



THE DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

The White House,
21, Upgate,
Poringland,
Norwich, NR14 7SH

29th June 1976
Feast of SS Peter & Paul

Fr. Baker, once parish priest of Downham Market, has decided to challenge present arrangements (whereby it was hoped that, as far as the Diocese of East Anglia is concerned, he would confine his involvement in the promotion of the Tridentine Mass to the Downham Market house) by setting up a centre in Bethel Street, Norwich, within a short distance of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

I had hoped to give you in toto the digest, made by the Archbishop of Birmingham, of the Pope's speech to the Cardinals regarding the excesses of Archbishop Lefebvre and those who support him; but the post has let me down. Time presses and there is considerable dismay and confusion around. It is therefore necessary to make certain things crystal clear to our people and I ask you, next Sunday, at the time of the homily or the notices, to read the following instruction:-

Father Baker, by arranging the saying of Mass in the Tridentine rite in various places in the Diocese the latest of which, as noted in the press, is in Bethel Street, Norwich, within a few hundred yards of the Cathedral, is deliberately flouting the authority of the Church, of the Holy Father, and of the bishops in communion with him. I am one such.

The Holy Father made this serious comment when speaking recently (May 24, 1976) of Archbishop Lefebvre as the one most responsible for this refusal to obey, and of the priests and people who support the Archbishop:-

"How can we not see in such an attitude - whatever may be these people's intentions - the placing of themselves outside obedience and communion with the Successor of Peter and therefore outside the Church?"

It is abundantly clear that anyone, priest or layman, who:-

- (a) puts himself out of communion with his bishop,
- (b) and out of communion with the Chief Pastor of the Church, his Holiness the Pope,

is withdrawing from the living Church of Christ. An appeal to Tradition, by which people seem to mean what happened and what was accepted in the past with no account taken of the modifications introduced by the recent reform of the Liturgy, has no weight. In fact, in a spirit of love, the Holy Father says:-

"It is in the name of Tradition that we ask all our sons and daughters, all the Catholic communities, to celebrate with dignity and fervour the renewed Liturgy. The adoption of the new Ordo Missae is certainly not left to the free choice of priests or faithful."

In saying this, the Pope appeals to "the supreme authority that comes (to him) from Christ Jesus" and he requires obedience. He asks us to "reflect on Christ's serious warnings about the unity of the Church and on the obedience that is due to the Lawful Pastor placed by him over the universal flock, as a sign of the obedience due to the Father and to the Son."

Nothing can be clearer than these words. Acceptance of the authority which belongs to the bishop by reason of his charge to govern his diocese, a charge he must exercise in communion with the Chief Bishop of Christ's Church, the Pope, is one of the best known and the most unambiguous marks of what it means to be a Catholic. For the vast majority of you this hardly needs to be said. But some of you, by promoting, however sincerely, the activities of Fr. Baker and other priests of like mind, are discrediting the Church.



To avoid misunderstanding, I wish to make it clear that:-

- (1) Fr. Baker or any other priest has no authority (such authority is required) to celebrate in public i.e. with a congregation, the Tridentine rite of the Mass.
- (2) No one is permitted to join him in these public celebrations without express permission.

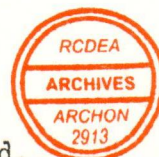
I ask all of you to be of one mind with me, with the Holy Father, with the Church. The consequences of refusing to do this are grievous for all of us, not only for these who argue themselves into the rightness of their disobedience.

Wishing you the blessing of unity and peace,

Yours devotedly,

+ Alan C. Clark
Bishop of East Anglia

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Since typing the attached, the digest, made by the Archbishop of Birmingham, of the Pope's speech to the Cardinals, has arrived, and I give you the appropriate extract for your information.

"A particularly sad example is cited by the Pope. A retired bishop, Archbishop Lefebvre by name, has set up a seminary of his own in Switzerland at a place called Eccone. In defiance of the Swiss bishops, priests of various nationalities, some English, are being recruited or ordained and sent out to set up mass centres in various countries, sometimes in private houses. They have no authority from the local bishops. They claim that they alone are keeping the traditions of the Church. What traditions? says the Pope. Who is the Judge of tradition? Is it the Pope, the College of Bishops of the whole Church, the Ecumenical Council or this one Archbishop and the group of priests who follow him?

"The Pope appealed time and again to Archbishop Lefebvre to return to the obedience of the Church. His communications remained unanswered. He then wrote a personal letter in his own hand. Archbishop Lefebvre replied with many professions of loyalty. But he continued to disobey.

"The Pope recognised, and with sympathy, that this group are understandably attached to the old ways. But he says very firmly that (and I quote his very words) whatever their intentions 'they are placing themselves outside obedience and communion with the Successor of Peter and therefore outside the Church.'

"These are grave words. The terrible danger of schism is there which St. Paul numbers among the deadly sins. Schism attacks and divides the Body of Christ. May God preserve us all from that.

"Let this be a warning in case anybody should be misled by them in this country. No blessing will come from those who have set themselves up in opposition to the Pope and the whole Church.

"Nevertheless, the Pope ends with a warm and affectionate call to all those who have gone astray to return to the unity of Faith, Charity and Authority. It is his duty as Chief Shepherd of the flock to ward off dangers and to inspire with hope."