

From the Editor's Desk...

by Michael J. Matt

Fr. Michael Rodriguez: An Update

Our friend, Father Michael Rodriguez, is well known to readers of *The Remnant*. Aside from the not infrequent appearances of his by-line here in these columns, Father has also served as chaplain to Remnant Tours and has been interviewed at least two times on Remnant TV. More importantly, Father is known around the world as one of a very small company of priests who, after Summorum Pontificum, discontinued offering the New Mass in order to celebrate of the Traditional Latin Mass exclusively. In fact, I can't think of another American diocesan priest who has determined to offer only the old Mass and yet remains in his diocesan parish. (Perhaps readers of *The Remnant* could send us the names of other priests who have taken this same step, so that we can keep them in our prayers.)

In any event, Father's decision, though blessed in the eyes of God, evidently did not sit well with his bishop. For some three years, in fact, many of us were concerned that the powers that be would not allow Father Rodriguez to make his lonely stand in favor of the old Latin Mass—even in the desert outpost (Shafter, Texas) to which he'd been banished in the first place. The truth has a way of winning out, even when it is defended by one lone voice crying in the wilderness.



As it turned out, our concerns were warranted. Last week we received the following bad news from Father's brother, David:

"Dear Friends: As of yesterday, November 10, 2014, Fr. Michael Rodríguez, is no longer the Administrator of Sacred Heart Mission in Shafter, TX. He has been given a six-month sabbatical in order to discern God's Will for the future. Fr. Rodríguez remains a priest in good-standing of the Diocese of El Paso. He will most likely be looking at options for priestly ministry beyond the Diocese of El Paso. Fr. Rodríguez has been offering the Traditional Latin Mass exclusively for the past three years, and this has led to increasing difficulties for him with the local hierarchy. Fr. Rodríguez asks for your prayers, and he especially asks you to pray for the small group of faithful (about 50) of the Presidio-Shafter area who are heartbroken over the loss of the Traditional Latin Mass and parish life based on the Traditional Latin Mass.

"Admittedly, Fr. Rodríguez is in a very difficult situation. On the one hand, he intends to do his best to be obedient to his bishop. On the other hand, Fr. Rodríguez is convinced that God is calling him – through the Church – to dedicate his priesthood and all his energy and strength to promote the Church's greatest treasures: **her timeless liturgy and doctrine**. Both Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have acknowledged that the Church is suffering through a terrible **crisis of Faith** in the post-Vatican II era, and Fr. Rodríguez, as a loyal priest and son of the Church, cannot stand idly by in the face of such widespread disparagement and abandonment of the Catholic Faith.

"In making any decisions for the future, Fr. Rodríguez is begging God to purify his motives, so that he may act, first and foremost, out of love and fidelity to Jesus Christ and His holy Church, and for the salvation of souls. As a loyal son of Holy Mother Church, Fr. Rodríguez is 100% committed to following, teaching, promoting, and defending her Traditional Mass (holy liturgy) and her unchangeable truths (holy doctrine), e.g. the sacredness of marriage, the indissolubility of marriage, the grave sin and intrinsic evil of homosexual acts. In closing, Fr. Rodríguez asks that efforts be redoubled to pray for the Holy Father so that he will consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as requested by Our Lady of Fatima. *May the reign of Christ the King come through the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of His Mother!*

"In a few days a number of us will begin a continuous series of nine-day novenas imploring the intercession of Our Lady and the saints on Fr. Rodríguez's behalf. I will email more information on that in a few days. Moreover, we will pray a 54-Day Rosary Novena on his behalf from Dec 10 - Feb 1, that is between the Marian feasts of the Immaculate Conception and the Purification of Our Lady, (also the feast of Our Lady of Good Success). We invite all to join us in offering these prayers. Thank you very much for your prayers and support.

Ad Iesum per Mariam, David Rodriguez"

I have not spoken to Father Rodriguez since this happened. I suspect he has agreed to not speak to members of the media at all, in fact, until sufficient time has passed for him to pray and discern God's will. I do not, therefore, care to speak for Father or to pretend that I have inside information about his situation. Speaking strictly as an outside observer, it is difficult for me not to succumb to anger over this obvious abuse of power where Father Rodriguez is concerned. With all the reprobate, apostate and even pervert priests running around loose in the Church today—men who suffer nary a word of reprimand, much less sanction from their bishops—one can scarcely stomach the blatant double standard at work in the case of Father Rodriguez, who, evidently, is just too Catholic for modern churchmen.

Even in these devastated vineyards filled with disobedient shepherds, Father Rodriguez is being held to a standard of obedience seldom seen anywhere else in a modern Catholic Church where wayward priests do what they will, teach what they want, say what they want and even have sexual encounters with whomever they please. But Father Rodriguez MUST OBEY the command of his bishop to cease and desist his “outrageous” behavior—i.e., his insistence on offering exclusively the Mass of all the saints, virgins and martyrs in the history of the Church. That is his “crime”, God help us!

The situation is so absurd that one wonders if the drafters of the canon law of the Catholic Church ever imagined that a day was coming when the spirit of the law would be violated to such an extent that holy obedience itself would be used to undermine the faith. It is difficult for us to see how it can possibly be the will of Almighty God for a good priest to obey a modernist bishop and thus deprive his flock of the Mass of All Times and the spiritual guidance of a good and holy priest at a time when such priests are few and far between.

I'm only a layman, and so I hope I can be forgiven for questioning that if the letter of the law is now clearly being used to undermine the spirit of the law, perhaps obedience (which is NOT a theological virtue, after all) in some of these cases needs to be reconsidered for the good of souls in a Church in crisis. After all, how obedient was St. Athanasius to Pope Liberius and his heretic bishops? I'm just asking...

In the meantime, we point to Father's obedience (which even we are struggling to understand) as yet another exhibit of the fidelity to the Church found in the hearts of these traditional -- what critics castigate as "rad Trad"-- Catholic priests. Ever faithful to his duty, the “alter Christus” is obedient even to the point where his friends and supporters wish it could be otherwise.

We offer our prayers and promises of unconditional support for Father Rodriguez, whatever he decides to do. Even as we hope he will seek out the FSSP or the SSPX, it nevertheless seems obvious to us that the persecution has begun and that good priests will have much to suffer in the future.

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