person who receives it. As a result saint Francis of Assisi could declare that if he met an angel and a poor preacher, he would kiss the hands of the preacher, because only those hands can make Jesus Christ come to the altar.

The other acts of the priest, from his daily life, are not elevated to an identical level. But, it is unthinkable they would not reflect anything of his sacerdotal being, unthinkable that the reverence in the sacred things that unfolds in the teaching and the governing, would not manifest themselves in the course of his day. This appears in different ways and in various intensities : constant availability, meekness, patience and humility in the relationship ; simplicity of life and charity towards indigents ; acceptance of prayer intentions entrusted to him and generosity in dedicating to it time and atonement ; chastity in demeanour and words... [...]

Father Berto, founder of the Congregation of the Dominican of the Holy Ghost, who cannot be suspected of complaisance with modernist ideologies, had carried an interesting and interested reflexion on the situation of worker-priests. And it is of course the being, the power received at ordination, that founded the base of his reflexion. For example, he wrote these words to a young priest of the Mission de France, in February 1954, at the time when Rome condemned the experimental worker-priest : « *It is certain that the manual work is not ex directo a sacerdotal function, but it can be finalised, in more than one way, to the exercise of the priesthood ; otherwise our good Briton parish priests could not even cultivate their garden, and the Trappist would have to be suppressed.* » He concluded his letter by this desolated call : « *Alas, all this would have been so easy to put in order, plus there was an opportunity to make something so beautiful of it !* »

