

LE ROYAUME

« Que ton règne vienne... sur la terre comme au ciel. »

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In the time of Saint Joan of Arc there were people who believed she had been chosen by Heaven and had a special mission; others did not believe this, and some still do not believe



Bishop
Pierre Cauchon



Joan of Arc burn-
ing at the stake



Catherine Doherty



Teresa of Avila



Alphonse de
Liguori



Jeanne-Antide
Thouret

it. Bishop Cauchon did not believe it and had her condemned as a heretic and relapsed Catholic. So who was in the truth? Those who followed the bishop, or the others?

Here are some other cases that raise questions: in the *Prions en Église* (the French-language missalette) of December 2001, a summary of the life of Catherine Doherty (foundress of Madonna House) is given. It is acknowledged that she had to cease her activities in Canada and quit her own country because of certain priests in Toronto who made life impossible for her. (Cf. p. 191.)

Who was doing God’s will? The people who approved those priests’ conduct, or those who supported that mystic?

History recounts many cases of persecuted mystics. Here are some examples:

– Saint Teresa of Avila (it is she speaking): “*He [the Provincial Superior of the Mitigated branch] was well armed with censures and excommunications for all the Sisters who would give me their vote. Ignoring the threat, fifty-five of the religious voted for me. Each time one of them gave me her vote, the Provincial excommunicated her and heaped maledictions upon her... So now these Sisters were excommuni-*

cated – no Mass, no admission to the choir even outside the time of the office. No one could speak to them: not the convent confessors, not even their parents.” (Yvonne Pellé-Douël, *Saint Jean de la Croix et la nuit mystique*, pp. 34-35)

– Saint Alphonse de Liguori: “*On the occasion of his having made some slight modifications to the constitutions of his Congregation, his own people denounced him to the Holy See as a rebel, and the Pope deprived him of all power over the religious residing in the pontifical states. The holy founder was declared excluded from his Congregation.*” (J.-M. Planchet, *Nouvelle vie des Saints*, 1947, p. 308)

“*Bishop de Liguori was going to enter upon his death throes and die on the cross. And it would be his Institute... and Pope Pius VI – his two loves – who would be the two crossbars of his gibbet.*” (Théodule Rey-Mermet, *Un homme pour les sans-espoir: Alphonse de Liguori*, p. 181)

– Sainte Jeanne-Antide Thouret: One of the times she was absent from France, having gone to Italy to visit her nuns, the bishop took advantage of this to proclaim himself Superior of the Community, and he forbade the Sisters to receive her into their convent. But some of them dared to defy his order, out of charity for their Superior.

– Blessed Anne-Marie Javouhey who was also condemned by a bishop, said to her Sisters, “*‘My children, you have been told that it is a sin to follow me. For myself, I’m telling you that it is not a sin to follow the bishop of Autun. You are free, you will make your choice. You know the institute’s situation.... All those who are for me will rise and the others remain seated.’ The candidates, almost as one, rose, excluding any shadow of doubt. Some seemed to have hesitated; after all, the bishop was, for them, the Church! But on her countenance there was a light that could not be misleading. A small number remained seated...*” (André Merlaud, *Anne-Marie Javouhey*, p. 217)



Anne-Marie Javouhey

– Saint Padre Pio was condemned five times by the Church, one of those times under the pontificate of Blessed Pope John XXIII. And yet, even during the time of his condemnation, his prayer groups remained faithful to him. One of these groups included the one “who once was” Karol Wojtyla, he who was to become Pope John Paul II.

– Another case is that of the foundresses of “Les Petites



Padre Pio of Pietrelcina



Ignatius of Loyola



Margaret Alacoque



Claude La Colombière

Franciscaines de Marie" [freely: the Little Franciscan Sisters of Mary]. They were subjected to all manner of misjudgments on the part of the clergy. Some parish priests even refused them Communion. Even the gentle Father Frédéric (later to be declared Blessed) became indignant with the Sisters: " 'Get up,' he told them angrily, 'I cannot bless you. Saint Francis does not recognize you as his daughters.' And to the Superior, he said: 'You, Reverend Mother, you are leading these daughters with you to hell! No, Saint Francis does not recognize you!' " (Par ce signe tu vivras, Michelle

Garceau, P.F.M., Baie-Saint-Paul, 1989, p. 112) And the book's author makes the following comment: "One must not draw final conclusions from this implacable judgment. Saint Francis will speak again, as will the Lord." (id., p. 113) Fortunately, a Jesuit, Father Langlois, paternally took them under his wing and gave them the sacraments. (Was he perhaps remembering what the Jesuits suffered through their suppression by the Church under Pope Clement XIV?)

Let us take the case of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Everyone is familiar with all that Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and Saint Claude de La Colombière, S.J. suffered for having dared spread a devotion that, at that time, was not considered part of the Church's teaching. What courage and what obedience to Heaven these two had to have!

"The Sacred Heart was calling for a solemn feast on the part of the entire Church. Doubtless, it was this element in the message of Paray, as it seemed to Father de la Colombière, that was the most novel, the most difficult to admit and, above all, the most difficult to realize. In vain did the holy seeress tell him, 'Even if I saw the whole world raging against this devotion, I would never despair of seeing it established, for the Master has guaranteed me that He will reign despite His enemies.' How could he not help fearing that this plan was but foolish ambition, an illusion, a chimaera on the part of a poor Visitandine nun?" (Georges Guitton, S.J., *Le Bienheureux Claude de La Colombière, son milieu et son temps*, p. 288)

Father G. Guitton writes: "The men of the Church, the defenders of tradition, were keeping their guard up against novelties." (id., p. 445)

So, then, we could ask ourselves: in all of these cases (and in many others, even here in Quebec, that could be given), who were the ones who were in the light of the Holy Spirit? Those who remained faithful to the "condemned", or those who followed the authority?

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Other reflections could be forthcoming in regard to various theories current at this time. For example, there are theologians who believe that Mary died; others believe that she ascended into heaven without dying.

Some believe that Mary was present at the institution of the Eucharist; others say the contrary. There is also the belief that Jesus appeared to Mary after His Resurrection, and there is support for the opposing theory.

There are those who advocate the recognition of the dogma of Mary Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate, whereas others are ferociously against it.

In all of these cases, can a bishop or a group of bishops, who are convinced of their belief, condemn those who do not hold the same belief that they do? For example, Saint Bernard did not believe in the immaculate conception of Mary. Did he do the right thing in condemning the canons of Lyon, when, in fact, the Church had not yet stated its official, universal position?

As long as the Church has not defined, officially and universally, a position, it seems that each of the faithful has the right to believe what seems to him to be reasonable. Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bernard incurred no guilt for not having believed in the Immaculate Conception, and, on the other hand, they could not have been excommunicated, for



Thomas Aquinas



Bernard of Clairvaux

the Church had not as yet affirmed this truth as a dogma.

Let us take up now the case of apparitions. There are people who believe in the apparitions of Mary at Medjugorje. There are priests who believe in them and speak of them publicly in their homilies.

Others do not believe in them. Who is right? Who is wrong? The Church condemns no one, because as yet there is no definitive approval or disapproval. And yet when it comes to the apparitions of "The Lady of All Peoples", why does the treatment change?

Approval was given by the local bishop, Bishop Joseph Maria Punt. And each year, bishops from all over the world travel to Amsterdam to celebrate the feast of the Visitation of Mary, something that was recommended by the Lady of All Peoples. (This year there were 25 bishops, an Archimandrite, a Father Abbot, more than 100 priests and about 6,500 pilgrims.) Among them, each year, is Bishop Paul Hnilica, S.J., who sets out from the Vatican to go and pray with these thousands of the faithful.

How does it happen that something is permitted in certain countries, and that in others it is a "sin"? At the present time, there is an apostolate underway in Russia fostering devotion to the Lady of All Peoples. It would not be surprising if Russia were converted before Canada. In any event, Mary, at Fatima, foretold the conversion of Russia.

It cannot but be remarked that numerous Catholics are publicly not following the teachings of God and the Church, even in serious matters, and yet they can participate in the parish pastoral ministry, serve at Mass, give the readings, etc.! But the question does not lie in that.

Contrariwise, the members of the Army of Mary strive to obey God and the Church in every detail, and they are the ones who are punished, have the finger pointed at them, are disparaged from the pulpit and shut out of churches. And yet the Church applies no sanctions against all those persons who scorn the teachings of the Gospel and the Church. Why this difference of attitude?



Maximilian Kolbe



Bernadette Soubirous



Catherine Labouré



Louis Marie de Montfort



M.-Madeleine Postel

As for what concerns the mystery of the Immaculate, it is far from being totally revealed and understood. In

his book, *La doctrine mariale du Père Kolbe*, Father H. M. Manteau-Bonamy, O.P., explains that Saint Maximilian Kolbe, beginning with Mary's private revelation to Bernadette Soubirous – "I am the Immaculate Conception" –, establishes that this declaration from Mary

is far greater than the dogma of "the immaculate conception of Mary". This latter was revealed to Catherine Labouré through the invocation "O Mary conceived without sin...". When Mary proclaims herself "Immaculate Conception" she is proclaiming a mystery that does not deny the dogma, but, rather, goes far beyond it and accords us an even greater joy in and admiration for the Immaculate. It is a mystery that links her to the Holy Spirit.

In short, those who attacked Saint Alphonsus de Liguori believed they were doing their duty; they were sure they were accomplishing God's work. Those who banished Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort were certain they were in the truth. Those who meted out like treatment to Saint Padre Pio, to Saint Jeanne-Antide Thouret, to Blessed Anne-Marie Jahouvey, to Saint Marie-Madeleine Postel and to many others, believed that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

And yet it is these excluded ones, these "excommunicated" ones who are now the glory of the Church.

Father Maurice Pélouquin