

SAINT BENEDICT CENTER
Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Post Office Box 627
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December 3, 2009
Saint Francis Xavier

To Our Friends and Benefactors,

Christ Jesus be praised! A common sentiment at the time of “the Holidays” is gratitude. Secularized folk speak in somber tones of the “blessings” they have received and solemnly render thanks to the deity of their choice in a way that will not offend those who have chosen another deity, or none. Why, it’s the stuff of a Norman Rockwell painting!

I am no Scrooge. My sardonic tone is inspired by the phony notion that any old “winter-time festivity” can possibly compare to Christmas — *Christ’s Mass* — which celebrates the merciful coming of God in the flesh for the purpose of delivering hell-bound man into the bliss of Heaven. Gratitude for blessings we must always have, but we need to be specific, as Saint Paul was: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Just as our blessings come to us through the Holy Infant, our gratitude must be returned to God through His Majesty: “It is truly meet and just, right and profitable for us, at all times, and in all places, to give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty, eternal God, through Christ our Lord” (Preface of the Mass — our *true* Thanksgiving, which is what *Eucharist* means).

We do have much for which to be grateful. Here are a few recent developments that we count as blessings meriting our gratitude. In early Fall, an important book on Vatican II was published by Monsignor Brunero Gherardini. The title of its soon-to-be-published English translation is *The Ecumenical Vatican Council II: A Much Needed Discussion*. I’ve read the book, and in my humble opinion it is a blockbuster. Monsignor Gherardini is a Canon of St. Peter’s Basilica, the secretary for the Pontifical Academy of Theology, professor emeritus at the Pontifical Lateran University, and the editor of *Divinitas* magazine. He is now eighty-five years old, and is using his prestige and sage status to ask some important and challenging questions throughout this lofty theological meditation on the nature of a unique, and exclusively “pastoral” ecumenical council. In the end, the author makes a solemn appeal to the Holy Father to settle innumerable open questions definitively. The volume caused a stir in Italy and may possibly cause a bigger one in its English and French editions.

On Sunday, October 18, Archbishop Raymond Leo Burke celebrated a Solemn High Pontifical Mass in Saint Peter’s Basilica. In attendance were some seventy priests and enough faithful to fill the Basilica’s Blessed Sacrament Chapel to overflowing. This was the first High Mass in the classical rite celebrated in Saint Peter’s in forty years — a very symbolic number! This is a sign that liturgical tradition is alive and welcome in the very heart of the Church: Rome.

On Tuesday, October 20, we received the generally unexpected news that His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, has cleared a canonical path for Anglicans seeking union with the Holy See to do so in a corporate way, and without altering the Holy See’s steadfast position on the invalidity of Anglican Orders, which many progressivists were falsely representing as an open question. May *Anglicanorum Coetibus* help many souls come into the true Church from the Anglican schism!

On Monday, October 26, the much anticipated Rome-SSPX discussions began on a good note, as reported by Vatican Information Service. Regardless of our historically poor relations with the Society of St. Pius X, we cannot help but be pleased that the rift between them and the Holy See may soon come to an end, and in terms favoring Tradition.

Clearly, the coalescence of some of these things is by design. And whatever is not strictly planned to coincide fits quite well with the atmospheric change in the Church brought about by our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, the Pope of *Summorum Pontificum*.

Certainly we are not content that these recent developments have *fixed* things with any finality. Truly, the Church is in a serious state of crisis. She is in a crisis of morals, of liturgy, of catechesis, of pastoral practice, and of culture. But mostly, she is in a crisis of faith.

To overcome this crisis, a truly integrated approach to doctrine and practice is necessary. What do I mean by that? “Integrated” means “whole” or “complete,” as in having the requisite parts all functioning in their proper hierarchy and subordination. Let us take only one area of doctrine: Right now, many Catholics speak of God’s mercy as if it somehow functions independently of His revealed truth, His justice, His grace, or His providence. “Harsh” dogmas are swept under the carpet of this *monistic* mercy and not only concealed, but dissolved. Not the least of these is the dogma “no salvation outside the Church.” An integrated approach to the sublime truth of God’s mercy views it as part of a marvelous whole, which includes God’s abundant actual grace, His

providential arrangement of human affairs, His Church, His sacraments, His ministers (priests, missionaries, the holy angels), etc.

None of God's attributes contradicts His revelations, which come to us through the "proximate rule of faith," that is, the infallible Magisterium of the Catholic Church. *God is inscrutable, but He is not an oxymoron.*

Father Feeney used to say that many surprises await us in Heaven, but none of them will contradict what we know by faith in this life. Vision will show us *just how amazingly true* all we believe really is, and this vivid, face-to-face experience of what we now see "through a glass in a dark manner" (1 Cor. 13:12) will astonish us. Seized by the beauty and goodness of God, we will be fully transported into the ecstatic and direct contemplation of Truth, but that Truth Itself will remain untouched. *Veritas Domini manet in aeternum!* "The truth of the Lord remaineth for ever" (Ps. 116:2).

But the malign mercy monster of neo-modernism would dissolve that Truth.

In short, while there are many encouraging signs, the badly needed reform of the Church is far from over. But what of us? What is our role in all this? Our little assignment is to try to make better known and appreciated the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation. Without the docile adherence, **by the whole Church**, to this binding, infallible doctrine, none of the advances made for Tradition will be truly effective or lasting. Thankfully, we have been getting a better hearing in recent times, and the Crusade is being taken more seriously by priests, religious, and lay faithful the world over.

And this brings us back to the theme of gratitude. The death of Brother Francis on September 5 brought us great sorrow, but even here we must render thanks to God. We are grateful for the many blessings we received through this man, who was a model of so many virtues, and who eagerly and generously imparted his abundant wisdom to any willing to be his student. Presently, for instance, I am reminded of his profound gratitude. The word "gratitude" was so often on his lips, and the virtue it stands for so fully exemplified and clearly imparted by the man that it's one of those words or phrases I recall in his sweet, familiar Arabic accent.

So, as Brother Francis taught me to do, on behalf of all the brothers and sisters, I say sincerely, "**Thank you!**" for all of your support. Without it, we simply could not carry out our apostolate. I also ask for your continued benefactions, which remain sorely needed. Your contributions go to the support of such things as:

- The education and formation of our young religious brothers and sisters.
- The material support of the priests who minister to us.
- Our *Mancipia* newsletter, and other publications.
- The expenses associated with our very fruitful Internet apostolate.
- Maintenance of our (now larger than last year) physical plant. Among other things, **two roofs and one basement are now in need of repair.**
- Vehicle maintenance on the small, hard-driven fleet that shuttles our brothers and sisters all over the Northeast (and elsewhere) distributing our books and spreading the faith.

The *Roman Martyrology* for December 25 tells us that "when the whole world was at peace, in the sixth age of the world, Jesus Christ, eternal God, and Son of the eternal Father, desirous to sanctify the world by His most merciful coming... is born in Bethlehem of Juda, having become Man of the Virgin Mary." Through the maternal intercession of that same most holy Virgin, may His merciful coming at Mass and Holy Communion sanctify each one of you and your families this Christmas.

In the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

Br. André Marie

Brother André Marie, M.I.C.M.
Prior

P.S. If you would like a "non-Theologically Correct" definition of God's mercy, consider this offering from Blessed Columba Marmion: "The mercy of God is the infinite goodness diffusing itself into the hearts of us wretched ones." Consider this a Christmas present from Dom Marmion and me.

