

Traditionalist 'Rebel Archbishop' puzzled by title

by Carol M. Ostrom

Times religion reporter



He's known as the "Rebel Archbishop," but clearly, Archbishop Marcel LeFebvre finds the title somewhat puzzling. A soft smile creases his face as the frail, 77-year-old leader of a worldwide religious society intent on maintaining the traditions of the Catholic Church, considers the word "rebel."

LeFebvre, ordained a priest in 1929, never accepted the modernizing of the church ordered by the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960s, and founded his own order, the Society of St. Pius X. Against orders from the Vatican, he continued to celebrate a 16th-century Latin Mass, and later, ordained priests in his seminaries in Switzerland and elsewhere.

In 1976, Pope Paul VI suspended LeFebvre, dealing him the harshest punishment a pope can give a bishop short of excommunication. Last year, the society again was thrust into the public eye when a priest ordained by LeFebvre, who had left the society, tried to stab Pope John Paul II in Portugal, shouting "Down with the pope," and "Down with Vatican II."

Today, the society claims a following of more than 250,000 members worldwide -- the largest and best-known of several organizations of Catholics who resist the modernized liturgy.

LeFebvre, who was in Edmonds earlier this week to bless the newly acquired Corpus Christi Chapel, claims that the churches of the "modernists" are emptying, while those that maintain the church's 2,000-year-old traditions are growing.

He and his followers maintain that it is not they, but the others, who have "broken" with the true Roman Catholic Church.

"I am a rebel against communism," LeFebvre says in a halting and heavily French-accented English.

"I am a rebel against modernism. But I am not a rebel against the Catholic Church," he concludes.

A crowd of about 250 turned out for the Mass, which was conducted in the formal

style common before Vatican II, with the altar turned away from the congregation. Women wore head coverings, and some in the congregation seemed a little rusty about just when to kneel and when to rise during the service.

According to Emma Craig, one of the original group of 19 local Catholics who began meeting in basements and rented halls in 1977, the church was acquired from the Baptists for \$260,000 — raised by the 450 on the society's local mailing list.

There are now six such "missions" in the Pacific Northwest.

Those who attended Tuesday's Mass bristle at the word "traditional." It has a pejorative implication, they say, that is unfair. "The archbishop is doing nothing wrong," says Kathy Kennedy, wife of Pat Kennedy, the church's coordinator.

"He's just doing what he was ordained to do — other people have fallen into this way of perverting the Catholic Mass." Father Jose, a member of another traditionalist group, agreed. "To me, he's fighting a great cause and fighting a great battle for the church. I wish we had more bishops who would stand up to the church and do this."

The Rev. F. Douglas Laudenschlager, head of the society's Pacific Northwest missions, says those in the society regard LeFebvre's suspension as "null and void." "What was right, what Pope Pius had praised him for, did not overnight become a sin," he says. Mass, he says, should not resemble a "parish party," but should be a "mystical renewal of Christ's sacrifice." The "new" vernacular Mass, those in the society believe, no longer is a Catholic Mass.

The Mass, though, isn't the only issue, Laudenschlager says.

"Sometimes people don't understand how far-reaching the crisis in the church is. It's not just a matter of translating the Mass

into English, or priests wearing turtleneck sweaters, but in many instances, a rejection of the traditions of the church, and her morals, and just about everything."

"We acknowledge that many of the bishops look with disfavor on what we're doing," he says, "but we think we're perfectly justified under the laws of the church. If it were perfectly all right 20 years ago, it's not dangerous to anyone's soul now."

Like all the 14 priests in this country who follow LeFebvre, Laudenschlager generally offers three or four Masses in different cities each Sunday, he says. Typically, he will conduct two in Post Falls, fly to Seattle for a midday Mass, and to the Tri-Cities area for an evening service.

According to a local archdiocese spokesman, Maury Sheridan, a priest who is not in "full communication" with the Vatican cannot preside at the Roman Catholic Eucharist or any liturgical rites.

But because LeFebvre is a "duly ordained" priest, the Mass is "valid" for those attending, although it is unlawful under Church law, according to Sheridan.

Officially, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen, who perhaps typifies the "modern" traditions of a less formal and more politically conscious church, has no comment.

And other church officials dispute allegations that Catholic churches offering modern services are emptying. "Lately, church attendance is very strong," says Rev. Michael Ryan, chancellor of the archdiocese.

"I haven't observed any of our churches getting empty."

Still, LeFebvre and others who cling to the traditions claim that a great number of Catholics are seriously disenchanted with the new directions of the church.

"I meet all sorts who say; 'Well, we really don't like what's going on,' but (who) don't have the courage to resist," Laudenschlager says.

Courage is necessary because the society inevitably arouses strong feelings, members

say. In the Midwest, Rev. Hector Bolduc, the society's supervisor for the South and West districts, has been involved in a number of disputes with former parishioners, according to stories by Eric Palmer, of The Kansas City Star.

Several former parishioners, including some who had contributed unpaid labor to help rebuild a seminary acquired by the society in 1978, were sent letters by Bolduc warning them not to "ever visit or step foot" on the property after they began to criticize the society's operations.

On both sides, the feelings run hot. "People are giving him money," complained one Seattle woman, who called the society "a cult."

But LeFebvre, who spent 10 years as an assistant to Popes Pius XII and John XXIII, hardly conjures up that image.

LeFebvre is, for instance, still hoping for a reconciliation with the Vatican. And he has not taken the one step that apparently would assure him excommunication: ordaining a bishop.

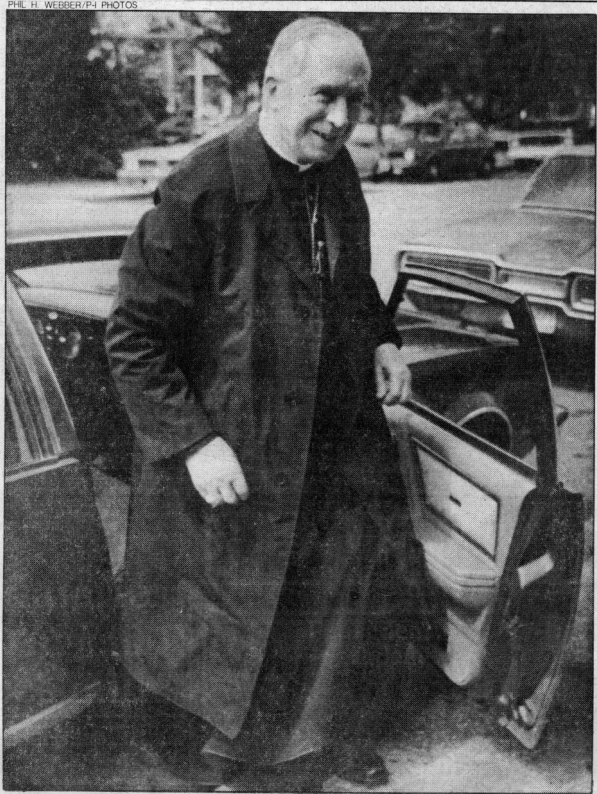
Although he says he plans to step down in three months as head of the society, he won't say whether he plans to ordain his successor. There are rumors, he says; that the Vatican may issue a document relaxing the restrictions on the traditional Latin Mass.

So far, LeFebvre has met several times with Pope John Paul II, and although he has not been further censured, neither has his suspension been lifted.

Relations he says, are "becoming better." Still, he acknowledges, "They are not very good now."

"Now in Rome they don't like tradition," he says. "The modernists — they are against me because I continue the traditions."

AB Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Wednesday, May 11, 1983



Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre arrives at Corpus Christi Chapel in Edmonds to bless the church and conduct a Latin Mass. Several hundred traditionalist Catholics gathered to worship with the French priest.

THE FOUNDING OF CORPUS CHRISTI CHAPEL Edmonds, Washington

On February 13th, 1977, nineteen people met in a home across the street from St. Joseph's Church on Capitol Hill in Seattle. Their purpose was to form an organization dedicated to bringing the True Faith back to the Puget Sound region. These people had been driving distances up to 125 miles each way in order to attend the Traditional Masses of the O.R.C.M. in Tacoma and that of Father Normandin in Vancouver, 'B.C. Now it was felt, that this was the time to bring the blessings of the True Mass to those people who could not make those long trips, as well as to those who could.

Clint Garrod of Bellevue was chosen to head the new group, with Dorothy DeBartolo as Secretary

and Emma Craig as Treasurer.

Contacts were made with priests who were known to be Traditional and they agreed to celebrate Mass in Seattle when their schedules would permit. In the meantime, the group met monthly for recitation of the Rosary and an exchange of ideas. A set of Mass tapes was purchased and the group was again allowed to hear Mass. But that was only a substitute for the real thing.

In August, Father Anthony Ward came to Seattle and celebrated Mass for a large group of people at the Senior Center in Edmonds. Mass was followed by a potluck dinner when everyone had the opportunity to talk to Father Ward and to become acquainted with each other. It was a heartwarming event and was the beginning of the feeling of belonging to a parish.

In August, the group filed for registration as a Washington Non-Profit Corporation. September 12, 1977, The Traditional Movement of Washington was officially incorporated, with Clint Garrod named as president, Gene Kennedy as vice-president, Dorothy DeBartolo as secretary and Emma Craig as treasurer.

Father James Bragola came to the Seattle vicinity in mid-October and celebrated Mass at the home of Gene and Ida Kennedy. To accommodate the large crowd, all the furniture had to be moved out of the dining room and family room.

During the summer, Barbara Ballew went to Paris where she visited the church of St. Nicholas de Chardonnay. This church had been occupied by the Traditionalists only a short time before (and is still in their possession), and entry could be gained only through the back entries, past the sentries who guarded the entrance. Barbara was very impressed by these people who were associated with the Society of Saint Pius X, and upon her return, suggested the group seek affiliation with the Society. A meeting was called to discuss this proposal and by a majority vote, it was agreed that Barbara should make the arrangements. It was at this time that Barbara Ballew undertook the task of handling the correspondence relating to affiliation with the Society. She later accepted the handling of the advertising in the phone book yellow pages and in the newspapers.

A decision was made to seek a tax-free status in order that our members could claim a deduction on their income taxes. This proved to be a complex procedure involving filing a tax return, amending the "Corporation Charter" to comply with IRS requirements, a lot of correspondence and then a long wait for approval. The tax-return was filed on March 12, 1978 and it wasn't until June of the following year that approval was finally received.

On May 18, 1978, the Traditional Movement officially applied for affiliation with the Society of Saint Pius X. On June 1, 1978, a letter was received from Father Daniel Dolan, advising that the application had been accepted, with the name of the group being changed to the "Corpus Christi Mission" (since June 1st was the Octave day of the Feast of Corpus Christi), and a schedule of monthly Masses was arranged.

In December of 1978, Father Gerard Hogan was appointed the first pastor of Corpus Christi Mission. Father appointed Joe DeBartolo as Co-Ordinator; Barbara Ballew was named Corresponding Secretary and Emma Craig remained the treasurer. Ida Kennedy was named Sacristan and Gene Kennedy was the new president as the Garrods had left the group. Father Hogan was instrumental in setting up the ladies' guild which he named St. Juliana's for his favorite saint. In November, 1979, Father Hogan was transferred to England. With his departure; Joe-DeBartolo resigned as Co-Ordinator. The position re-

mained unfilled for several months.

The new pastor was Father Gregory Post, who was assisted by Father Terence Finnegan. The Mass schedule was changed to a weekly basis, except for the second Sunday of each month when there was a Mass at Tacoma.

Father Finnegan finally persuaded Gene Kennedy to accept the Co-Ordinator job in order to keep the Mission together.

Gene had been doing most of the work since Joe had resigned, so he was the logical person to call on.

The ladies' guild sponsored a pancake breakfast, a pot-luck dinner and several bake sales. The money raised by these endeavors was used to purchase altar linens and other altar supplies. St.

Juliana's merged with St Helen's when it was formed to accommodate north side people in 1980.

In May 1980, Archbishop Lefebvre confirmed several of the Corpus Christi people in Post Falls Idaho. A great many of these people were marooned by the eruption of St. Helen's, an experience which they will never forget.

St. Helen's was now the only ladies' guild in Corpus Christi. It has promoted four Christmas Bazaars, three picnics, several bake sales, a spaghetti dinner, several rummage sales and has instituted the classic "Coffee And". All money earned by these events is used for the beautification of the altar and for necessities of the altar, including the Hosts and the Sacramental wine.

In August of 1981, Father Douglas Laudenschlager became the new pastor and Masses were celebrated weekly and on Christmas Day.

In March of 1982, Gene Kennedy passed away after a short illness. Father Laudenschlager sang the Requiem High Mass with Father Finnegan, who had flown in from Phoenix to assist. Gene's passing was mourned by the parish and a fund was started in his memory by Ed Dick.

In February of 1983, the Corpus Christi Chapel acquired the church building it presently occupies in Edmonds, Washington. Archbishop Lefebvre came to consecrate the chapel. On January 7th, 1985, the church caught fire from the antiquated heating panels in the basement and suffered severe damage. It was fully covered by insurance with the Aetna Casualty and Surety Co. and was repaired. The church was actually in better shape after the repairs than it was when it was purchased.

In August of 1984, Father Daniel Couture replaced Father Laudenschlager who had suffered ill health for some time.

After the death of his father, Pat Kennedy was named Co-Ordinator. Pat married Kathy Baretta, the wedding being performed by Father Laudenschlager, and the two of them have been enthusiastically helpful in expanding the scope of the church. They both deserve a thank-you for their hard work.

Of the original nineteen people who met in that Capitol Hill home on February 13, 1977, only Luana Malarz remains. The others have passed away, moved away, or dropped out.