

Reply from Fr. Edward F. MacDonald to: **A Catechetical Refutation: (Regarding Certain Objections Made to Bishop Williamson's Comments on the Novus Ordo)** by Sean Johnson

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I do not understand why you are defending Bishop Williamson. It has been some time since I listened to his conference but I think that my memory is sufficiently accurate.

1. His Excellency prefaced his remarks about the NO Mass with the statement that what he was about to say was heresy for traditionalists.

Therefore, he has pre-judged and pre-condemned himself. He is guilty by his own admission.

2. He said that he was going to stick his neck out and people could chop it off.

Thus he has given permission for people to attack what he has said. Those attacking him on this matter do so with his authorisation. Therefore we should not think that we have to counter their arguments. It is curious that being an Englishman he did not offer to be hanged, drawn and quartered, rather than having his head chopped off which is more appropriate for a Frenchman.

In my view these two reasons preclude a defence of His Excellency.

3. His Excellency said that the NO Mass was designed to destroy faith.

There is plenty of empirical evidence to show that it was well designed and has successfully destroyed the faith of millions. Nothing is perfect and some people who attended the NO Mass for many years managed to keep the faith. They are the exception. In those cases it is usually due to some other practise of theirs, e.g., morning and night prayers, the rosary, the little office...

Regarding the **Archbishop Lefebvre quote**, on page 2 of your document.

The Archbishop is talking about the pastoral care of one either saying the NO Mass or actively assisting at it. He says that for some it may be NOT be subjectively a sin. It is OBJECTIVELY a sin. I would say that almost always someone attending the NO Mass is not guilty of grave sin. If they knew it was evil they would not attend. (In the seminary we were taught that it is intrinsically evil.)

“We admit that there is serious matter (*materia grave*) and that there is full consent. But if there is no knowledge, no knowledge of the seriousness of the sin, then the person is not aware of the grave matter (*materia grave*). They do not commit a subjective sin.”

This is not at all what Bishop Williamson said.

Note also, that the Archbishop is speaking of people who are ignorant. This woman did not want to be ignorant. She wanted to know. Probably she expected and wanted His Excellency to tell her why she should not go to the NO Mass. She was not completely ignorant as she did know about the traditional Mass and was at the Bishop's conference.

### **Bishop Williamson's criterion**

According to His Excellency how do we know if we can attend the NO Mass. “IF it nourishes your Faith”. This criterion is no good. It cannot be assessed. How do I know if my Faith is nourished or not? I don't know. I do not even know if I am in the state of grace. If I am not in the state of grace my faith is dead and cannot be nourished. If I am in the state of grace I am incapable of measuring my faith. Faith is a supernatural reality. While we are in the wayfarer state our minds

are limited to what is sensible. We cannot measure supernatural things. Do I have “little faith” or do I have “great faith”? Do I have more faith today than yesterday? I don’t know.

We do know that Catholic sacraments infallibly give grace and with an increase of grace there is an accompanying increase of the virtues. Worthily receiving Holy Communion at the traditional Mass certainly nourishes my faith. Also if I assist at Mass in a dignified manner with attention and devotion it will nourish my faith. This is not the case with the NO Mass.

**Another quote from Archbishop Lefebvre** more pertinent than yours (emphasis added).

“Your perplexity takes perhaps the following form: may I assist at a sacrilegious Mass which is nevertheless valid, in the absence of any other, in order to satisfy my Sunday obligation? The answer is simple: these Masses cannot be the object of an obligation; we must moreover apply to them the rules of moral theology and canon law as regards the participation or the attendance at an action which endangers the faith or may be sacrilegious.

“The New Mass, even when said with piety and respect for the liturgical rules, is subject to the same reservations since it is impregnated with the spirit of Protestantism. It bears within it a poison harmful to the faith. That being the case the French Catholic of today finds himself in the conditions of religious practice which prevail in missionary countries. There, the inhabitants in some regions are able to attend Mass only three or four times a year. The faithful of our country should make the effort to attend once each month at the Mass of All Time, the true source of grace and sanctification, in one of those places where it continues to be held in honor.<sup>1</sup>

If we cannot attend the NO Mass on days of obligation, *a fortiori*, we cannot attend it on weekdays.

The NO Mass, even when said devoutly bears within it a poison harmful to the faith. It poisons the faith. It is incapable of nourishing the faith. This was known long before Archbishop Lefebvre said it. Many priests who rejected the changes of the 60s already said this in 1969.

For many years, perhaps still now, the NO Mass was/is said at Holy Family Church in Detroit, on the high altar, the priest having his back to the people, in Latin, following all the rules, with dignity and presumably devotion. The Communion rail is there and people kneel for Communion received on the tongue. However we cannot go there. Fr. Bonfil<sup>2</sup> the priest there rejected all of the changes of the 60s. In the late 60s we traditionalists starting going there. However in about 1970 or 71 the NO Mass was imposed on Holy Family Church. Fr. Bonfil left and cared of us traditionalists. He also invited the SSPX to come. When they came in 72 or 73 he retired to Italy. Fr. Bonfil taught that we could no longer attend Mass at Holy Family Church because now it was the NO Mass. It is poison for the Faith.

**The answer** to the question “if it nourishes your faith” is that the NO Mass cannot and does not nourish anyone’s faith. Therefore it cannot nourish the woman’s faith. Therefore she cannot go to it. In this case His Excellency gave bad advice. Most good priests do from time to time. The Church is infallible, priests and bishops are not. It is not a disaster because all traditional Catholics knew that he was wrong. Certainly none of the faithful in Ireland think him correct. One Irishwoman was certain that His Excellency was drunk when making these remarks.

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<sup>1</sup> Open Letter to Confused Catholics, ch.4

<sup>2</sup> I believe that that is his Christian name