

The following article first appeared in the April 15, 1986 issue of *The Athanasian*, a traditional Catholic newsletter. Because of its relevancy more than 20 years later, Novus Ordo Watch is pleased to share it with our readers. Its message is something we should all take to heart and then resolve to work even harder this year to, as Pope St. Pius X declared, "*restore all things in Christ.*"

# CATHOLIC ACTION

*by*

Fr. Francis E. Fenton

The term, Catholic Action, as employed by the Church in times past, was a rather technical one and meant the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the Church's hierarchy. Nor could there be any properly so-called Catholic Action without the bishop's authorization. It is obvious that the words are not here used in that sense but rather as a general term to signify a broad range of apostolic activity in which Roman Catholics can engage themselves. Some of those activities would directly relate to the defense or propagation of the Faith; others, because of the nature of a particular issue, would involve participation with non-Catholics as, for example, in anti-abortion demonstrations. (Because abortion for whatever reason is murder, it is forbidden by the moral law of God not only to Catholics but to all without exception.) Manifold, then, are the opportunities for traditional Roman Catholics to become involved in Catholic Action.

The Roman Catholic Church is the one organization on the face of the globe founded by the Son of God for the salvation of mankind. In it alone is found the totality of divine Truth. The code of conduct which it teaches is the moral law of God. The sources of sanctification which it possesses (first and foremost, the Sacraments) are the means whereby multitudes of individuals have led lives of extraordinary holiness within its fold. God alone knows the number of those who have undergone all kinds of suffering and have joyfully accepted the most cruel and barbaric forms of death in martyrdom in glorious testimony to that Church and its divine Founder. And, far and away the greatest of its possessions, there are found therein the supreme act of divine worship, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. ("I dare to say that God, though He be all-powerful, could not give us more; though He be all-wise, knows not how to give more; though He be all-rich, has not more to give." – Saint Augustine)

In a word, there is nothing comparable to the Roman Catholic Faith this side of Heaven. It is unique. It is a pearl of inestimable value. It is a gem of unparalleled worth. It is the treasure of all treasures.

Its greatness, its grandeur, its beauty, its nobility and, above all, its truth have, by the grace of God, led untold millions to become converts to it down through the Christian centuries. And those converts include some of the keenest intellects of their time. It was the famous author and convert to the Church, Robert Hugh Benson, who wrote: “The Catholic Church is supremely what she promises to be. She is the priceless pearl for which the greatest sacrifice is not too great.”

The thoughts expressed in the preceding two paragraphs have been stated numerous times in the pages of this newsletter. Nor would any traditional Roman Catholic disagree with them. Indeed, he could not for they are absolutely true. That being the case then, the living of the Faith in his daily life to the best of his ability should be the predominant concern of his life. And it is safe to say that the vast majority of such Catholics are men and women of prayer; they attend Mass as often as they reasonably can; they receive the Sacraments; they have an awareness of sin and make an honest effort to observe the Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church. And they are concerned too about the spiritual and moral well-being and the living of the Faith of the members of their family and other loved ones. They are, in short, commendable, some even exemplary, traditional Catholics, are they not?

No, they are not. Typical traditionalists, they certainly are. Commendable, exemplary, they certainly are not. How come? Because the traditional Catholics to whom I refer, however praiseworthy they may otherwise be, lack or, at least, fail to manifest a spirit of militancy in relation to the Faith. In other words, while they themselves are good, sincere, wholesome men and women, they fail in their obvious obligation – and it is an obligation – to be activists, apostolic, militant in the promotion and defense of the Faith. The typical traditional Roman Catholic lives the Faith himself but God forbid that he proclaim it “from the housetops” or even endeavor to promote it in one or another of numerous ways in which he could do so. Indeed, were it not for a small percentage of exceptions who are genuinely apostolic and truly dedicated traditional Catholics, one might almost think that traditional Catholicism was supposed to be a strictly personal, private affair, a sort of secret religion. So help me, that’s the impression that may well be conveyed at times. When I tell people with whom I casually converse in my Mass circuit travels that I am a traditional Roman Catholic priest, they invariably ask in effect: What’s that? The Conciliar Church media and the conservative “Catholic” publications do a masterful job, to be sure, in keeping genuine traditional Catholicism a practical nonentity but the generality of traditional Catholics bears a portion of the blame for this condition.

As to what traditional Roman Catholics can do in the way of Catholic Action, well, a more or less complete list of such projects would be a lengthy one indeed. Nor is a detailed listing really needed since so many opportunities are self-evident and others can be found without much effort. Following, then, are a few suggestions for Catholic Action, some of them directly involving the defense or promotion of the Faith, others indirectly so.

1. Protesting in one or more ways (picketing, letters to the editor of the local paper, calling in to radio talk shows) abortion locations, pornographic bookstores, immoral motion pictures, etc.
2. Refusing to purchase any items or merchandise produced by companies or corporations which advertise their wares on morally objectionable and anti-God and anti-Catholic TV programs or in pornographic publications (there are scores of such companies and they produce hundreds of such items); refraining from trading in any stores which carry pornographic material; refraining too from purchasing any products coming from Communist countries, products which are all but certainly made by slave labor. In all of this results are far more likely to be forthcoming if those responsible (the owner or manager of the store, the president of the corporation) are informed of one's action and the reason for it. (Several chain stores around the country, for example, have removed objectionable literature as a consequence of persistent and widespread protest.)
3. Striving to inform others about traditional Catholicism (in contrast to the Conciliar Church), Freemasonry, Communism and so much else of vital importance.
4. Making every reasonable effort to explain and promote the Faith when there is the opportunity to do so (for example, instructing potential converts) and to defend it when it is attacked or misrepresented.
5. Taking advantage of the various opportunities which arise to be an influence and force for good and, in word and deed, to reflect favorably upon the Faith which we profess.
6. If and to the extent that circumstances permit, being active in civil and political affairs, especially those relating to religion and morality. (We may criticize to our heart's content the abhorrent moral condition of the country but, unless we try to do what we can to improve the situation, we are ourselves partially to blame for it. "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.")

Such, then, are a few suggestions for Catholic Action. Dedicated, apostolic, militant action has not been a particularly distinguishing mark of traditional Catholicism to date – and that assuredly is an understatement. How to explain this I do not know. Only in the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are found the answers to the spiritual and moral problems that plague our nation and the world – and the Roman Catholic Church today is traditional Catholicism. One would logically suppose, then, that traditional Roman Catholics would be burning with zeal and ablaze with enthusiasm to bring the glorious tidings of their divine Faith to their fellowmen and to make its influence felt as forcefully as possible upon the American scene. But where are they?

The vast majority of traditional Roman Catholics have a tunnel vision with regard to the Faith, a self-centered outlook, a provincial frame of mind which ill becomes a Roman Catholic at any time – and especially here and now when the remnant of the Church so desperately needs warriors, crusaders,

fighters for the Faith. Each time we recite The Apostles Creed we profess our belief in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints; that is, the spiritual union under the headship of Christ of the Church Triumphant in Heaven, the Church Suffering in purgatory and the Church Militant on earth. But “militant” is defined as “fighting, having a fighting spirit.” The Church Militant today means us traditional Roman Catholics. But where, pray tell, is the militancy? For the most part, what I see is a Church Dormant.

How long more before traditional Catholics cease merely bemoaning among themselves how bad things are and become what they are supposed to be by virtue of the Sacrament of Confirmation – active, dedicated, militant, apostolic warriors for the most glorious cause in the world, Christ and His Church, the Roman Catholic Faith? Catholic Action is not something above and beyond the call of duty, a sort of “take-it-or-leave-it” proposition, for traditional Roman Catholics. It is a *moral obligation* for them. +



**Father Francis Fenton** ranks among the foremost defenders of Holy Mother Church in this troubled era. Born in 1918, this fearless prelate was well trained to do battle with the enemies of Christ. He was educated at Fordham University and at the Catholic University of America, where among his professors was the renowned Monsignor Joseph Clifford Fenton (no relation).

His studies produced a Masters Degree and a S.T.L (Sacrae Theologiae Licentiatus, a Licentiate of Sacred Theology permitting him to teach theology in seminaries and Catholic universities).

Fr. Fenton was a parish priest for over 20 years, serving as pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church in Bridgeport, CN, before being given permission by his bishop to pursue an educational campaign against the forces of Godless communism.

Equally gifted as a writer and orator, Fr. Fenton was one of the first priests in the United States to openly oppose the errors of the Vatican II reforms. His stirring public addresses around the country moved countless Catholics to actively fight the false religion that had taken over their parishes.

In 1980 he started *The Athanasian*, a highly influential traditional Catholic publication, which over the course of fifteen years exposed the evils of the day, both religious and secular, applying the truths of the Faith to refute them.

Fr. Fenton passed to his eternal reward August 3, 1995. Please pray for him.

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