

A CASE OF ROBBERY

We have been robbed. By “we” I mean those Catholics born after 1956. By “robbed,” I mean raised with little or no understanding or knowledge of Catholic doctrine, practice, or heritage. What does it mean to be a Catholic in the 1980s? Why are we not Protestants? How are we different? Does it matter? And most of all, why were we not told the answers to these questions by priests, nuns, or our parents? We will try to find some solution to these problems and, coincidentally, include some tips on rebuilding Catholicity in a hostile environment.

To start with, we must take stock of ourselves. Since we are all going to die, and since the time spent dead is much longer than that spent alive, it follows that our religion, our Church, must be the most important thing in our lives. Is it? Are we more concerned with securing eternal happiness, or with temporary pleasure? Will an MBA from a really good business school provide salvation? Is possession of high grade cocaine a plus in the day of judgment? If you answer affirmatively, then you will pardon my preaching and proceed to heaven via Club Med.

For those of us left behind, the question remains: How necessary to us is our religion? The litmus question is this – would we die for it? Could we, like St. Thomas More, sacrifice everything in its defense? If the answer is yes, the question becomes “why?” If no, it is time to join our Club Med-bound brethren.

The “why” here is most important.

The most common perceptions of the Church today are either that it is a very wealthy and flawed organisation which is somehow important, or (for the more devout) that it is the assembly of believers gathered together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper and heard the word of God. This last is very nice, doubtless, but I would find it very hard to die for either

idea. Really, it would be too much to put off a ball game, let alone die, for the Church. Luckily, neither is true.

The first definition is held by those individuals who are misinformed about the history of the Church, and about human psychology. While Christ did not appoint Monsignori, or prescribe the shape of the host, he didn't sit under a tree expect his teaching to be maintained through racial memory either. In the setting aside of Peter, and the delineation of apostles versus regular disciples, we see the main outlines of the hierarchy of today. If Christ saw fit to establish a structure, He must have had a reason. He was God, after all. One might say, then, that the Church is worth our attention and study, at very least, if He put so much time into its creation. A manufacturing company in existence under the same management since the time of the Roman empire would excite our interest, so why not the Church?

The second definition is partly true, and thus much more destructive. One assumes that the reader of this book is sincerely interested in his religion or, he would not have picked up the book. And having perhaps been active in his local parish, parochial school, or Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, this is the definition he has most likely been taught. But it is only a part of the truth. It is as misleading on its own as being taught that the U.S.A. is merely the strip of land separating Mexico from the Dominion of Canada. The concomitance of that teaching – that priests are merely presidents of the worshipping assembly with no quasi-“magical” powers of transubstantiation; that the Eucharist is merely a memorial of the Last Supper; that all forms and doctrines are changeable according to the whims of the day; that the Pope is merely the chief bishop, and the papacy is optional in any case; and worst of all, that truth is dependent upon man's understanding, rather than God's will – is not merely Protestant or Modernist, but satanic. If you assault the teachings of God's church, you assault God. And the wages of that sin are certainly death. What is truly

inexplicable is why people would reject the filet mignon of Catholicism for the Big Mac of pseudo Catholicism. Yet this is what a large part of the generation of Catholics which preceded us have done. Still, what is one to expect from the generation who brought us Mood Rings and Pet Rocks?

To truly understand the extent of the damage done to the Catholic Church as a human institution, we must examine what wreckage is left from the attempt of our fathers and elder brothers to remake the Church in their own, admittedly somewhat tacky, image. If you can obtain a pre-1960 missal, one of the things that will strike you is the mystery, the depth, of the liturgy described there. A detailed and complete missal is a very good guide to authentic Catholicism, and is uncommonly good literature as well, but what did the beat generation, in their great haste to be trendy, leave us? A watered down rite that is as uninspiring as it is insipid. What reflection of the glory of God is it? Even a junior high student would know that “All glory and honor *is* yours...” is poor usage. Not content with stealing the majesty and solemnity of the mass, they took its grammar too. Even Luther and Cranmer stopped at that.

This bebop “rebel without a cause” attitude affected every sector of Catholic practice in the 1960’s and 70’s, and is with us yet. But by trivialising the Church in their care, our predecessors did more than gratify their own egos. They made the Church appear to be less than worth dying for, and thus less than worth living for. And in doing so they lost the greater part of our generation.

In the following pages, we will attempt to put before your eyes some of the now not-so-trendy concepts our aged father-in-the-faith propounded, and the truths they abandoned. The time is coming when we young people will hold the Church in our hands. If we are to do our duty to Christ the King, we must accept the challenge of Catholic reconstruction. To do that, we must each of us acquire the

education denied us. We could not help being robbed; we can blame only ourselves if we remain poor.