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Concern Expressed over R

By Rev. ROBERT G. BOISVERT
Pastor, Our Lady of the Lakes

The building of a new church in Gilford does not come as a surprise. I have been expecting it ever since Hector Bolduc came to the rectory to give me a copy of his certificate of ordination. That was 12 years ago.

The first thing that must be made clear in all this is that the new building has nothing to do

Commentary

with the Roman Catholic Church. It is being erected to serve the needs of a congregation that is made up largely of people who have left the Catholic church and is under the direct and total leadership of Rev. Hector Bolduc.

Traditional Catholics of New Hampshire, as the recently formed Church wishes to be called, has its roots in the unsettled times that followed the Second Vatican Council. Not long after the Council ended in 1965 the French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre found that he was unable to accept the decrees of the Council. Determined to oppose the many changes called for the Council's wide-ranging call for renewal, he left the church. Relocating in Ecône, a small town in Switzerland, he founded his own dissident group which he called the Priestly Fraternity of Pius X. The repeated pleas for reconciliation extended by Pope Paul VI were ignored and he proceeded to ordain to the priesthood the new recruits who applied for membership in his fraternity. (These ordinations are considered illegal by the Catholic church and none of the priests from the Fraternity of Pius X may exercise any priestly ministry in the Catholic church.)

It was as a member of the now "International" Priestly Fraternity of Pius X that Hector Bolduc, at the age of 38, was ordained to the priesthood on June 19, 1974. And it was as a representative of Archbishop Lefebvre that he returned to the United States to begin his ministry to Catholics who preferred to leave the church rather than to accept the reforms that had been required since Vatican II.

But by then times were changing and things were beginning to settle down in the Catholic church. In view of the momentous changes that had resulted from Vatican II it was astonishing that so many had come so far in so little time. For those who still felt uneasy with the new face of the church, few thought that leaving to join a competing church was the solution. All this

proved to be a disappointing situation and the missionaries of Archbishop Lefebvre did not find the American soil fertile. Only a scattering of small congregations was established but even that modest success was to be short-lived.

Sins against unity inevitably beget more sins against unity. It was not long before the Priestly Fraternity itself was rife with dissension. Several strong personalities emerged in the American branch of the Fraternity and a power struggle ensued. And as it has happened so often in the history of religious groups who rely more on the charismatic influence of individual leaders than on wider institutional relationships and loyalties, the International Priestly Fraternity broke up amid acrimonious accusations of "serious abuses and grave departures from tradition." Differences of opinion culminated inexorably in the expulsion of priests and to the dispute over property which smoldered in lawsuits filed in federal court.

When the dust settled Rev. Hector Bolduc emerged as the leader of several small and widely dispersed groups that were no longer affiliated with the International Priestly Fraternity of Pius X. He had become the sole

Diocese Offers

By Monsignor Francis J. Christian
Chancellor, Diocese of Manchester

In response to inquiries from concerned Catholics and representatives of the media, the Diocese of Manchester wishes to clarify the confusion surrounding the plans of Father Hector

Diocesan View

Bolduc to establish a church in the Lakes Region.

We are saddened by Father Bolduc's improper initiative in this regard, and feel obligated to advise Roman Catholics of the following points.

First of all, no Catholic priest can function in any capacity in the Diocese of Manchester without the permission of the bishop of the diocese.

Father Bolduc has not been in touch with the Diocese of Manchester to receive such permission. He has in no way been given such permission by Bishop Odore J. Gendron.

If a priest without such faculties celebrates a public Mass, he does so contrary to church law.

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authority in all matters financial and spiritual and was free to fulfill a long cherished dream: the establishment of a church on the site of the old family homestead in Gilford.

It is not in a spirit of contention that I lay out these facts. I do so as pastor of Our Lady of the Lakes Church, the Catholic parish that has responsibility for the faithful of the town of Gilford. I am also acting on my conviction that future misunderstanding will be avoided only if at the outset everyone clearly understands the nature of the new church as well as its relationship to the Catholic church.

I wish things could have been different. I wish I could have rejoiced and welcomed with open arms a new family of Christians dedicated to the most basic human aspirations of peace and justice, love and unity. Instead it is with apprehension and a heavy heart that I notice the announcement of the new church's construction is accomplished by a public attack on the Catholic church and an especially insensitive treatment of our spiritual leader, Pope John Paul II.

It is also with serious misgivings that I take note of Rev. Bolduc's stated intention to recruit new members to his fledgling congregation by

appealing to "dropouts from mainstream Catholicism." Could it be that a potentially divisive element of proselytism is being introduced into our community? Will the leaders of the new church continue to mislead Catholics into thinking that the Gilford church is really part of the Catholic church and it's O.K. to attend Mass there? More seriously, will anyone be encouraged to drop out of the Catholic church?

The Laconia-Gilford community has a long history of ecumenical witness. What is especially notable is the spirit of cooperation and mutual trust that exists between the various churches and synagogue of the area. It is with this in mind that we at Our Lady of the Lakes Church invite our new neighbors of the Traditional Catholic Church to join in the spirit that is common to all the religious groups of our community.

While we must disagree theologically with the new church, this should not prevent us from linking arms with other churches in the community as all of us try to exemplify charity and demonstrate mutual respect. We pray that they will be part of our joint effort to build trust and give witness to the God who expects his people to be a sign to the world of unity and peace.

View on Father Hector's Church

Furthermore, such a priest who attempts to hear confessions or perform marriages for Catholics does so invalidly. Catholics receiving those sacraments from him, regardless of their intentions, receive them invalidly. Bishop Gendron does not intend to grant such permissions or faculties to Father Bolduc in the future.

Secondly, according to the Canon law of the church, no parish or church building may be erected without the direct permission of the local bishop.

Bishop Gendron has no plans for establishing another parish in the Lakes Region at this time, and there is no possibility that any other church authority, including the Holy Father himself, would authorize the establishment of a parish in a diocese without the approval of the local bishop.

Finally, Father Bolduc admits that he was at one time a follower of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, a founder of the Society of Saint Pius X, which has rejected much of the spirit and teaching of the Second Vatican Council. For this continued disobedience to the Holy Father,

Archbishop Lefebvre himself was suspended from public celebration of the sacraments by Pope Paul VI.

It is hard to understand how Father Bolduc, in his April 24 interview with the Evening Citizen, can intimate that Vatican authorities have expressed sympathy with his views and give the impression that he is somehow in concord with the mind of the Holy Father when it is Rome that has condemned the very views that Father Bolduc espouses.

The fact that Father Bolduc has now separated even from the dissident Archbishop makes it clear that he speaks for no one but himself. He certainly does not represent in any fashion the current position or teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Catholics in the Lakes Region should be very clear on Father Bolduc's status in the diocese of Manchester and be aware of the fact that any direct support of his plans is contrary to the wishes of Bishop Gendron, and detrimental to the faith and unity of the Roman Catholic Church.