

Bring Our Church Up to Date

Many people want our Church to update itself to be in today's world and to use the standards of today. While these intentions may be well-formed it is the danger of what is called Modernism. Our Church has on occasion used *modernism*, for example our churches have pews (or is that a latinization?) Not really, we arrived in this country, we bought church buildings that had pews already. We have had calls to modernize by shortening the liturgy, reducing fasting and strictness of the fasts. These we have done. There have been calls to allow priests to be able to remarry if his wife dies, this we have not done. We have in many cases accepted the new calendar, which is not the traditional calendar of the Church. While some may say that the use of English is a modernization to make our Church welcoming to Americans, in reality, our Church has always used the language of the people whether it be Old (Church) Slavonic or Greek, Ukrainian, English or, increasingly, other languages.

In our current situation especially in light of the preparation for the October, 2024 Synod of bishops, there have been cries especially in the German church for the ordination of women, gay marriage and electing bishops by the people. The argument put forth is that the Church must adopt the structures and processes of secular liberal democracy. The Germans add and say "all positions in the Church including bishops and pastors are to be elected and term-limited". Decisions of a pastor and a bishop could be overruled by a majority vote of their selected bodies. The pope's job is to confirm the results of the elections that choose them.

Modernism, the heresy condemned by the Church, has two original errors. The first is the belief that Jesus never intended to start a Church and a sacramental system. They are people's inventions. So, should the Church drop dogmas and just offer its members hope? The other flaw is that religious truth exists in the heart and mind of the individual believer, not is some unchangeable, objective reality, exterior to man.

At the very core of this is the supremacy of an individual's belief. While in Protestantism is seen as the ability of a person to interpret scripture that that makes it the correct understanding. This is not the true interpretation of the text which has at its purpose a greater understanding, not a new teaching. There are no new teachings because the revealed truth ended with the death of the last apostle, the Evangelist John.

Keeping up with the times is what makes Modernism the collection of all heresies because some of its ideas are ageless and have been heard in the Church for centuries. So, as now happening, there are some Gnostic practices coming around again in suggesting changing the definition of marriage.

Faith, or what we believe in our Church, is supernatural and mysterious based upon what God has revealed and taught by the

apostles and their successors in the name of Jesus Christ. We firmly believe what God has revealed and what the Church teaches us. Believing is adhering to the teaching which is based upon the authority of God's Word and has been recognized as truth since the early days of the Church Fathers. These are things that cannot be changed because they are from God.

Faith, or belief, for the Modernist, has as its origins a private consciousness. It is based in the belief of an individual, not in God. Erroneously Modernism says the truth of religion is already in the person who does not need a teacher because the truth is found in the universe, everyone believes it. This way, one person speaks from their mind and heart and the rest agree because they feel the same way. Thus some claim that a tie-in with the teaching of Jesus may be made. To a Modernist, Jesus would just be agreeing with them, as if Jesus were not the true source of the teaching. Is such an individual correct to say that through their act of interpretation that Jesus feels the same way?

The teaching of our Church is as a living tree which develops new leaves and fruits and by this we know they are true good by their relation to the source. Anything that grows takes time. There is a general unfolding of doctrine. Just as it took centuries for God to send the Savior, there was a "right time". Jesus could have been sent at the time of Seth (Adam and Eve's other son.). But, preparation of humanity was needed, first in choosing the Jewish people to whom truth would be given. The truth would unfold with the gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses by a monotheistic God. Then is the coming of Christ foretold by prophets.

The Church rejects transitory doctrines, beliefs and practices that come and go as the theological or liturgical fad of the moment. This does not mean that every new idea is Modernism and to be condemned. What is necessary is to look at a new idea and see the truth that is inside it and discover if it contacts with the age-old teachings, then discover if it opposes or supports a teaching of ecclesiastical authority. This principle is why our Churches have pews in this country.

We see so many Modernist teachings in the world today. How do we correct this? By prayer. When Thomas More was condemned to death by his fellow Englishmen for adhering to the authentic faith that they themselves had abandoned, he showed no rancor and refrained from guessing their motives.

He said he hoped and prayed to see them in heaven someday, and he knew it was possible, because both Stephen, who was stoned to death, and Saul, who held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, now stand side by side as saints of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We should be so charitable. We should be so true.

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