

Strictly embargoed until 12.00 hours on Sunday, 25th July

A message from the Bishop

We expect priests to hand on the living teachings of Christ's Church, including those of Councils like Vatican II. We expect them to obey and respect the Pope and the Bishops, and to celebrate Mass and the Sacraments in the Church's way. We expect their people to do the same.

That is why I am writing to warn you against attending the unofficial old Latin Mass which will soon be celebrated here.

The group which is organising it is directed from Switzerland by a retired French archbishop, Marcel Lefebvre. He opposes Vatican II and all the changes that have come from it, even though the Pope and the Bishops have ordered them. Twice he has declined the Holy Father's invitation to change his mind and to obey. Some priests and people are supporting him. Pope Paul spoke about them on 24th May last. He said, "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?". They do not accept the changes in the Mass. So the Pope reminded them, "The adoption of the new Order of Mass is certainly not left to the free choice of priests and faithful".

Some of these people live in this country and in this diocese. They say that the priests and I are not teaching and supporting the Catholic Faith, and that we are not providing the real Mass for the people. They say this because we are faithful to the teachings and decisions of Pope Paul and the whole Catholic Church.

So, to join them, to attend their Mass and to support them in their work against us will be to risk parting company with the Pope and the Catholic Church. If you need further help or advice, please get in touch with your priest or with me, and we will do whatever we can to help you.

+ HUGH LINDSAY

22nd July, 1976.

Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle.