

SAVE THE NOTRE-DAME!

Posted on May 1, 2023 by Jose Antonio Ureta



The reconstruction of the Notre-Dame de Paris is gradually turning into a desecration of an ancient Christian church, which was built in all its beauty to hold the holy Host. But plans are afoot to make the sacred site into a tourist-friendly information-center. The letter that follows is a protest over this Godless make-over.

If you would like to add your name to the letter of protest to the Archbishop of Paris, [you may do so here](#).

An Open letter to Mgr. Laurent Ulrich, Archbishop of Paris

"What the fire spared, the diocese wants to destroy!"

Excellency,

I am writing this letter as president of Avenir de la Culture, an association of lay Catholics who since 1986 have been defending Christian values in French society. I also represent [more than 110,000 people](#) who have signed the attached petition asking the Diocese of Paris to refrain from inserting contemporary art inside the Notre-Dame.

The Tragedy of April 15, 2019

Some dates remain tragically engraved in the history of a country. As far as ours is concerned, April 15, 2019 is certainly one of them. On that day, it is not necessary to remind you, the Notre-Dame was set ablaze. Under the stunned gaze of Parisians and people around the world, the flames devoured the cathedral's centuries-old beams. The spire collapsed, engulfed in an abyss of fire. As the mast sank, who did not fear the total loss of the ship? All night long, the firefighters led a heroic struggle to save almost a thousand years of history, accompanied by the impromptu prayers of the faithful, begging the Queen of Heaven not to abandon the cathedral dedicated to her. At dawn, the rising sun bathed an ocean of ashes with its light. In the midst of it, the towers of the Notre-Dame stood, miraculously intact. The Notre-Dame outraged! The Notre-Dame broken! The Notre-Dame martyred! But the Notre-Dame

[saved!](#) As is the case with all miracles granted by Heaven, the miracle of the Notre-Dame de Paris invites conversion.

Why this Tragedy?

The cathedral had already witnessed the iconoclastic fury of the Reformation, the impious vindictiveness of the Sans-Culottes, the Prussian machine gun and the atrocities of two world wars. It stood upright through the vicissitudes of history before stumbling at the dawn of the third millennium. Why did God allow the tragedy of April 15, 2019? And why did He spare His sanctuary in extremis? Is it possible not to see in this fire an allegory of the drama our country is going through? Once the commander of Christianity, it is now faltering, eaten away by apostasy and hatred of God. "France, [Eldest Daughter of the Church](#), are you faithful to the promises of your baptism?"—asked His Holiness John Paul II on the occasion of his first apostolic journey to France in the spring of 1980. How can we revive the promises made by Clovis in the baptismal font of Rheims on Christmas night in 496, without being faithful to the centuries of Christianity that are the fruit of these promises, and to the Notre-Dame its most beautiful flower? The tragedy of April 15, 2019 was an opportunity to implore the mercy of Heaven, as the faithful spontaneously understood, with rosary in hand and knees to the ground, begging God on the burning banks of the Seine.

A "Contemporary Touch" Envisaged

Unfortunately, as soon as the blaze was extinguished, the Notre-Dame was threatened with an outrage worse than the one inflicted by the flames. The head of state called for a "contemporary touch" on the occasion of the reconstruction of the roof and the spire of Viollet-le-Duc, destroyed by the fire. Immediately, the so-called "avant-garde" architectural firms competed with aberrant proposals, in brutal rupture with the sacredness of the place. The Dijon-based firm of Paul Godart and Pierre Roussel suggested a glass roof for tourists to stroll through. The NAB studio and the architect Nicolas Abdelkader offered to replace the roof with a botanical greenhouse in order to, among other things, "support professional reintegration by learning about urban agriculture, horticulture and permaculture." Mathieu Lehanneur, a designer in the 2nd arrondissement in Paris, suggested replacing the spire with a giant, hideous flame that would somehow give the fire of April 15 the honors of time. However, the most obscene and implausible proposal was the one privately advocated by the President's companion herself, if we are to believe Roselyne Bachelot. In her book, *682 jours*, the former Minister of Culture says: "Lunching a few days later with Brigitte Macron, she showed me a plan for a project culminating in

a kind of erect phallus, surrounded at its base by gold balls... "

Miraculously saved from the flames, here was the Notre-Dame threatened with assuming the face of our time: atheistic, playful, recyclable and even pornographic.

Head of State Forced to Back Down

Fortunately, the projects of "[modernization](#)" of the Notre-Dame, to which Mr. Macron had opened the door, aroused the disapproval of heritage lovers. "You can't play with the Notre-Dame... you can't make a 'contemporary architectural gesture' on a historical monument like this cathedral," warned Didier Rykner, historian and director of La Tribune de l'Art. To rebuild the spire identically, "it is the cheapest, the fastest, the most efficient solution; it is the way of wisdom and legality," added Stéphane Bern, the government's "Mr. Heritage." Public opinion was also stirred up. The French Association for the Defense of the Family Property Tradition took the initiative of an international petition addressed to the Head of State and to the Minister of Culture in order to demand an identical restoration of the Notre-Dame. Supported by a dozen French and foreign associations, notably Avenir de la Culture, this petition gathered more than 110,000 signatures, proving, if it were still necessary, the immense influence of your cathedral. Faced with protests from all sides against the "contemporary touch" he had announced, Emmanuel Macron was forced to back down. "After passionate debates, the president sided with the defenders of heritage and public opinion," noted *Le Figaro* on July 9, 2021. The Notre-Dame seemed to be saved from disfigurement. Alas, this did not take into account the indecent opportunism of those whose mission is to watch over the integrity of the sanctuary.

Notre-Dame Disguised as Disneyland?

As early as the fall of 2020, disturbing rumors began to appear in the press. *Le Figaro* sounded the alarm against the "controversial project of [Mgr. Aupetit](#)" for the redevelopment of the cathedral: "The computer-generated photos give the impression of an airport runway, or even a 'parking lot'. The development project, to which the daily had access, would be a fabric of "disruptive creations," which would not fail to break the "secular harmony" of the Notre-Dame. The 14 side chapels of the building would be completely renovated in favor of highlighting works of art: "Old paintings from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries will dialogue with contemporary art objects." A year later, when the project was to be examined by the National Commission on Heritage and Architecture, the British press echoed new concerns. "It's as if Disney were entering Notre-Dame," denounced architect Maurice Culot in *The*

Telegraph. The specialist added: "What they are proposing to do to Notre-Dame would never be done to Westminster Abbey or Saint Peter's in Rome. It's a kind of theme park and very childish and trivial given the grandeur of the place." Several architects who had access to the file complained to the British newspaper about aberrant innovations such as a "discovery trail" that would take visitors on a journey to Africa and Asia, texts projected on the walls in different languages, exhibits of mediocre taste and the dedication of a chapel to the theme, albeit secular, of ecology. Confessionals, altars and classical sculptures should be discarded. "This is political correctness gone mad. They want to turn Notre-Dame into an experimental liturgical showroom that exists nowhere else whereas it should be a landmark where the slightest change must be handled with great care," concluded one architect quoted by *The Telegraph*.

Anti-Christian Artists

Another reason for concern, and not the least, is the diocese's planned use of [artists](#) whose orientations and works are in every way opposed to the Church's teaching. Among them: Ernest Pignon-Ernest, Louise Bourgeois and Anselm Kiefer. The first is the President of Friends of Humanity, the famous communist daily. A fellow traveler of the PCF for nearly 50 years, he has notably campaigned for the legalization of abortion. In 1974, Ernest Pignon-Ernest posted in the public space drawings of naked women, victims of clandestine abortions to encourage members of parliament to vote in the Veil Act. In 2019, on the occasion of the European elections, the artist was proud to have voted for the list led by Ian Brossat, a Parisian elected official who called for [the desecration](#) of the the Sacré-Cœur Basilica of Montmartre! Louise Bourgeois, who died in 2010, was also close to feminist movements. She is the author of pornographic works, celebrating male and female genitalia. Her last major installation, the Steilneset Memorial, is a tribute to witches. The German painter and sculptor, Anselm Kiefer, is notorious for his fascination with the Kabbalah. "The Old Testament has always struck a chord with me because it expresses the cruelty of God," he says.

Excellency, the very possibility that the diocese would consider working with such characters is a scandal! How could the works of ungodly artists stand side by side with those of the heralds of God in the Middle Ages without defiling them?

"What the Fire Spared, the Diocese Wants to Destroy"

Once again, the plans to denature the Notre-Dame generated a strong reaction from heritage lovers.

On December 7, 2021, in the columns of [Le Figaro](#), an article co-signed by more than a hundred personalities from the academic and artistic world—including philosophers Alain Finkielkraut and Pierre Manent, historian Pierre Nora, and filmmaker Jean-Charles Fitoussi—denounced in no uncertain terms the planned alterations: "What the fire spared, the diocese wants to destroy."

How can we believe, Your Excellency, that such eminent personalities would use such terrible words without having first weighed them? "The Diocese of Paris wants to take advantage of the restoration project to transform the interior of the Notre-Dame into a project that will completely alter the decor and the liturgical space," the letter read. The signatories denounced "the installation of removable benches, lighting that changes with the seasons, video projections on the walls, etc., in other words, the same fashionable (and therefore already terribly outdated) 'mediation devices' found in all the 'immersive' cultural projects, where silliness often vies with kitsch." They begged the diocese to back down: "Let's respect the work of Viollet-le-Duc. Let's respect the work of the artists and craftsmen who worked to give us this jewel. Let's simply respect the heritage principles of a historic monument." Before this forum, the academician Jean-Marie Rouart had also castigated, with a vehemence unusual for a member of the French Academy, "artistic freaks likely to distort it, to spoil our memories, to damage forever the spirit and soul that hovered in this sacred place." "The Notre-Dame has miraculously escaped everything. Perhaps not, alas, the reformist pruritus of Bishop Aupetit," he lamented in the columns of [Le Figaro](#).

Who are the Artists Pre-Selected by the Diocese?

What was the response of the Diocese of Paris to this barrage of criticism? A skillful silence in the expectation that the storm would cease. As soon as the lightning fell, and the clouds moved away, the machination continued, in all discretion. According to *Le Figaro*, "five artists have been working for two months on the new liturgical furniture and are due to submit their work on May 23." Among the artists "more or less close to the Church" are Constance Guisset, "a feminist and progressive on social issues" and Laurent Grasso "fascinated by the solar star and its ramifications." A brief search on the Internet reveals that the artists preselected by the diocese are the originators of ugly, grotesque and eccentric contemporary works, far removed from the sacred harmony and splendor of Christian art. Everything leads us to believe that the Notre-Dame will be ravaged, disfigured, soiled. In the columns of *Le Figaro*, Mgr Olivier Dumas, rector-archpriest of the Cathedral, tried, not without cynicism, to extinguish the controversy: "We do not ask them (the artists) questions about their spiritual life or their religious practice. We believe him and that is the heart of the problem: entrusting to men without God the care of

His house. " He who is able to receive this, let him receive it," says Our Lord in the Gospel (Mt. 19: 12).

A Supplication Left Unanswered

Along with the criticisms of the academic world, the faithful, and more widely all the French devoted to heritage, rose up. This time, it is Avenir de la Culture which led the revolt. The association that I have the honor of presiding addressed to the apostolic administrator of the diocese, Mgr Georges Pontier, a supplication in order to beg him to renounce subjecting his Cathedral to the dross of contemporary art. "Mr. Macron backed down by renouncing, for the exterior of the cathedral, the outrage of a 'contemporary architectural touch.' And now the diocese is rushing into it," lamented the 108,536 signatories of the letter. Despite several letters informing him of this cry from the heart, addressed to him by the lovers of the Notre-Dame, Mgr Pontier refused them the charity of a reply. "Clericalism is a perversion in the Church," Pope Francis said on Italian television in February 2022. "Under every type of rigidity there is rot," he added on that occasion. Wouldn't these warnings of the Supreme Pontiff apply to the leaders of the Archdiocese of Paris? Indeed, Your Excellency, how can we fail to describe as "clerical" and "rigid" this implausible contempt of the diocesan authorities for tens of thousands of faithful who turn with anguish to their pastor? Would the virtues of dialogue and "synodality," so often present in the speeches of clerics, not apply to the faithful who wish to preserve our Christian heritage? As Jean-Marie Rouart rightly reminded us, the Notre-Dame does not belong to the archbishop of Paris, but to the entire nation. It is therefore right and normal that the French, and in particular Catholics, express themselves when they feel that the nature of the Cathedral is threatened. And the least we can do is to answer them!

Only Your Hand...

Despite protests from all sides, on December 9, 2021, the verdict fell: the project to redesign the interior of the Cathedral was validated by the members of the National Commission for Heritage and Architecture, with reservations concerning, on the one hand, the relocation of statues of saints in the chapels and, on the other hand, the benches on wheels equipped with lights planned by the diocese. There is no hand left to prevent the Notre-Dame from being defiled, except yours, Excellency! Think of the judgment of history and, even more, of God, if you allow this irreparable act to take place. The Notre-Dame remains, despite the stigma of the fire, the most beautiful sanctuary of Christianity. The queen of cathedrals is a jewel box of beauty, destined to receive what is most sacred in the world: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Its silhouette makes it immediately clear that it is a ship that leads souls to

Heaven. Each of its windows, each of its statues and stones are dedicated to the glory of God. How can we not think, as we walk along its nave, of the heavenly Jerusalem described by the Apocalypse of Saint John in Chapter 21: " And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk" (Revelation 21:11;23).

Pedagogy of the Sacred

Before it was closed, thirteen million visitors entered the Notre-Dame every year. What were these men, sometimes from the ends of the earth, looking for? A mirror of their time? No, on the contrary, they were looking for beauty and sacredness, which our world without God is so cruelly lacking. They were seeking, often without knowing it, a trace of that blessed time when the "philosophy of the Gospel governed the States," according to the expression used by H.H. Leo XIII in his encyclical *Immortale Dei* of November 1, 1885. " Then it was that the power and divine virtue of Christian wisdom had diffused itself throughout the laws, institutions, and morals of the people, permeating all ranks and relations of civil society," the Pope wrote of Christianity. " The State, constituted in this wise, bore fruits important beyond all expectation, whose remembrance is still, and always will be, in renown, witnessed to as they are by countless proofs which can never be blotted out or ever obscured by any craft of any enemies," continues Pope Leo XIII. Is not the Notre-Dame one of the most marvelous "documents" of this time that bears the name of Christ? The pedagogy of the sacred, desired by the contemporaries of Suger and St. Louis, speaks not only to the intelligence, but to the soul. "I myself was standing in the crowd, near the second pillar at the entrance to the choir on the right side of the sacristy. And it was then that the event that dominates my whole life took place. In an instant my heart was touched and I believed." How many souls, far from God, have experienced under the sacred vaults of Notre-Dame, the encounter that shook Paul Claudel in these places? Where will these thirsty souls go to drink, if the source were to dry up through your fault?

Where do These Ill Winds Come From?

Your Excellency, where do the ill winds that suddenly threaten to sweep through the Notre-Dame come from? No doubt Father Gilles Drouin, in charge of the liturgical and cultural development of your Cathedral, offers us the beginning of an answer when he declares: "If Vatican II broke with the Latin Mass and turned the altars around to go towards the flock instead of turning their backs on them, fifty years later, part of the work remains to be done. Thus, it would be a matter of deconstructing Notre-Dame to make it a "conciliar" cathedral that no longer honors God, but Man! Alas, so many churches

have suffered the same fate! "In the 1960s, the French clergy interpreted the Vatican II Council by implementing a vandalism unheard of since the French Revolution in the name of a dubious modernism," recalls Didier Rykner. A vandalism that is, unfortunately, not limited to architecture. As Guillaume Cuchet has masterfully demonstrated in his book *Comment notre monde a cessé d'être chrétien (How Our World Ceased to be Christian)*, the Council convened by H.H. John XXIII coincided with the beginning of a collapse, unprecedented in its brutality, of Catholicism in France, outside the period of persecution. Sacramental practice has become residual in our country, priestly ordinations are decreasing year after year, and, as you know, the clergy is plagued by sordid affairs of morality which bring despair the faithful and to which no one sees an end. Your Excellency, it is not only the Notre-Dame that is burning—in fifty years, Christian France has been reduced to ashes. And now, in the midst of this dark night, you are preparing to extinguish the Notre-Dame, the ultimate beacon of Christianity.

Your Excellency, it is not too late to refrain from letting into the Notre-Dame the "fumes of Satan" that stink up the Church, in the tragic words of Pope Paul VI. To hand over your Cathedral to unholy modernity would not only be an insult to those who built and preserved it, it would also be, first and foremost, an offense to the One to whom it belongs. From this touch, [inevitable curses will be arise](#) for the Eldest Daughter of the Church, at the very moment when a muted persecution threatens the Catholics of France. How can one not shudder to think that the Archbishop of Paris will write a chapter in this tribulation, by working to desecrate his own Cathedral? Excellency, for the love of God, spare the Notre-Dame! There is still time.

Please receive, Excellency, the assurance of my high and filial consideration,

Paris, March 25, 2023
Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary

Jose Antonio Ureta,
President

This letter appears through the kind courtesy of [Avenir de la Culture](#).

Featured: The Hand of God protecting the faithful, with a depiction of Notre-Dame de Paris, from the *Hours of Étienne Chevalier*, painted by Jean Fouquet, ca. 1452-1460.

