



Society of St Pius X District of Canada

Centre Saint-Joseph, 1395 rue Notre-Dame, Saint-Césaire, Qc, J0L 1T0
Tel. +1 450 390 1323 - www.fsspx.ca

LETTER TO FRIENDS AND BENFACTORS

The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius

February 1st, 2019

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

While reading the biography of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, one cannot help but admire how Providence prepared this new David to victoriously take on modernist Goliath. His life in the seminaries, in the missions, as a representative of Rome, at the head of a large religious congregation – all these things and more were a preparation for his greatest work of all: the Society of Saint Pius X.

With this Society, it was not only the Tridentine Latin Mass of all time and priestly formation that he would go on to save – it was, at the heart of this formation, all those treasures coming forth from the different gardens of the Church. For example, he had a true love for the sacred liturgy – an authentically *Benedictine* love, where the altar of sacrifice and the divine office are at the centre of it all. This makes sense: after all, was not Archbishop Lefebvre related to the famous Dom Gaspard Lefebvre, so well-known for his daily missal?

Archbishop Lefebvre, Roman through and through, was also deeply Thomist. *Spiritual Journey*, his last book, is an overview of the *Summa Theologica* – an antidote par excellence in these times of crisis. He therefore left us a very *Dominican* heritage.

Who cannot see in the Society's *missionary* zeal an echo of the very life of its founder? "The Society is essentially apostolic, because the Sacrifice of the Mass is as well..." he wrote at the beginning of the Statutes of the Society.

I would also like to add that Providence willed to also give the Society, at its very beginning, in a most unexpected way, an "irresistible" *Jesuit* instrument for the conversion of souls, for the recruitment of vocations, for priestly sanctification and for the battles we will have to fight: this, in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius.

In May 1971 (that is, in the very first year of *Écône*), the Reverend Father Ludovic-Marie Barrielle (1897-1983), by one of those sudden and surprising changes of direction, offered himself to Archbishop Lefebvre as spiritual director of *Écône*. Father Barrielle brought with him the famous method of giving the *Spiritual Exercises* according to Father Vallet (of whom he had been a confidant). He had nearly thirty years' experience preaching this retreat to tens of thousands of retreatants.

Provincial Superior for France of the Parochial Cooperators of Christ the King (CPCR), Father Barrielle had been at the heart of the fight for Christ the King between the post-war period until the Council, with the retreat house of Chabeuil, in France – where a large part of the Catholic intellectuals from France, Switzerland and beyond would come to be revitalized. It was fierce fighting against the *Nouvelle Théologie* (1951), which was just coming to be – organizing *La Cité Catholique* and its study groups with Jean Ousset – then, the Order of Knights of Our Lady, and other groups fighting for the rights of God and of His Church.

Alas! Mystery of iniquity! The Council and its reforms, its false obedience, and above all the New Mass of 1969 pushed all these fine works to the ground, starting with the CPCR themselves! How could one fight for the Kingship of Christ with a Mass that is ecumenical, liberal, and neo-Protestant?

It was Archbishop Lefebvre who finally got the better of this great preacher who came to Écône to talk to him about obedience to the reforms. It was a question of uniting all the forces into a new counter-reform, in the face of a neo-Protestantism which was becoming more and more aggressive. There was nothing better to do than to return to these Exercises «which every good soldier of Christ should use» (Pius XII), in all their primitive purity.

«If everywhere, through all the orders of Christian society, these Exercises are propagated according to Our advice and are practiced with care, they will produce a spiritual renewal: piety will be enkindled, the forces of religious will be nourished, the apostolic office will unfold its fruit bearing branches, and peace will reign in society and in the hearts of all.» (Pius XI)

Father Barrielle hoped for some years to recruit some of Archbishop Lefebvre's seminarians to revive the real CPR. But again he had the humility to yield to Providence, which inspired him instead to give the knowledge and love of the *Exercises* to the entire Society. Thus, nearly 50 years later, our priests have preached them in all the languages of the many countries in which their ministry is carried out, including Chinese, Japanese, Tamil...

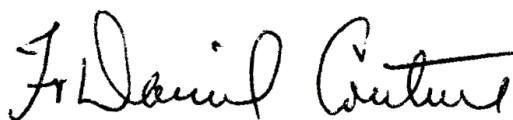
It is therefore important for all the faithful to understand these *Exercises*. It is not an ordinary retreat, like a retreat that one could attend on the Blessed Virgin, or on the Holy Mass. It is necessary to situate the *Exercises* in their original historical context and in today's world – where we have gone so far as to put a statue of Luther on a pedestal in the Vatican. They are *Exercises* to overcome oneself, to detach oneself from all disordered attachment - and God knows how strong the devil is to attach us to trifling things! Traditionalists are often tempted to be proud, like the Pharisees and the Protestants, tempted to rest on the fact that they have the Faith and Mass, and that they are thus saved automatically. St. Ignatius puts us before the true reality of the purpose of life, of sin, of Hell to be avoided, of Heaven to win. The rules of «discernment of spirits» and those of «thinking with the Church» are treasures little known and yet so useful for the spiritual life, for living one's Catholic faith in a completely disoriented world.

Too many of our faithful are content with Sunday Mass without ever taking the time to deepen their Catholic life. This is surely one of the reasons why the Church cannot manage to pick herself up ... According to Father Vallet's method, these *Spiritual Exercises* generally only take five days - and everybody can find five days every one or two years! They are really worth an eternity. If you have never made one, sign up; if you have already made one, sign up again, and sign up others along with you! «Persevere, come back, recruit!» See the Society's websites for the locations and dates of the next retreats.

News from the District:

- In this month of February, Father Bouchacourt, Second Assistant, is visiting some of our priories (when he is not prevented by snowstorms!)
- On February 2, in the seminary of the United States, a young Canadian from Calgary, Clinton Leussink, received the cassock, and another from Toronto, Joseph McManus, received the tonsure.
- We currently have 8 Canadian seminarians in Society seminaries. The cost of training is close to CAD \$ 7,000 per year. Have you ever thought of financially «adopting» a seminarian, a future priest? Who would not want to have a priest among his children? Adopt one! They all need help. (Write to the district for more information.)

A blessed Lent to all!



Fr. Daniel Couture
District Superior