

LETTER TO HIS EXC. ARCHBISHOP TERRENCE PRENDERGAST  
FROM SISTER YOLANDE RIBERDY, O.F.F.M.

July 4, 2005

His Exc. Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J.  
Archbishop of Halifax

Your Excellency:

Without any pretentiousness whatsoever, but rather in all simplicity, I wish to share with you my reaction to your letter to Mother Paul-Marie. You refer to your "Ignatian formation". Assuredly, I cannot boast of having received that type of formation but..., perhaps I can be permitted to affirm that, through the circumstances in my life, I was subjected to a strong Ignatian influence. Raised in the parish of the Immaculate Conception in Montreal, I met there several Jesuits and, while I was still an adolescent, my first spiritual director was a Father from the Company of Jesus. Later, when I was a teacher at the Normal School in Dolbeau, I taught catechism using the books from the series *Témoins du Christ: Jésus notre Maître, Jésus notre Modèle, Jésus Sauveur du Monde, L'Église notre Mère*. Now, as you no doubt know, this series was prepared and published by the Jesuits.

Moreover, while I was a member of another community, I had the privilege and the grace of making a thirty-day retreat (therefore, following the exercises of Saint Ignatius!) under the direction of a Jesuit Father. And yet, despite the formation previously received and my great admiration for all the Fathers who had helped and guided me in the past (Fathers Jean Laramée, Réal Lebel, Wilfrid Gariépy, Jules Paquin, Rémi Potvin, etc.), I became a member of the Army of Mary in 1973 without any difficulty, that is to say, without any problem of conscience.

I did not have to renounce my past; it was quite the contrary, in fact, for I found in it all that I had been taught in my parish, at Normal School and in my former community where I lived for 35 years. Discovering a new "Mystery", a new dimension through which to live one's life of faith, hope and love, does not necessarily bring about the rejection of all those dogmas in which we have always believed, of all those spiritual fulfillments which, formerly, nourished our interior life.

Once I was a member of the Army of Mary, but while I was still in another religious community, I taught catechism courses to adults at the parish level. The parish priests who attended my courses never once brought to my attention the slightest doctrinal error in my teaching. In all sincerity and humility, Your Excellency, I do not believe that I was ever "a danger" for the persons who followed my courses.

I hesitated before writing to you for two reasons: first of all, because I loath having to speak of myself, and secondly because I must say something to you in confidence which may offend you. But in the context of the difficult and regrettable events experienced by the Work to which I have belonged for 32 years, my silence would be cowardice...

More than twenty-five years ago, while I was doing pastoral work in a parish in Longueuil, I attended a conference given by Father Julien Harvey, S.J., then the Provincial Superior of the Jesuits. In the presence of the local bishop and numerous priests, Father Harvey declared with assurance: "Hell does not exist... or if it exists, there isn't anyone in it." Now, at Fatima, the Virgin showed hell to Lucia, Francesco and Jacinta, and they saw the many souls that were falling into it. Is an "Ignatian formation" a guarantee of orthodoxy? Has not the Church always taught that

heaven and hell exist?

Father Julien Harvey was Provincial Superior, but there is also another Jesuit, Father Pierre Arrupe, who was the Superior General of your Community and who was condemned by Pope John Paul II. In his case, there are two possibilities: either the condemnation was an injustice or it was justified. In the case of the first possibility, this would prove that a highly placed religious authority can make a mistake. In the case of the second possibility, this would prove that an "Ignatian formation" is not an absolute guarantee of orthodoxy.

There you have, Your Excellency, what my conscience has dictated that I write to you without any rancour, bitterness or animosity. I even thank you for giving me an opportunity to verify, in a concrete way, that the Lord's words addressed to Mother Paul-Marie are being realized: "You will be alone to the end."

I pray for you, Your Excellency, as well as for Pope Benedict XVI who once was His Eminence Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, for Cardinal Ouellet and Bishop Durocher. May the Holy Spirit indwell you and open your mind and your heart to an understanding of the so very beautiful and grand Mystery of the Co-Redemption.

cc.: To whom it may concern

Sister Yolande Riberdy, O.F.F.M.