

Lac-Etchemin, April 1, 2006

Father Pierre Mastropietro's reflection upon reading the letter of February 22, 2006, addressed by Archbishop Prendergast to the Sons of Mary. Father Pierre's observations have been inserted after each section of the letter, in order to facilitate the continuation and comprehension of it.

**ARCHDIOCESE  
OF HALIFAX**

**Halifax, Nova Scotia, February 22, 2006**

**Dear Sons of Mary,**

**May the peace and joy of Christ be abundantly with you!**

**On the occasion of the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, I wish to take up my correspondence with you once again after having waited for a favorable time. Several reasons have made me consider this to be a favorable time to get in touch and write to you again.**

The letter of February 22, 2006, written by His Excellency Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J., Archbishop of Halifax and Pontifical Commissioner for the Sons of Mary, sent to Father Eric Roy, Superior General of the Community, on the eve of the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, comes after a silence of more than six months. We respected that silence, even if the Pontifical Commissioner had promised that he would give Father Eric a call immediately upon his return from Rome in August 2005.

Six months passed without any questioning on our part, given that we are so busy with meeting the needs of souls that require our religious services. The joy of seeing this re-awakening and this return to God always sustains us in our apostolate, as it was requested by Vatican II.

Archbishop Prendergast was always sure to find us at our post not only on the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter but at any time because we are always the faithful disciples of the Church of Peter that is evolving in accordance with the Father's plan, announced many millennia ago in Saint John's "Apocalypse". But are not those who are called upon to open the way always misunderstood, contemned and struck by prohibitions?

## **THE PRAYER OF THE LADY OF ALL PEOPLES**

The Archbishop continues his letter by tackling the point of the prayer of the Lady of All Peoples.

**First of all, I wish to bring out a few consequences stemming from a change in the devotion to the Lady of All Peoples, following upon my request that you stop publicly reciting the prayer that is at the very heart of this devotion.**

**To sum it up, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) informed the bishops of the Philippines and other bishops as well, including the bishop of Haarlem, that it does not consider it pastorally timely for a part of the prayer which describes the Lady of All Peoples as the one “who once was Mary” to be recited out loud.**

Here the Pontifical Commissioner refers to the recent intervention of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) on the subject of the prayer of the Lady of All Peoples, whereupon it recommended that the part of the prayer which says “who once was Mary” not be said out loud for reasons of “pastoral timeliness”.

One can ask oneself here to what point it is possible, in all conscience, to set the concrete application of the idea of “pastoral timeliness” within the framework of ecclesial values.... The fact that the CDF imposed upon numerous bishops, among them the bishops of the Philippines and Haarlem, that an essential part of the prayer of the Lady of All Peoples be omitted when it is recited, can only arouse serious questioning when there is always an increasingly greater number of people throughout the entire world who can bear witness to the authenticity of the prayer and the messages of the Lady.

## **BISHOP JOSEPH MARIA PUNT**

Archbishop Prendergast continues by referring to the recent official text published by the Diocese of Haarlem:

**Bishop Punt gave his consent to this consideration, as you can see from the text given as an attachment and which comes from the web site that officially deals with the devotion. The Diocese indicates that the seeress herself said that when a belief enters into conflict with the desires of the ecclesiastical authority, obedience to the authority must prevail (ATTACHMENT 1).**

It is nonetheless surprising that Archbishop Prendergast should suddenly have recourse, by means of a text published by the Ordinary of the diocese in which the apparitions of the Lady of All Peoples took place, to the testimony of the seeress in support of his comments. It is also surprising that he can subscribe to one single message transmitted by Ida, the interpretation of which is rather questionable, and that he makes no mention, with the same spontaneity, of all the other messages of the Lady, in particular those addressed explicitly to all the theologians and representatives of the Church of Rome...

Intentionally or not, by drawing this sentence attributed to Ida out of its context, the Pontifical Commissioner expurgates the prayer of the Lady of All Peoples of a part of its Mystery.

Did not the Lady repeat so many times the necessity of reciting the prayer in its entirety, of not changing anything in it and not cutting anything out from it? Rather, would not the Lady have exacted obedience as much on the part of the ecclesiastical authority as on the part of the little ones?

Here are a few excerpts from the messages of the Lady of All Peoples that may prompt us to reflect upon this point.

1. 29th apparition, May 28, 1951:

*“The Son wants to be obeyed. His will must be carried out.... This is the picture that must be put in circulation. As for the text of the prayer which I dictated to you, nothing in it can be changed.”*

“And the Lady repeats the prayer whose text appears in print before me as she utters the words. The words, ‘now’ (‘send now’) and ‘ALL’ (‘the Lady of ALL Peoples’), are underlined. She specifies: ‘ “*WHO ONCE WAS MARY*” must remain as it is.’ ”

2. 30th apparition, April 1, 1951:

*“I have said: ‘Theology must yield to the undertakings of my Son.’ Here is what I want the theologians to understand: ‘Theologians, the Son, for His undertaking, seeks only what is little and simple. You too must believe in this littleness and in this simplicity which you teach to others. Believe with simplicity.’ ”*

3. 41st apparition, April 6, 1952

*“Tell the theologians that I am not happy about the changes they have made in the prayer. MAY THE LADY OF ALL PEOPLES, WHO ONCE WAS MARY, BE OUR ADVOCATE. That must remain as it is.”*

4. 45th apparition, March 20, 1953

*“The Lady of All Peoples promises peace, true peace. But the peoples, with the Church – and mark this well: with the Church –, will have to say my prayer this very year.”*

**This official text, available in English, Italian and other languages, but not in French, is attached to this letter in English and Italian, accompanied by a commentary by Dr. Mark Miravalle who has shown a great interest in this devotion (ATTACHMENT 2).**

**Both the declaration from the Bishop’s Office and the declaration from the theologian encourage the faithful to obey the request of the CDF. Considering the discussions we have already had on the matter, you will not be surprised that I should remind you again of the importance of your obedience to the authority legitimately established within the Church, that is to say, to the bishops of the dioceses in which your residences are located and to myself as Pontifical Commissioner.**

**In the light of the above-mentioned development, I am disposed to change my request to not recite the prayer of the Lady of All Peoples, a request that had been made through my own authority at the urging and with the agreement of Roman authorities. You may now recite the prayer on condition that you not include the words “who once was Mary”.**

**TO WHOM DO THE SONS OF MARY OWE OBEDIENCE?**

The Pontifical Commissioner, by making his own the pastoral orders of the

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with regard to this essential part of the prayer of the Lady of All Peoples, “who once was Mary”, places the Sons of Mary in a very delicate position. Inevitably they find themselves faced with the obligation, in all conscience, of questioning themselves on the moral legitimacy of a pastoral directive that encourages them to disobey a repeated demand made by the Lady.

Do the Sons of Mary really have the right to follow a pastoral directive that is contrary to an express demand from Heaven? To whom do they owe obedience, first of all: to God or to men?

For the Sons of Mary to subscribe to Archbishop Prendergast’s conditional permission to recite the prayer without the part “who once was Mary” cannot be, in the present context, anything other than a wide open path to compromise, so as to safeguard at any and all costs the image of their future as priests, and thus render themselves guilty of and a party to a much more serious disobedience to the Lady of All Peoples.

#### **MEETINGS TO COME...**

**Secondly, within the prospect of my visit to Rome in May with the bishops of the Atlantic provinces, I consider this to be a good opportunity for me to give an account of the three years of my mandate as Pontifical Commissioner. Therefore, we should evaluate the point that has been reached in our relations, what your expectations for the future are, and what I should recommend to the Holy Father and to the Roman dicasteries during our meetings with their representatives who assist the Holy Father in his ministry in the service of unity.**

**In speaking recently with the Archbishop of Quebec and the Apostolic Nuncio, we agreed to meet next month in order to discuss the present situation and the orientations to be proposed concerning the ministry being exercised by the ordained members of the Sons of Mary in the dioceses of the province of Quebec in general and the Archdiocese of Quebec in particular. Cardinal Ouellet and I will invite certain ones among you to come and meet with us; however, each one of you should feel free to ask to meet with me for a good reason.**

“... Give an account of the mandate..., evaluate the point that has been reached in our relations..., what your expectations are...” there you have

Archbishop Prendergast's considerations after more than three years of mandate. At the same time, he officially invites all the confreres of the Community to solicit an appointment to meet with him "for a good reason".

Here we should underline the fact that, in another more informal note, Archbishop Prendergast specified to Father Eric that, for the meetings scheduled for March 13, 2006, he could be accompanied by another confrere of his choice, provided that this person was not a former Superior General. That marks a strange contrast with the official proposal made in the letter of February 22, 2006, in which the Pontifical Commissioner seems to be inviting all the Sons of Mary to renew their dialogue with him...

#### **A NOVENA TO SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER...**

Archbishop Prendergast invites the Sons of Mary to join him in a novena.

**Thirdly, you know, perhaps, that this year is a Jubilee Year celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Saint Francis Xavier, copatron of the missions with Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. It is a custom in many places to make the novena of grace, from March 4 to 12, a novena addressed to Francis Xavier in order to obtain divine favors. If you would, I ask you to please join me in making this novena, asking for the grace of a reconciliation of minds, as well as the bringing about of a relationship of positive collaboration between us. The details of the novena of grace are attached for your information and for your eventual use (ATTACHMENT 3).**

The Pontifical Commissioner invites the Sons of Mary to pray, and more particularly, to pray a novena addressed to Saint Francis Xavier, in order to ask for the grace of reconciliation and the bringing about of a relationship of positive collaboration...

The asking for a grace of reconciliation and collaboration between brethren who wish to live together and be united is assuredly a very just and good thing. But is that not also and first and foremost the Work and the Mission of the Lady of All Peoples who comes into this world to make of the Church "one single Community" with a view to the Kingdom? If only the Lady's demand could have been accepted and obeyed, and her prayer recited as she taught it to us...

**IN CLOSING...**

**In closing, let me tell you that you are often in my thoughts and my prayers and that I count on your prayers. On this feast which celebrates the unity which Saint Peter and his successors represent for the Church through the Petrine ministry of teaching and authority, let us allow ourselves to converge more closely towards each other in a unity of mind and heart.**

**Sincerely yours in Christ,**

**+ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.  
Pontifical Commissioner**

“To obey God rather than men,” there you have what could constitute a good starting point in order to converge with the Sons of Mary in the wake of the Apostle Saint Peter and the other Apostles towards a better point of arrival... However, for lack of this good point of departure, we can nonetheless thank heaven for the necessary crossroads which, in the infinite wisdom and goodness of the divine plan, mark the birth of the Church of John for the renewal of that of Peter.

Father Pierre Mastropietro, O.F.F.M.

cc: To whom it may concern