

## OPEN LETTER TO FR. JUAN CARLOS ORTIZ

London

4th January 2018

Dear Father Ortiz,

It is the memory of your 27-page long Ambrose Moran document dealing with questions of the schismatic Orthodox, and the time I spent reading through it, which spurs me to write to you first and foremost. In some people's eyes, you are the Church's champion leading a crusade against the peril of schismatic Orthodoxy. For this reason, I feel sure that the following will interest you a great deal. I wish to begin by drawing your attention to some fairly recent statements made by Bishop Williamson which appear to favour the Russian Orthodox. His words appeared in Eleison Comments #525 August 2017 and #535, October 2017 and can be read here: [stmarcelinitiative.com/fatima-consecration-ii/](http://stmarcelinitiative.com/fatima-consecration-ii/) and here: [stmarcelinitiative.com/putin-speaks](http://stmarcelinitiative.com/putin-speaks). The first talks about the consecration of Russia requested by Our Lady of Fatima and uses the name "Holy Russia" to describe contemporary Russia before its consecration has happened. The second one begins by defending the use of the phrase "Holy Russia" and then goes on to call Vladimir Putin "a follower of Christ", even though he is a man whom the whole world knows to be a Russian Orthodox schismatic.

### 1. Holy Russia

Bishop Williamson begins Eleison Comments #535 by telling his readers that:

*"One reader of these 'Comments' was surprised to see them (August 5) referring to 'Holy Russia' when since 1917 it is Russia that has been spreading its errors throughout the world."*

Whether Bishop Williamson has misrepresented the grounds for his reader's objections (knowingly or otherwise) is unclear. Regardless, the fact remains that the main objection to calling Russia "Holy" is not merely that it was a Communist country after 1917, for this would be to suggest or give the impression that Russia perhaps *was* "holy" before 1917 and that it was only the Bolshevik revolution which took away that "holiness". You and I know otherwise, Father, as does Bishop Williamson.

Bishop Williamson then goes on to justify calling Russia "Holy Russia" by saying:

*"But 'Holy Russia' is an expression that goes much further back than the 20th century. It refers to the Russian people's natural inclination to religion. If from 1917 to 1989 they were the spring-bed of international Communism, that is only because they served it with a religious fervour..."*

The question which he begs is: *their inclination to what religion?* You and I both know the answer, Father. The religion of Russia is not the Catholic religion. It is a false religion calling itself Russian Orthodoxy and has been since the year 1054. And whilst the phrase “Holy Russia” may go back earlier than the 20th century, it is not that much earlier, and nowhere near as old as the schism of 1054. The phrase is a comparatively recent invention of the Orthodox. It therefore does not refer to anything Catholic but is a reference to Russian Orthodoxy supposedly being the true religion, since it recalls the false teaching of the Russian Orthodox according to which Russia (and not Rome) has a sort of spiritual primacy over the world, the true religion being the schismatic, man-made national religion of that country.

The contrast which the bishop draws between Russia pre- and post- 1917 is also misleading since, as mentioned above, it risks leaving the impression that things were bad in Russia after 1917, but not before. An uninformed person reading Bishop Williamson’s words might be forgiven for thinking that before 1917 Russia was a truly “holy” country, where all or most people were “fervently” practicing the true religion. But you and I know that that is not the case, quite the contrary. The truth is that the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 only replaced one form of darkness with an even more brutal and unpleasant form of darkness. Even so, prior to 1917 Russia was a country in need of conversion, a country practicing a false religion, a country which, in the name of that false religion, persecuted and oppressed the Catholic Church, even officially in her government and laws, sometimes with bloody violence. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* tells us that in the mid-19th century, a mere two generations before the Bolshevik revolution, Czar Nicholas I was busy persecuting the Church in Russia and also in Poland which at that time fell under his sway:

“The reign of Nicholas I was a long period of persecution and suffering for Catholics in Russia. ...

Catholics were prohibited from restoring their churches and from building new ones; from preaching sermons that had not previously been approved by the government, and from refuting the calumnies of the Press against Catholicism. It is not necessary for us to recur to the authority of Catholic writers, like Lescœur, to prove how odious this violence was; we may be satisfied with a mere glance at the immense collection of laws and governmental measures concerning the Catholic Church, from the times of Peter and of Ivan Alexeievitch to 1867. ...

It is not without reason that a Catholic writer has said that the laws of Nicholas I against Catholicism constitute a Neronian code.”

([www.newadvent.org/cathen/13253a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13253a.htm))

His successor, Czar Alexander II, was little better.

“The first years of the reign of Alexander II were not marked by anti-Catholic violence.

... Soon however there was a return to the methods of Nicholas I, notwithstanding the fact that Pius IX wrote to the tsar, imploring liberty for Catholics of both rites in Russia. In another letter, addressed in 1861 to Mgr. Fialkowski, Archbishop of Warsaw, Pius IX referred to the continual efforts of the Holy See to safeguard the existence of Catholicism in Russia, and to the difficulties that were opposed to all measures of his and of his predecessors in that connection. Encouraged by the words of the pope, the Polish bishops presented a memorandum to the representative of the emperor at Warsaw, asking for the abrogation of the laws that oppressed Catholics and destroyed their liberty. A similar memorandum was presented to the tsar by the Archbishop of Mohileff and the bishops of Russia. Upon the basis of these memoranda, the government accused the Catholic clergy of promoting the spirit of revolution and of plotting revolts against the tsar. Most painful occurrences ensued; the soldiery was not restrained from profaning the churches and the Holy Eucharist, from wounding defenceless women, or from treating Warsaw as a city taken by storm. One hundred and sixty priests, and among them the vicar capitular Bialobrzewski, were taken prisoners, and several of them were exiled to Siberia. Mgr. Deckert, coadjutor of the Archbishop Fialkowski, died of the sufferings that these events caused him. The condition of the Poles were becoming intolerable, and Catholicism suffered proportionately. Amid the general indifference of Europe, one voice, that of Pius IX, was raised, firm and energetic, in favour of an oppressed people and of a persecuted faith.

(Ibid.)

Would it be worth noting that the persecution of the Church by the Russian government and national “church” did not end with the death of Alexander II but carried on into the 20th century?

“It should not be forgotten that, during the entire reign of Alexander II, the religious policy of Russia was inspired by Konstantin Pobiedonostseff, Procurator General of the [Russian Orthodox] Holy Synod, who, for political rather than religious motives, was a fierce adversary of Catholicism. The Catholic clergy continued to endure the severest oppression, abandoned to the caprices of the police, greatly reduced in numbers, and trammelled by a thousand obstacles in the exercise of its apostolic ministry. This condition of things was prolonged into the reign of Nicholas II, during which Pobiedonostseff exercised his dictatorship until 1905.”

(Ibid.)

1905 is a mere twelve years before the Bolshevik revolution and the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima. But which Russia is it that we see here, is this the “Holy Russia” of which Bishop Williamson speaks? Was it “Holy Russia” which persecuted the Church? Was it “Holy Russia” which made the condition of Polish Catholics intolerable? Was it “Holy Russia” which sent soldiers into Catholic Churches to smash them up and profane the Blessed Sacrament? Was it “Holy Russia” which arrested priests and sent them to die in Siberia? Which Russia was this Russia which officially passed so many laws designed to suppress the Catholic Church and against which Pius IX energetically protested?

## 2. A Follower of Christ

That would be bad enough, but it gets worse. In the same Eleison Comments #535, Bishop Williamson tells us that Vladimir Putin is “a follower of Christ.”

*“Some experts in the perfidy of the New World Order are still distrustful of Vladimir Putin, which is understandable, but as Americans say, if he talks, walks and quacks like a follower of Christ, then common sense says that he is a follower of Christ.”*

Father, can a Russian Orthodox schismatic truly be called “a follower of Christ”? Can, in this particular case, possibly the best known Russian Orthodox schismatic in the whole world, a man who promotes the false religion of Russian Orthodoxy on television by his words and deeds and bad example, nevertheless be called “a follower of Christ”? Does Vladimir Putin need to convert and become a Catholic or does he not? If, say, you had managed somehow to become his best friend and closest, most trusted confidant, and he were to ask you one day: “What do you think, Father, should I become a Catholic? What would you advise me to do?” - would you urge him to do so as soon as possible, or would you tell him that there really is no need? I ask again: can a Russian Orthodox schismatic truly be called a follower of Christ? This is a yes or no question, Father. Bishop Williamson is either right or wrong. There are huge implications either way.

## 3. Implications

If what Bishop Williamson says is right, and a non-Catholic who publicly professes the Russian Orthodox religion can truly be called “a follower of Christ,” then it is not necessary to be a Catholic in order to follow Christ. And since it is by following Christ that we save our souls and gain the eternal reward of heaven, this in turn must surely mean that it is not necessary to become a Catholic in order to save one’s soul.

If what Bishop Williamson says is right, and Russia as it is today, in its present unconsecrated state, can be called “Holy Russia” due to the “the Russian people’s natural inclination towards religion” of any sort, be it the false religion of Russian Orthodoxy which persecuted the Church or the false religion of Communism which persecuted the Church and many others indiscriminately, then the word “holy” has undergone a radical change of meaning. According to this new meaning, the more inclined a person is towards joining and supporting whatever the fashionable false religion *du jour* is and “serving it with a religious fervour,” even if that service involves persecuting the Church, the more they can be said to be “holy.”

If what Bishop Williamson says is right, and Russia, a country with hardly any Catholics (all Catholics, including liberal and non-practicing Catholics, total barely 1% of the population) and where the Church is not represented in the state at any level can be called “holy”, then holiness can be found outside the Church, which in turn must surely mean that the Church is not necessary for sanctification since it is now possible to be “holy” without being in any way Catholic.

If what Bishop Williamson says is right, and a known, publicly-professing Orthodox schismatic can be “a follower of Christ,” then the charges which you levelled against Fr. Pfeiffer and Fr. Hewko of “association in sacris” (if there were such a thing) and of being “suspect of schism” (ditto) do not make a lot of sense because if, for argument’s sake Ambrose Moran really were a Ukrainian Orthodox and not a Ukrainian Catholic, he could still nevertheless be regarded as a “follower of Christ,” could he not?

On the other hand...

If what Bishop Williamson says is not true, then he has publicly propagated some ideas which are, at the very least, highly misleading and will lead to confusion among the faithful and even priests.

If what Bishop Williamson says is not true, then he would appear to have contradicted Church teaching on a number of points (‘Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus’ for example), whether implicitly or explicitly, knowingly or unwittingly.

If what Bishop Williamson says is not true, then such moral authority as he still enjoys due to his status as one of the four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre in 1988 will unfortunately only serve in this instance to help lead souls astray.

If what Bishop Williamson says is not true, and you can see that it is not true, then you surely have a very grave moral obligation to point that out to him, for his benefit at least, if no one else’s.

If what Bishop Williamson says is not true, and you can see that it is not true, then the unfortunate fact that he made these misleading statements in public means that they must be put right in public in order to repair the damage and clear up any confusion caused, and that any correction made to him, by you or by anyone else, must also be made in public.

If what Bishop Williamson says is not true, then as a sober man who takes such things seriously, you must surely ask yourself how this could have happened and whether perhaps it might have happened before on an occasion which you did not notice and whether it will happen again.

#### 4. Justice

It is, as always, very disappointing to witness a supposedly “Traditional” Catholic bishop saying such things. What is perhaps even more disappointing is the lack of response from those calling themselves Traditional. It has now been nearly three months since Bishop Williamson made these statements, and I and many others have been waiting to see what your response would be, Father. So far, we have been disappointed.

Father Ortiz, you are regarded around the world as being a priest associated with, cooperating with and in some way joined to Bishop Williamson. That is true whether you like it or not, whether you intend it or not. You have in the past referred to Bishops Williamson and Faure as “our bishops,” you assisted at the most recent episcopal consecration which Bishop Williamson performed, an event which took place at your church where you are resident, St. Athanasius, in Vienna, Virginia. And to this day, nobody has ever seen a public word from you which so much as hints at a difference between Bishop Williamson and yourself. I find this not a little perplexing.

The reason I find it perplexing is that not so very long ago you publically accused Fr. Joseph Pfeiffer and Fr. David Hewko (and indirectly all those who assist at their Masses) of being in some way tainted with schism and Orthodoxy due to their “association with” a man whom you regard as an Orthodox schismatic, despite the fact that he made a public profession of the Catholic Faith in 2015 and that his baptism as a Catholic in the late 1940s was proven beyond all doubt by the unearthing of his baptismal certificate from the parish in New York where he was born. I remember well the pages and pages of talk about “communicatio in sacris,” and the quotations concerning those “suspect of heresy” to which you had added the word “schism” in square brackets, as though there could ever be such a thing as one “suspect of schism”. Only last year you wrote a letter to the Australian faithful accusing Fr. Pfeiffer and Fr. Hewko of “association in sacris” – a thing which does not exist! – and telling them that they could not go to their Masses. I thought then, as I do now, that you greatly overreached yourself and overstated your case. Had you confined yourself to saying that you were concerned over the question of Ambrose Moran’s past or that you found Fr. Pfeiffer and Fr. Hewko to have exercised not enough caution for your liking then, I suspect, people might have taken you a little more seriously. I myself would still not necessarily agree, but it need not have been a point of public contention. Since, however, you chose to make this into such a big, public *cause celebre*, unfortunately you must bear the consequences of that decision, which is why people are now waiting to see what your response will be to Bishop Williamson.

You accused Fr. Pfeiffer and Fr. Hewko of being too closely “associated” with someone whom you suspected was Orthodox. You accused them of temporising with schismatic Orthodoxy and of being “suspect of schism” and said that no one may go to them for the sacraments lest they too become somehow tainted with Orthodoxy and schism. And yet now, today, when the whole world has witnessed Bishop Williamson speaking of the

Orthodox schismatic Putin as a “follower of Christ” and of the Orthodox Russia which persecuted the Church as “Holy Russia” your response is total silence. A less generous man might be tempted to accuse you of the very worst kind of hypocrisy and self-interest. You have unjustly attacked two priests who are innocent of the crimes with which you charge them and who would never knowingly have anything to do with schismatic or heretical false religions, except to convert them. And yet when one of your own friends a year or two later does the very thing of which you accused those two priests, you look the other way and pretend you didn’t notice.

If it was, as you said, “necessary to warn the faithful” about the non-existent “association” of Fr. Pfeiffer and Fr. Hewko with schismatic Orthodoxy, why is it not now necessary to warn the faithful of the very real and undeniable temporising with and favouring of schismatic Orthodoxy on the part of Bishop Williamson? Father Ortiz, to avoid anyone mistaking your silence for rank hypocrisy, you must now choose. Either you must denounce the recent statements of Bishop Williamson and warn the faithful against what he is currently encouraging them to think. Or you must apologise to Frs. Pfeiffer and Hewko and let it be known publicly that you were mistaken, that you overstated your case, that they were and are innocent of the charges which you levelled against them and that, in any case, even if they had been guilty, it would not matter because, as Bishop Williamson has now made clear, the Orthodox can be “followers of Christ” too. One or the other, Father.

On behalf of many others who, like myself, eagerly await your reply,

God bless,

Greg Taylor

PS – If my memory serves, Fr. Pfeiffer and Fr. Hewko asked you, in charity, to point out to them what “calumnies” they had committed against Bishop Williamson (or “our bishops,” as you put it), an entirely reasonable request. It has now been a whole year. Perhaps you would like to consider fulfilling their request and showing them where they went wrong?