

PAIX LITURGIQUE

Letter 114 published 24 February 2021

THE ELECT OF THE NATIONS

INQUIRY ON THE UNIVERSAL CHARACTER OF THE ATTRACTION TO TRADITIONAL LITURGY

We have all heard, especially in the ecclesiastical milieu or in the journalistic spheres devoted to it, the statement that the “traditional” trend is a “little Frenchmen’s” movement, a phenomenon limited to the French in France. That sort of gratuitous claim allows those Churchmen and journalists to rest on their ideological positions without having to trouble their consciences.

And yet. . . facts are facts, and they show that such bald statements are unfounded! In addition to the many Letters we have published on the traditional liturgy throughout the world, since 2018 we at Oremus/Paix Liturgique have been publishing a yearly summary of the geography and spread of the traditional liturgy. It is alive and well, and celebrated regularly in 90 countries on all continents. This indicates to men of good will that the attempt to reduce the traditional phenomenon to a reservation of Old World nostalgics is no more than a political stance. Such a stance is calibrated to allow the enemies of liturgical peace not to face the reality of the life of the Church at the dawn of the third millennium—a Church whose traditional component now (even though the official media won’t mention it) is an essential component of the Church in our day, and will be ever more so tomorrow. *Heri, hodie, et in sæcula*, because it is in the nature of the Church to be traditional!

For those who “have eyes, but see not, have ears, but hear not,” as the Psalm goes, the following interview with Christian Marquant is not going to change any minds. . . . And yet, the interview reveals, figures in hand, that by 2020 the movement of young men who are turning to the ever-growing traditional priesthood now involves every region on earth, whatever their language or culture might be. The movement confirms the data gathered in our yearly summaries.

For as the second decade of the third millennium comes to an end, there is one well-attested fact: that attraction to and love for Tradition—both liturgical and doctrinal—is universal. Ignorance and ill-will are no longer in a position to circumscribe it to a few regions of the “Old World.” The traditional *sensibility* is universal. By *sensibility*, we understand a *sense*, the instinct of faith, the *sensus fidei*. There are more and more of these young people, men and women, who discover the deep riches of traditional Catholicism and take a decisive turn towards it. And this is just the beginning. . . .

Paix liturgique: What led you to undertake this study on the new candidates for the traditional Catholic priesthood in 2020?

Christian Marquant: At first it was purely by chance. . . . As I received one, then several documents from traditional institutes sharing their back-to-school news, I was intrigued by the diversity of origins among many of the young men they mentioned. This led me to find out more and dig into the matter further.

Paix liturgique: And where did you go to find your data?

Christian Marquant: Because of my interest in these young men entering traditional formation, I naturally took a look at the information I was able to obtain from the large traditional institutes.

Paix liturgique: Meaning?

Christian Marquant: The Society of Saint Pius X, the Fraternity of Saint Peter, the Institute of Christ the King, and the Institute of the Good Shepherd, to which I added the Asian seminary of Catholic Fidelity (a breakaway from the SSPX) for reasons I’ll give later on.

Paix liturgique: Were you able to obtain the information you wanted?

Christian Marquant: With unequal success. . . . Some of these institutes—most of them—have the bulk of the information on their websites. For the rest, I have in mind the more distant institutes in America or Asia, the search for information was more involved.

Paix liturgique: So you were not able to conduct a thorough search?

Christian Marquant: Correct, but this is not a problem for the study itself. Although I did only obtain 95% of the information I was looking for, this did not alter the conclusions I reached.

Paix liturgique: So first of all, what do you mean by “those entering formation in 2020.”

Christian Marquant: I mean those young men who first approached a traditional seminary in 2020 in the hopes of having a priestly vocation, whether they are entering a year of spirituality (also called propaedeutic) or a period of discernment, but I did not include those currently in a second year of discernment.

Paix liturgique: But surely you know that a certain number of these young man will not make it to the priesthood?

Christian Marquant: I am well aware of it. Over a third of them will likely leave this demanding life, in some cases pretty quickly. Up until commitment to the subdiaconate, the seminarian and his superiors can judge that this is not the path to which God is calling him. But once again, I don't think this makes a difference for my research or for the results of this study, which focusses on the origins of those who wish to enter the traditional priesthood today, in 2020.

Paix liturgique: And what are the results of your study ?

Christian Marquant: I have found two particularly important results, among many others.*

Paix liturgique: And the first of these?

Christian Marquant: The high number of young men who attracted to the traditional priesthood! Indeed, even without making a complete and exhaustive calculation, and without including traditional religious houses (Benedictines, Dominicans, etc.) or the numerous other outfits loosely linked to the Ecclesia Dei nebula or the SSPX world, for 2020 one reaches about 210 candidates who are turning to the traditional Catholic priesthood. . . .

Paix liturgique: Is that a high number?

Christian Marquant: I would say it's a considerable number. Also, if you compare this number—even discounting the third or the half who will likely discern out—to the number of traditional priestly ordinations in 2020, the next few years will see a considerable increase of over 50% of yearly ordinations in the traditional world!

Paix liturgique: But that is not the case in all the regions of the world.

Christian Marquant: You are right, and in some European countries the number of traditional ordinations is regressing, or not increasing, even though a certain recovery is discernible. On the other hand, and this will be the second interesting point of my study, the internationalization, I would even say the near-universalization of the attraction to the traditional Catholic priesthood is going to produce a significant global increase in ordinations these next few years.

Paix liturgique: Do you think that this 210 figure is “a maximum”?

Christian Marquant: No, it is just the number reached by my research, which, as I was saying, is not exhaustive among all traditional institutes. For that reason, I am inclined to think that if I had been able to conduct a more thorough search, I probably would have obtained a higher result—say at least about 260 candidates, simply judging by the partial information that has reached me outside the formal context of my research.

Paix liturgique: Let’s circle back to your second point. You were saying?

Christian Marquant: Well first that even today, the greatest number of young men who are attracted to the priesthood come from old traditional countries. I am here thinking of the USA, with 57 candidates, and France, with 33 youngsters.

Paix liturgique: But there are also those who hail from elsewhere.

Christian Marquant: Yes, and this is an improbable “elsewhere” too, for all of us.

Paix liturgique: From the American continent ?

Christian Marquant: Yes, let’s start with the American continent. It represents 96 of the 210 “AD2020” candidates for the traditional priesthood, say about 46%.

Paix liturgique: 96 of the candidates are from the USA?

Christian Marquant: No, only 57 of them; the remaining 39 candidates come from 9 other countries in the Americas.

Paix liturgique: Which countries?

Christian Marquant: First of all Brazil, which alone has 16 candidates. This is considerable enough in itself, but does not represent the totality of Brazilian candidates, because for lack of information I did not factor in those in the Saint John Mary Vianney Administration or those in the few diocesan seminaries that are open to the traditional liturgy.

Paix liturgique: And the others?

Christian Marquant: They are quite diverse . . . and come from Argentina or more unexpected countries, such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, or the Dominican Republic.

Paix liturgique: How about Mexico?

Christian Marquant: Mexico is the strangest case for my investigation. Tradition is quite lively there, as everybody knows, and yet the candidates to the priesthood remain outside the great institutions of the traditional world. This is not to say that there are not young Mexicans who are attracted to the traditional priesthood, but only that their trajectories follow paths with which we are unfamiliar. We'll devote some research to this issue over the next few months and will be in a position to tell you more then.

Paix liturgique: And after America

Christian Marquant: After America there is Europe, a close second with 85 candidates, i.e. 40.5% of the total.

Paix liturgique: You were mentioning the fact that vocations are dropping in Europe?

Christian Marquant: That is not quite what I said. I noted that the number of candidates to the priesthood seemed to be on the decline in France. On the other hand, in Europe, the number is in an upswing with, just as in America, a very broad origin base. Indeed, the AD2020 candidates come from 18 European countries as diverse as Malta, Croatia, and Belarus.

Paix liturgique: Is this a new phenomenon?

Christian Marquant: As far as I know this is not a new phenomenon; it is a phenomenon on the increase, however: my archives indicate that last year candidates hailed from only 14 countries.

Paix liturgique: And is there an increase in the number of candidates?

Christian Marquant: There is a general increase in Europe. I am thinking of Portugal, where I have counted up five new candidates in 2020, but I am aware of at least 13 Portuguese seminarians currently in priestly formation . . . whereas just a few years ago the total number of these traditional Portuguese candidates could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Paix liturgique: And from Africa?

Christian Marquant: The case of Africa is complicated. There are young men from nine different countries—three times as many as in 2019—but at the same time a rather low number of candidates to the traditional priesthood: I've noted only 12. Two are from Portuguese-speaking Africa (Angola); five from English-speaking Africa; and six from French-speaking Africa.

Paix liturgique: Rather few, all in all. . . .

Christian Marquant: Granted, but once the necessary structures have been adapted to welcome them, I believe that this movement will increase. The difficulty today consists rather in being able to interview these candidates to find out whether their call to the traditional priesthood is definite.

Paix liturgique: That leaves Asia and the Pacific area. . . .

Christian Marquant: There again the number of countries from which the candidates hail is on the increase and presages a significant growth in numbers for the next decades.

At the beginning of this interview I mentioned that I had factored in the candidates enrolled at the Catholic Fidelity seminary in the Philippines. I did so for two reasons:

The first reason has to do with the availability of information, as I couldn't manage to collect the information that I needed from Asia because of the upheavals linked to health issues and border closings, which made it difficult to travel.

The second is that I was quite surprised to find out that the small number of candidates represented a great diversity in origins.

These two reasons led me to factor in this institution, which allowed me to add an illustration to my investigation.

Paix liturgique: And what are the data for the Asia/Pacific region?

Christian Marquant : They are rather similar to the data from Africa: few candidates—only 16—but an increase in the regions of origin. The candidates come from seven countries, including such interesting origins as China, Vietnam, India, and Korea.

Paix liturgique: Before we proceed, I'd like to ask another important question: how did these young men, as a whole, come to know the traditional world?

Christian Marquant : You are right to ask because these 210 young men come from very many countries. For most of them, the traditional liturgy is a living and developing reality—I am here thinking, of course, of France or the United States. Many, over a dozen, come from countries where the traditional liturgy is not even celebrated!

Paix liturgique: So how did they come to know it?

Christian Marquant: Sometimes it happened during their studies or through friends, but most often . . . via the Internet, which is today the greatest canal for the spread of traditional Catholic liturgy and thought in those parts of the world where it is absent or most scarce.

Paix liturgique : Did this research allow you to connect with some of these candidates?

Christian Marquant: Alas, only with very few of them, that is, with a small handful of them, and always through electronic media at that, which do not permit every kind of communication.

Paix liturgique: And what did you get out of it?

Christian Marquant: Two lessons. The first is the extraordinary power of attraction of the traditional liturgy, which answers to the faith and spiritual needs of men from all parts of the world. Several told me that for them this liturgy represented the quintessence of their faith; also, that Latin, far from being an obstacle, was an excellent way of lifting up their soul and leaving behind their daily cultural distractions.

The second lesson was the discovery that the ordeal a young Frenchman endures to follow his vocation by leaving France for Wigratzbad, Ecône, or Gricigliano has nothing to compare with what an Indian, Chinese, or Cuban goes through when he must follow his vocation to the ends of the world to find an outfit that will take him in.

It is therefore incumbent upon us to leave behind our parochial conception of things and envisage the future of the Church, a future which will certainly be Catholic, meaning universal and traditional. It is important to work for traditional institutes, which are currently the best vectors of traditional priestly formation, to be able to take in these future elect of the nations on their own continents.

*We have indicated these data in good faith. Errors or imprecisions may have slipped in, and we should be grateful to all those who can transmit their observations and any necessary corrections.

Table

The Americas: Total 96, or 45.7%

Argentina 7

Brazil 16

Canada 4

Colombia 1

Costa Rica 1

Cuba 1

Mexico 2

Nicaragua 4

Dominican Republic 3

USA 57

Europe/Mediterranean : Total 85, or 40.5 %

Germany 10

England 6

Austria 1

Belgium 1

Belarus 1

Spain 5

France 33

Hungary 2

Ireland 4

Italy 2

Lebanon 1

Malta 1

Wales 1

Poland 4

Portugal 5

Czech Republic 2

Rumania 1

Slovakia 1

Switzerland 4

Africa: Total 12, or 5.7 %

Angola 1

Benin 1

Cameroons 1

Congo Brazzaville 1

Congo Kinshasa 1

Gabon 2

Ghana 1

Kenya 1

Nigeria 3

Asia/Pacific: Total 16, or 7.6 %

Australia 4

China 1

Korea 2

India 2

New Zealand 1

Philippines 5

Vietnam 1