

Cardinal Sarah . . .

Many Church Leaders Underestimate The Crisis

(LifeSiteNews) — The Catholic Church is going through a “serious crisis,” says Robert Cardinal Sarah, the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship.

By PETE BAKLINSKI

And the problem is compounded by the fact that a “significant number of Church leaders underestimate” just how serious the crisis is.

The crisis consists in “relativism in doctrinal, moral, and disciplinary teaching, grave abuses, the desacralization and trivialization of the Sacred Liturgy, a merely social and horizontal view of the Church’s mission,” the cardinal wrote in a March 31 address to a German conference on the sacred liturgy.

The conference marked the upcoming tenth anniversary of Pope Benedict XVI’s *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*. The edict, issued July 7, 2007, clarified the right of priests to offer the Traditional Latin Mass without having to request permission from their bishop.

Basing his explanation of the crisis on the old Latin adage *lex orandi, lex credendi* (what one prays is

what one believes) the cardinal said that a lack of even a basic understanding of the truths of the faith, including among priests

as well as bishops, can be traced back to the impoverished state of

the Catholic liturgy.

“The serious crisis of faith, not only at the level of the Christian faithful but also and especially among many priests and bishops, has made us incapable of understanding the Eucharistic Liturgy as a sacrifice, as identical to the act performed once and for all by Jesus Christ, making present the Sacrifice of the Cross in a non-bloody manner, throughout the Church, through different ages, places, peoples, and nations,” he said.

“There is often a sacrilegious tendency to reduce the Holy Mass to a simple convivial meal, the celebration of a profane feast, the community’s celebration of itself, or even worse, a terrible diversion from the anguish of a life that no longer has meaning or from the fear of meet-

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ing God face to face, because His glance unveils and obliges us to look truly and unflinchingly at the ugliness of our interior life.

"But the Holy Mass is not a diversion. It is the living sacrifice of Christ who died on the cross to free us from sin and death, for the purpose of revealing the love and the glory of God the Father," he added.

While the Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" studies have shown that as many as 50 percent of American Catholics do not know the Church's teaching that Jesus is truly present "Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity."

The cardinal makes the case that lack of belief in the reality of the Eucharist is due to errors that have crept into the Church's highest prayer, the liturgy.

"It is necessary to recognize that the serious, profound crisis that has affected the liturgy and the Church itself since the council is due to the fact that its center is no longer God and the adoration of Him, but rather men and their alleged ability to 'do' something to keep themselves busy during the Eucharistic Celebrations," he said.

With the Church not emphasizing God as her center in the liturgy, the Church has begun to "self-destruct," he said, straying from her mission and purpose of saving souls, many times with the approving nod of high-ranking Churchmen.

"Many refuse to face up to the Church's work of self-destruction through the deliberate demolition of her doctrinal, liturgical, moral, and pastoral foundations," he said.

"While more and more voices of high-ranking prelates stubbornly affirm obvious doctrinal, moral, and liturgical errors that have been condemned a hundred times and work to demolish the little faith remaining in the People of God, while the bark of the Church furrows the stormy sea of this decadent world and the waves crash down on the ship, so that it is already filling with water, a growing number of Church leaders and faithful shout: '*Tout va très bien, Madame la Marquise!*' But the reality is quite different," he added.

Tout va très bien, Madame la Marquise (Everything's fine, My Fair Lady) is the refrain of a popular 1930s song in which an employee of a noblewoman reports to her that "everything is fine" on the estate except for "one small thing." As the song progresses, the noblewoman learns that the "one small thing" has resulted in her losing her husband, her home, and her entire fortune.

Cardinal Sarah said that the way forward out of the current crisis facing the Church is to discover anew the sacred reality of the liturgy, in all its sacred mystery and glory. To be avoided at all costs is the "disaster, the devastation, and the schism that the modern promoters of a living liturgy caused by remodeling the Church's liturgy according to their ideas" in the wake of Vatican II.

The liturgy called for by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council has yet to be fully realized, suggested the cardinal.

"Now, it is enough to pick up [Vatican II's] Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy again and to read it honestly, without betraying its meaning, to see that the true purpose of the Second Vatican Council was not to start

a reform that could become the occasion for a break with Tradition, but quite the contrary, to rediscover and to confirm Tradition in its deepest meaning," he said.

"It must be reaffirmed that Vatican Council II never asked to make *tabula rasa* (blank slate) of the past and therefore to abandon the missal said to be of St. Pius V," he added.

The cardinal said that Pope Benedict showed a path forward to rediscovering authentic liturgy by opening the door to the Extraordinary Form of the Mass which he hoped would help "enrich" the Ordinary Form of the Mass.

Following Pope Benedict's lead, Sarah said he would like to see the relaunch of a "liturgical movement." Not one that is based on the "ravings of some theologians who long for 'novelties,' but one based on a disposition toward "silence-adoration-formation."

Without sacred silence, he said, "we cannot encounter God." In adoration, he added, one is "swallowed up in God and surrounded on all sides by His presence." Adoration helps one desire to "belong now to God alone and to plunge into the purity of His Love." Finally, he said, a proper liturgical formation is necessary "based on a proclamation of the faith" and in the "deep mystery of God our loving Father."

Cardinal Sarah's address comes two months after news broke of Pope Francis ordering a surprise review of the most recent translations of liturgical texts from Latin into English and other languages. The new translations brought back, among other things, "And with your spirit" as a response to the priest at Mass, the accurate translation of the Latin "*et cum spiritu tuo.*"