



INTERVIEW GIVEN BY CARDINAL BURKE TO NOTRE-DAME DE CHRÉTIENTÉ

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Rectorry of Chartres Cathedral*

Pope Leo XIV calls us to mission. What does mission mean according to him? The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that "outside the Church there is no salvation", while many of our contemporaries, even Christians, believe that "everyone will go to heaven". So how can we proclaim to today's world the reality of salvation and the path that passes through Christ and the Church?

The Church is by nature missionary, meaning that she seeks to bring Christ's message to all, and not only His message, but Christ Himself, particularly through the sacraments. Regarding the phrase "outside the Church there is no salvation", paragraph 846 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains this delicate question well, one that has often been misunderstood. It must be understood in this way: all salvation comes from Christ the Head, through the Church which is His Body.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to Lumen Gentium n°14:

"The Council teaches that this pilgrim Church is necessary for salvation. Christ alone is the mediator and the way of salvation; He is made present to us in His Body, which is the Church. By explicitly teaching the necessity of faith and Baptism, He simultaneously confirmed the necessity of the Church itself, which men enter through Baptism. Hence those who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded by God through Jesus Christ as necessary, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it, could not be saved (LG 14)."

The only path to salvation we know with certainty, because God has revealed it to us, passes through the Church and Baptism. It is in this sense that voluntarily separating from the Church, through schism or heresy, endangers one's own salvation. Sacred Scripture and Our Lord, as well as the Church's constant teaching, have always been clear about the unfortunate fact that souls can be lost.

Mission requires truth and the full proclamation of the faith and the Gospel message for the salvation of souls, even if it stands as a sign of contradiction to the world. Concretely, what are the instruments of mission (prayer, sacraments, proclamation, witness, social media)? What advice would you give to young people so that they may become ever more missionary each day and welcome catechumens and neophytes?

To be truly missionary, one must first be truly Christian, living and radiating one's own Faith. No one can give what he does not have, even though Divine Grace makes use of deficient, even useless, instruments, in Saint Paul's words, to reach souls.

The instruments of mission are first of all those that Christ Himself gave us, namely the Gospel and the Sacraments. These instruments have an intrinsic effectiveness. Anything that makes them known and highlights them, as well of course as the Church's sacramentals, helps mission. This is why one can be a missionary in many ways, including without ever leaving one's Carmel in Normandy, as Saint Thérèse did.

The growing number of catechumens in France in recent years is also a consequence of the breakdown in the transmission of the faith. What lessons can be drawn for mission today? We know that parents play a fundamental role: through their example, they can pass on to their children the habit of regular confession and offer them a spiritual framework (family prayer, grace before meals). And regarding catechesis, do you think traditional pedagogies, based on an almost school-like, by-heart learning of doctrine, should be favoured, or rather pedagogies based on a more intuitive approach to Revelation?

The large number of adult catechumens in France is a beautiful sign of Hope. However, it should not obscure the decline in the number of infant baptisms. Mission must also address this aspect, encouraging parents not only to have their children baptised, but also to ensure they receive a solid Christian upbringing.

As for catechumens, it is very important that they continue to deepen their Faith. Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into Christian life, not its endpoint. These newly baptised must not become discouraged; they need to be accompanied and supported — this is of course the fundamental role of the godparent, but also of every Christian.

Regarding catechesis, I am not familiar in detail with the various pedagogies used in France. A pedagogy should simply be judged by its fruits: traditional catechisms, which have proven their worth, should not be dismissed. Nor should what belongs to sound adaptation be rejected. Catechesis has one purpose: to make Christ and His teaching known. Its effectiveness must be judged by that measure alone.



The Pope recently called for a welcoming attitude towards communities and faithful attached to the *Vetus Ordo*, calling — I quote — for “seeking, with the help of the Holy Spirit, concrete solutions to generously include those sincerely attached to the *Vetus Ordo*, in keeping with the guidelines desired by the Second Vatican Council.” We know you have great love for this liturgy. What does it carry, in your view? What is the place of this spirituality within the Church? What role does the traditional liturgy play as an instrument of mission? Do you experience its missionary strength in your encounters, and why, in your opinion? Finally, what does its appeal among young people mean?

The liturgy as celebrated according to the *usus antiquior* of the Roman rite is an inestimable treasure of the Church, one that must be preserved and cherished, for it is intimately linked to the very identity of the Roman Catholic Church. It is evident that this liturgy is missionary; this is seen in its fruits, both now and in centuries past, for it attracts through its sense of the sacred and the transcendent. This is particularly clear with the younger generation, which has a deep thirst for the spiritual in a world that is increasingly “horizontal”.

It is sometimes said that only the 1969 liturgy is the liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, and that accepting the Council means renouncing the *Vetus Ordo*. How can one explain that attachment to the *Vetus Ordo* is perfectly compatible with the content of the Second Vatican Council?

Can the same be said of the other sacraments? Is it possible to be fully Catholic while living the sacraments according to the 1962 books?

It is certainly possible to be fully Catholic while living the sacraments according to the 1962 books. It is absolutely unacceptable to claim otherwise. Naturally, living and appreciating the sacraments dispensed according to the *Usus Antiquior* does not mean denying the validity of the sacraments in the subsequent forms of 1965 and 1969, nor rejecting the Council as a whole.

We know that these 1962 books were the very books used during the Council by all the Council Fathers.

One must revisit the historical and liturgical studies carried out on the years 1965–69, particularly the Synod of Bishops and the question of the development of the *Novus Ordo Missae*, in order to understand these matters. This certainly deserves to be examined further, in light of archives now beginning to open; much work remains to be done in this regard. The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and its requirements differ from — sometimes in agreement with, sometimes even opposed to — the *Novus Ordo Missae* as it is practised today in parishes. Had the Council Fathers been required to vote, as they did during the Synod of Bishops following the Mass of 24 October 1967, on the draft missal of 1969, it is far from certain that a majority would have emerged.

There is confusion here linked to anachronisms and to a lack of understanding of the process that led to the promulgation of the *Missale Romanum*. Once again, it would be important to study further and to make the documents of that period better known.



Returning to mission, the Holy Father recalled in his message for the 100th World Mission Day that “the Church's first missionary responsibility is to renew and keep alive the spiritual and fraternal unity among her members.” How did the various monastic orders and secular communities, which had quite specific vocations and sometimes their own rites, manage to preserve this unity in past centuries?

A distinction must be drawn between Unity, which is a distinctive mark of the Church (the “one” of the Creed), founded on Christ Himself — Our Lord developed this teaching in His discourse at the Last Supper — and uniformity, which consists in making everything identical. Uniformity has never existed in the Church. Since the earliest centuries, differences of rite have existed, including within the Latin West of the Roman Empire. The Church has always respected these differences of rite, while maintaining the necessary Unity, which naturally comes through the promulgation of fundamental principles and a form of discipline.

The Carthusian, Dominican and Carmelite rites, for example, existed alongside the Roman rite for almost a thousand years, as did the Mozarabic, Lyonese and Ambrosian rites in the West, among others one could add. One should reread the remarkable treatise of Dom Guéranger on liturgical institutions to understand what constitutes an abuse in particularity and what constitutes a legitimate diversity to be respected.

We set out from Notre-Dame de Paris to reach Notre-Dame de Chartres. You have a great devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. In what way is the Virgin Mary a path to salvation for all mankind?

We see throughout human history that Our Lady has very often intervened for the conversion of peoples. This is the case with the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which was the immediate cause of the conversion of hundreds of thousands of people. In France, the number of Marian apparitions is extremely significant. Consider the conversions at Lourdes, to name just that shrine, though one could also attribute to Our Lady the conversions at Notre-Dame de Paris or Notre-Dame de Chartres, including those of well-known figures. Our Lady's participation in the history of Redemption is linked to her Fiat, to her Divine Motherhood, to her place within the Hypostatic order, and of course to Our Lord's words from the Cross: “Woman, behold your son.”

Devotion to Our Lady should therefore be encouraged, particularly the recitation of the Rosary.

Our Lady certainly desires our salvation, but she also concerns herself with the needs of Humanity. Consider at Fatima her requests for prayer for peace, and the introduction of the devotion of the First Saturdays, particularly for obtaining Peace in the world. It is also very important to make this devotion known and to encourage it today, in response to Our Lady's request.



How do you see the future of the Church and of Christendom, particularly in Europe and in France? Do you see differences with America? What threats weigh upon the Church and the world, but also what signs of hope, with a spiritual thirst that is stirring young people? What role is the Holy Father called to play at the dawn of a key pontificate? Given his relative youth, many already see him as the pope of a generation, like Saint John Paul II, who left such a deep mark on so many Catholics, particularly among the young.

The situation varies considerably from one country to another — between Italy and France, Germany, or the United States, for instance.

Generalisations are not easy, but secularisation is clearly a central feature of the Western world. Young people as a whole sense the dangers of this secularisation imposed by previous generations, and are searching for the spiritual and the supernatural. Unfortunately, the means of this search are sometimes led astray. The proclamation of the Gospel in its fullness is without doubt the remedy for this.

In France and in the United States, one observes a genuine renewal through Christian families, often large ones. This is very encouraging and a real sign of hope. The moral crisis affecting society as a whole is a direct consequence of the crisis the Church is going through.

I earnestly hope that Pope Leo XIV will be able to touch the hearts of young people and respond to their thirst for transcendence, as John Paul II knew how to do.

“France, eldest daughter of the Church, are you faithful to the promises of your baptism?” This appeal by Saint John Paul II during his first visit to France still resonates in our hearts today. We learned a few days ago that the Holy Father, Leo XIV, will visit France from 25 to 28 September, including Paris and Lourdes. In your view, why does he wish to come to France? Do you have any sense of the message he will bring to the Catholics of France and to young people?

From the very first moments of his pontificate, Pope Leo XIV conveyed a message of unity. He seeks to heal certain wounds, unfortunately deep ones, present in the Church today. I therefore expect a message along these lines on the occasion of his visit to France.

I encourage the pilgrims of Chartres and friends of the Association Notre-Dame de Chrétienté to pray for the smooth unfolding and the abundant spiritual fruits of this visit.



Finally, what did you experience and feel during your presence at the Chartres pilgrimage this year?

The pilgrimage is remarkable for the great youthfulness of its participants and for their enthusiasm and fervour. I was able to greet many of them on their arrival at the bivouac in Gas.

It is deeply moving to see such a large number of pilgrims approach the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist during the pilgrimage. This is a great sign of spiritual vitality and of the action of the Holy Spirit. It is also a beautiful reason for Hope.

May all the participants keep this spiritual momentum throughout their lives!

