

# Pastoral Letter from Bishop Paul-André Durocher Regarding "Les Fils de Marie"

May 25, 2005

In the homily at my installation as diocesan Bishop of Alexandria-Cornwall nearly three years ago, I referred to presence of the Fils de Marie in our diocese in these words: "I would simply like to say that I have had the occasion of briefly meeting the two Erics, Daniel and Gilles, and I found them all to be very friendly. I look forward to meeting with them at greater length in order to know them better. Many priests appreciate their ministry in our diocese, as well as many of their parishioners. I hope to ensure their place among us, in agreement with their pontifical commissioner, Bishop Gilles Cazabon, and in the unity of the Catholic faith which I must ensure as diocesan Bishop." Since then, Father Éric Roy has been replaced by Father Luc Beaudette as local superior of the Fils de Marie. My impression has not changed: I continue to find them friendly. What is more, I have come to know their zeal for the ministry, their love of Christ, their spirit of generosity, their deep life of prayer, their desire to collaborate with me in the service of our diocesan Church.

There was one more change: Archbishop Terrence Prendergast of Halifax replaced Bishop Gilles Cazabon as pontifical commissioner of the Fils de Marie. The pontifical commissioner, as his title indicates, is named directly by the Pope to direct the life of a religious order. Though the Fils de Marie are not canonically erected as a religious community, the Holy See judged it best to use this approach in its efforts to resolve the canonical problems and the doctrinal ambiguities that revolve around them. It was with the assent of Bishop Prendergast that the Fils de Marie continued to exercise their ministry in our diocese. Thus, their "place among us" was assured "in agreement with their pontifical commissioner."

On the other hand, I did state that all this had to be done « in the unity of the Catholic faith which I must ensure as diocesan Bishop. » It is in view of this unity of faith that I have recently taken some decisions that I would like to explain to you.

## Problems surrounding the Fils de Marie:

The Fils de Marie are associated to the Army of Mary, founded by Mrs. Marie-Paule Giguère and inspired by her mystical experiences. It is not for me to judge the origin of these experiences, but the interpretations that are made of them, the theories that have been deduced from them are often difficult to reconcile with Catholic Tradition. These interpretations and theories circulate freely in the Army of Mary through their magazine "Le Royaume." This is one of the reasons the Bishops of Canada, after consultation with the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, whose prefect then was Cardinal Ratzinger, published a doctrinal note in 2001 declaring that the Army of Mary could not be considered a Catholic association.

There are certainly some good points to the Army of Mary: Marian devotion, love of the Eucharist, respect for the priesthood, attention to the teachings of the Pope, to name a few. My feeling is that the great majority of people who gravitate around the Army of Mary are attracted by these aspects and have found therein a nourishment for their faith.

Unfortunately, there is more to the Army of Mary than these good points. Using the writings in which Mrs. Giguère describes her numerous mystical experiences (which, by the way, have never been officially recognized by the competent Church authorities), members of the Army of Mary have developed a series of teachings that raise serious questions. Among them, Mr. Marc Bosquart has written a number of such books and articles.

Mr. Bosquart believes that Mrs. Giguère is to Mary of Nazareth as Jesus-Christ is to God the Father. Starting with this conviction, he deduces a series of beliefs:

- that there is a feminine person, the "Immaculate," who shares eternity with God;
- that God the Father fertilized this Immaculate to create the world;
- that this Immaculate was incarnate in Mary of Nazareth, who is thus more than a simple woman: divine, she shares

certain divine attributes with God;

- that this Immaculate is today incarnate in Mrs. Giguère;
- that Mrs. Giguère is completing the redemption that was inaugurated by Jesus-Christ and is in fact the feminine equivalent of the Redeemer;
- that Mrs. Giguère participates in the Eucharist in the same manner as Jesus-Christ;
- that we can conceive the divinity as a "quinternity" in which we find not only the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but also Mary of Nazareth and Marie-Paule Giguère.

The first, third and fourth points that I have just named were all explicitly condemned in the doctrinal note of the Bishops of Canada regarding the Army of Mary. I consider the other points to be just as erroneous. Such beliefs, incompatible with the Catholic faith, are heretical.

Many members of the Army of Mary do not know of these teachings; or, if they know them, do not consider them to be central to the movement. Yet, a movement which wants to be Catholic cannot continue tolerating heretical teachings. The leaders of the Army of Mary have never accepted the Bishops' decision, and to this day continue to allow such teachings to be published in their journal.

## The situation in Alexandria-Cornwall

Since being named pontifical commissioner, Archbishop Prendergast has tried to move forward with the Fils de Marie in a way that would respect both truth and individuals. Reading "Le Royaume" reveals that all his proposals have been rejected by the leadership of the Fils de Marie. Recently, Archbishop Prendergast asked that, in the name of the obedience due to him as personal representative of the Pope, the Fils de Marie cease all devotions to the Lady of All Peoples (a devotion founded on a series of supposed Marian apparitions in Amsterdam which are said to be fulfilled by Mrs. Giguère). Once again, the leadership of the Les de Marie refused.

Faced with this refusal, I had to intervene at the local level. I met with the Fils de Marie present in the diocese: Fathers Éric Robichaud, Daniel Gauthier, Gilles Devaux and Luc Beaudette. Father Éric Roy, superior general of the Fils de Marie, was also present. I established one condition to their continued presence in the diocese: that they sign a document in which they would profess the Catholic faith, reject the heretical teachings of Marc Bosquart and recognize the authority of the doctrinal note of the Canadian Bishops. A few days later, I received their answer: another refusal.

This final refusal convinced me not to renew the contract of pastoral service they had signed with our diocese.

Father Éric Robichaud, on the other hand, has decided not to renew his own commitment to the Fils de Marie. Instead, he has asked to be incardinated in our diocese, which request I have welcomed with joy and thanksgiving. He will therefore remain parish priest of Glen Robertson and Dalkeith.

## A few thoughts

Through my discussions with the Fils de Marie and my reading of « Le Royaume », I have come to believe that there are three fundamental problems with the leadership of L'Armée de Marie.

First, they do not seem to understand that in Jesus-Christ, God has spoken his ultimate Word. There is no new revelation to be awaited. Our challenge is to receive this Word of Life and apply it to the concrete situations which we face. This is an never ending task, for the Word of God is infinite in its richness and its depth.

Secondly, they do not see that the legitimate development of doctrine cannot lead to a contradiction of revealed teaching. For example, our faith teaches that God alone is eternal, and that nothing else exists which has not been created by God; therefore, saying that there exists an "Immaculate" co-eternal with God is not a development of doctrine, it is a contradiction of doctrine. Another example: our faith teaches that God is a Trinity; to affirm God is a quinternity is not to deepen our understanding of the Catholic faith, it is

to contradict it.

Finally, they refuse to recognize that it is up to the Bishops of the Church to judge what is in conformity with faith and what is not. God has entrusted to Bishops the ministry of teaching, and God gives to Bishops the charism of discernment in this domain. To continually refuse the Bishops' judgment is to reject the magisterium, the teaching authority God has given to his Church. One cannot claim to be faithful to the Bishop of Rome while being unfaithful to the Bishops who are in communion with him.

### **In conclusion**

In these days when there are so few priests, it is painful to refuse the services of any priest, even more when the priests in question are young, dynamic, committed and zealous. Yet, we cannot avail ourselves of their service at any cost.

The unity of the Catholic faith is essential. It is my responsibility, as Bishop of this diocese, to protect it and ensure it.

My great hope was that Father Éric Robichaud would not be alone in the wise discernment he has made or in the courageous decision he has taken. I pray that Fathers Daniel Gauthier, Gilles Devaux, Luc Beaudette, indeed, all the Fils de Marie come to their senses and return to full communion with the Catholic Church. I remind them of my friendship, and of my commitment to welcome them and dialogue with them if they so choose in the future.

To all the members and friends of l'Armée de Marie, I ad-

dress this invitation: open your eyes to the perilous way in which you are engaged. Certainly, there is nothing wrong in meeting to pray together, to say the Rosary, to meditate on the teachings of the Pope. But there are other possibilities for doing this in the Church, without belonging to a movement that continues to promote teachings that are contrary to the faith. In the months to come, I would like to gather those who are interested in developing a correct Marian spirituality for all the members of our diocese. I invite you to commit yourself to this beautiful project with me.

Finally, to the parishioners of Fathers Gilles and Daniel, particularly to the youth who have known Father Gilles as pastoral animator at La Citadelle: stay faithful to everything they taught which was true, imitate what you have found in them to be good. But learn also to recognize what is dangerous in their refusal to hold firmly to the Catholic faith or to accept humbly the legitimate authority of the Church. Pray for them.

And please welcome with joy and warmth those who will come to replace them. Together, let us build the People of God, the Body of Christ, in the unity of that faith which has been handed down to us in the Holy Spirit.

Yours in the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

† **Paul-André Durocher**

(This Pastoral Letter is a faithful reproduction of the original except with regard to the page layout.)