



CATHOLICISM'S VITAL FORCES: FINALLY SEEING REALITY!

Posted on June 1, 2023 by Christophe Geffroy



On May 5, *La Croix* published [a survey](#) on the subject of "Why Catholic families have difficulty passing on their religion," pointing out that in France 91% of Muslims, 84% of Jews and only 67% of Catholics retain their religion from one generation to the next. Admittedly, the minority phenomenon no doubt goes a long way to explaining the high rate of transmission in Muslim and Jewish families, whereas disaffection is more likely to affect a "majority" religion in a socio-political context where Christianity is marginalized.

That said, this "majority" status of Christians is now outdated, with only 25% of 18-59 year-olds declaring themselves to be Catholic, compared with 43% twelve years earlier. The situation is therefore worrying. *La Croix* notes, however, that some of the faithful pass on the faith far better than others:

"These observant and rather conservative Catholic families successfully steer their spiritual reproduction, carefully selecting the religious socialization of their children (Catholic schools, youth movements, friendship circles)."

And the fact that Catholicism is becoming a minority religion accentuates this phenomenon, notes Yann Raison du Cleuziou, interviewed in the *La Croix* article:

"In a minority landscape, a religion tends to restructure itself in order not to disappear. This reconfiguration leads to an intensification of the "familiar" around distinctive practices."

Drawing Conclusions

What's extraordinary is the incredible contrast between the fairly unanimous agreement on the observation, relayed even by *La Croix*, a newspaper hardly known for its "conservative" positions, and the total absence of conclusions drawn from this observation! What more will it take for our Catholic elites to understand that what attracts and remains fruitful in the Church is in no way akin to the hackneyed assumptions of progressivism?

These assumptions—ordinations of married men and women, blessing of same-sex couples, acceptance of contraception, softening of Christian morality, etc.—have solved nothing wherever they have been used. Wherever they have been implemented (as in Protestantism), they have solved

nothing, if not simply worsened the situation. So why do these demands occupy such a disproportionate place in the concerns of the media and religious bodies? Why do we remain with an overly horizontal vision of the Church, where grace no longer seems to count, where the priest is desacralized to ward off any form of "clericalism?" And why is it that those who, on the contrary, advocate a return to a certain verticality by placing the Eucharist, properly celebrated, at the center of Christian life, the regular practice of confession, the promotion of adoration and popular piety, are given too little encouragement and support by the authorities, when they are not simply persecuted?

"Progressive" Christians are our brothers and sisters, and have the right to express their positions—which should nevertheless be circumscribed by the Magisterium. But is it normal, when they are a minority and far from representing the Church's vital forces, for there to be such a gap between the power they still wield and the reality of the grassroots of French Catholicism, which is poorly represented at all levels and sometimes even suspected of being too conservative?

Is Vatican II Really Under Threat?

In an interview with the Jesuits of Hungary published on May 9, Pope Francis expressed his concern: "the resistance [to the Vatican II Council] is terrible;" "there is an incredible restorationism;" the fruit of a "nostalgic illness;" "the danger today is the return to the past, the reaction against modernity." This is how he justifies his *motu proprio Traditiones custodes* (2021).

Apart from the Society of St. Pius X, whose canonical position means it is not affected by this *motu proprio*, and a few easily identifiable traditionalist figures, it's hard to understand who the Pope is talking about! And yet, the Pope's remarks are unusually violent, targeting a small part of his flock—he castigates his own sons, without ever naming them precisely or demonstrating the validity of his accusations, as if "modernity" were in itself unassailable. He discredits an entire movement which is not homogeneous, and most of whom no more question Vatican II (which they have not read) than ordinary Catholics.

In the present context of the "collapse" of Catholicism (G. Cuchet), is the priority really to punish indiscriminately the faithful who don't recognize themselves in the description given of them? And thus marginalize a part of the Church that is bearing much fruit, fervently practicing a beautiful liturgy, transmitting the faith better than elsewhere, inspiring vocations? The "traditionalists" are not the only ones to have stood firm on these issues—they are part of the much broader conservative orbit evoked

by the *La Croix* survey. Our poor European Church is already far too fragmented, so why exhaust ourselves in vain divisions instead of trying to unite all its vital forces?

Christophe Geffroy publishes the journal [La Nef](#), through whose kind courtesy we are publishing this article.

Featured: Wrisberg epitaph, central panel: *Distribution of the divine graces by means of the church and the sacraments*, Hildesheim Cathedral, by Johannes Hopffe; painted in 1585.
