

In Depth

Traditionalists rely on traveling priests to hear Latin Mass

By Richard A. Kiley

Father Anthony Cekada of the Fathers of the Society of St. Pius V may be one of the reasons the airlines created frequent-flyers programs.

Father Cekada is one of 14 priests who minister to nearly 50 traditionalist-Catholic churches and missions across the country. The local site, the Chapel of the Holy Name of Mary on Rochester's North Winton Road, is the only church in the diocese where the Tridentine Mass, the 16th-century Latin ritual, is regularly celebrated.

Parishioners at Holy Name of Mary and other churches like it oppose the changes in the Church and liturgy that came about through the Second Vatican Council, which took place from 1963 to 1965.

A typical Sunday for the 36-year-old priest consists of celebrating a morning Mass at the Rochester chapel, then catching a plane to a city like Detroit or Minneapolis for a mid-day service.

Father Cekada is one of the more than 200 priests to have been ordained by suspended French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. Since 1976, Archbishop Lefebvre has been in defiance of a Vatican order suspending him from all ministry as a priest or bishop. The archbishop announced two weeks ago from his headquarters in Ecône, Switzerland, that he would on June 30 ordain four of his disciples as bishops, in defiance of papal orders.

Since Canon Law requires papal authoriza-

tion for the creation of new bishops, the step would automatically excommunicate Archbishop Lefebvre and the new prelates he ordains.

The consecration of illicit bishops could also produce the first schism — or split in the Church — since the 1870s, when the Old Catholics revolted against the First Vatican Council's proclamation of papal infallibility.

Father Cekada and the more than 140 parishioners of Holy Name of Mary are closely watching the dispute between the traditionalist archbishop and the Vatican, but say its out-

come will not directly affect them. Father Cekada and the Fathers of the Society of St. Pius V broke from Archbishop Lefebvre's Priestly Society of St. Pius X five years ago, after the archbishop began making what Father Cekada termed "compromises with the Vatican."

"Archbishop Lefebvre was definitely trying to put together some sort of a deal with the Vatican. He wanted his churches to use a more updated version of the Tridentine Mass and to accept marriage annulments unquestioningly," said Father Cekada, who was ordained by

Archbishop Lefebvre at Ecône in 1977. "We had a parting of the ways in April, 1983."

Members of Holy Name of Mary don't believe there is any room for compromise when it comes to adhering to Roman Catholic doctrine.

"We didn't come this far for the truth to be divided and split up," said Susan DeBlase, who with her husband, Ron, has been a member of Holy Name of Mary since 1977.

Since 1983, priests from the Fathers of the Society of St. Pius V, which is located in Oys-

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Schism could eventually splinter traditionalist groups, observers say

Fence-sitting followers of French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre will face a difficult choice if the archbishop carries out his threat to ordain bishops without Vatican approval June 30.

But it is difficult to predict the degree to which a schism precipitated by the traditionalist archbishop's actions would affect the mainstream of the Roman Catholic Church, according to Father Joseph A. Hart, a faculty member at St. Bernard's Institute.

"Some people who have been fence-sitting because it is technically possible to fulfill their spiritual requirements within the Society of St. Pius X may be faced with a choice," Father Hart said. "But for most people who've been in the movement for a long time, there'd presumably be no turning back."

He pointed out that reaction in France — where large congregations indicated their rejection of Vatican II reforms by repeating Latin responses to their pastors' French invocations — may differ markedly from the response in such countries as the United States, where the reforms have been more widely accepted.

Archbishop Lefebvre's following in France is motivated as much by politics as by theology, Father Hart observed. "The archbishop is involved in causes that go beyond the Church, such as restoration of the monarchy," he said. "The base of this movement among similar types in Switzerland and France is simply not shared in the United States — They are much different."

Some observers have contrasted Vatican at-

tempts to reconcile with Archbishop Lefebvre against relatively harsh sanctions employed against Father Charles Curran and Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen.

Father Hart, however, does not believe that the Vatican's actions in the two cases indicate a less stringent code of conduct for conservatives than for liberals. Neither Archbishop Hunthausen nor Father Curran, he pointed out, threatened a schism.

"No one has ever wanted a schism — Especially if a bishop is involved, Rome has been very cautious," he explained. "(Vatican officials) are bending over backwards to keep the Church together, because once broken off, these things are very hard to put back together."

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