



Cardinal Robert Sarah attends the synod in Rome on Oct. 16, 2018.

IN PERSON

# Cardinal Sarah's Cri de Coeur: The Catholic Church Has Lost Its Sense of the Sacred

Exclusive interview with the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

By Edward Pentin – Posted 9/23/19 at 9:37 AM

Cardinal Robert Sarah has said the Synod of Bishops on the Pan-Amazon Region, being a regional assembly of bishops, is not the forum to discuss priestly celibacy — a subject that is “unbearable” for the modern world because “some Westerners can no longer tolerate this scandal of the cross.”

The subject is one of many the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments discusses in this exclusive Sept. 13 interview with Register [Rome correspondent Edward Pentin](#), including the reasons why he decided to write his latest book, [The Day Is Now Far Spent](#) (Ignatius Press).

He addresses the current crisis in the Church and society and believes it is driven primarily by atheism, not placing God at the center of our lives, as well as a prevailing wish to impose “personal opinion as truth.” Those who announce “revolutions and radical changes,” he warns, “are false prophets” not “looking out for the good of the flock.”

The Guinean cardinal also explains why Africa's grace is to remain “a child of God,” discusses the positive and negative effects of liturgical reform, and says a “demon” wanting our “spiritual death” is what makes some prohibit Mass in the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite. “How can we not be surprised and deeply shocked that what was the rule yesterday is prohibited today?” he asks, and he urges a “move away from dialectical oppositions.”

*What is the primary concern you want to convey to readers in your book?*

Don't misunderstand this book. I don't develop personal theses or academic research. This book is the cry from my heart as a priest and a pastor.

I suffer so much from seeing the Church torn apart and in great confusion. I suffer so much from seeing the Gospel and Catholic doctrine disregarded, the Eucharist ignored or profaned. I suffer so much from seeing the priests abandoned, discouraged, and [witnessing those] whose faith has become tepid.

The decline of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus the Eucharist is at the heart of the current crisis of the Church and its decline, especially in the West. We bishops, priests and lay faithful are all responsible for the crisis of faith, the crisis of the Church, the priestly crisis and the de-Christianization of the West. Georges Bernanos wrote before the war: "We constantly repeat, with tears of helplessness, laziness or pride, that the world is becoming de-Christianized. But the world has not received Christ — *non pro mundo rogo* — it is we who received him for him; it is from our hearts that God withdraws; it is we who de-Christianize ourselves, miserable!" (*Nous Autres, Français*, "We French" — in *Scandale de la Vérité*, "Scandal of the Truth," Points /Seuil, 1984).

I wanted to open my heart and share a certainty: The profound crisis that the Church is experiencing in the world and especially in the West is the fruit of the forgetting of God. If our first concern is not God, then everything else collapses. At the root of all crises, anthropological, political, social, cultural, geopolitical, there is the forgetting of the primacy of God. As Pope Benedict XVI [said](#) during his meeting with the world of culture at the Collège des Bernardins on Sept. 12, 2008, "The '*quaerere Deum*' — 'searching for God,' the fact of being attentive to the essential reality of God is the central axis on which all civilization and culture is built. What founded the culture of Europe — the search for God and the willingness to let oneself be found by him, to listen to him — still remains today the foundation of every true culture and the indispensable condition for the survival of our humanity. For the refusal of God or a total indifference towards him is fatal for man."

I have tried to show in this book that the common root of all current crises is found in this fluid atheism, which, without denying God, lives in practice as if he did not exist.

In the conclusion of my book, I speak of this poison of which we are all victims: liquid atheism. It infiltrates everything, even our speeches as clergymen. It consists in admitting, alongside faith, radically pagan and worldly ways of thinking or living. And we satisfy ourselves with this unnatural cohabitation! This shows that our faith has become liquid and inconsistent! The first reform to be made is in our hearts. It consists in no longer making a pact with lies. Faith is both the treasure we want to defend and the strength that allows us to defend it.

This movement which consists of "putting God aside," making God a secondary reality, has touched the hearts of priests and bishops.

God does not occupy the center of their lives, thoughts and actions. The life of prayer is no longer central. I am convinced that priests must proclaim the centrality of God through their own lives. A Church where the priest no longer carries this message is a Church that is sick. The life of a priest must proclaim to the world that "God alone is enough," that prayer, that

is, this intimate and personal relationship, is the heart of his life. This is the profound reason for priestly celibacy.

The forgetting of God finds its first and most serious manifestation in the secularized way of life of priests. They are the first to have to carry the Good News. If their personal lives do not reflect this, then practical atheism will spread throughout the Church and society.

I believe that we are at a turning point in the history of the Church. Yes, the Church needs a profound and radical reform that must begin with a reform of the way of being and the way of life of priests. The Church is holy in herself. But we prevent this holiness from shining through our sins and worldly concerns.

It is time to drop all these burdens and finally let the Church appear as God has shaped her. It is sometimes believed that the history of the Church is marked by structural reforms. I am sure that it is the saints who change history. The structures then follow and only perpetuate the actions of the saints.

*The notion of hope is a fundamental element of the work you do, despite the grim title of the book and the alarming observations you make about the state of our Western civilization. Do you still see reasons for hope in our world?*

The title is dark, but it is realistic. Truly we see the whole of Western civilization crumbling. In 1978, the philosopher John Senior published the book [The Death of Christian Culture](#). Like the Romans of the fourth century, we see the barbarians take power. But this time, the barbarians are not coming from outside to attack the cities. The barbarians are inside. They are those individuals who refuse their own human nature, who are ashamed to be limited creatures, who want to think of themselves as demiurges without fathers and without heritage. That's the real barbarity. On the contrary, civilized man is proud and happy to be an heir.

We convinced our contemporaries that in order to be free, we must not depend on anyone. This is a tragic mistake. Westerners are convinced that receiving is contrary to the dignity of the person. However, civilized man is fundamentally an heir; he receives a history, a religion, a language, a culture, a name, a family.

Refusing to join a network of dependency, inheritance and filiation condemns us to enter the naked jungle of competition from a self-sufficient economy. Because he refuses to accept himself as an heir, man condemns himself to the hell of liberal globalization, where individual interests clash without any other law than that of profit at all costs.

However, the title of my book also contains the light of hope because it is taken from the petition of the disciples of Emmaus in the Gospel of Luke: "Stay with us, Lord, for it is nearly evening" (24:29). We know that Jesus will eventually manifest himself.

Our first reason for hope is therefore God himself. He will never abandon us! We firmly believe in his promise. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Holy Catholic Church.

She will always be the Ark of Salvation. There will always be enough light for the one who seeks the truth with a pure heart.

Even as everything seems to be in the process of being destroyed, we see the luminous seeds of rebirth emerging. I would like to mention the hidden saints who carry the Church, in particular, the faithful religious who put God at the center of their lives every day. Monasteries are islands of hope. It seems that the vitality of the Church has taken refuge there, as if they were oases in the middle of the desert — but also, Catholic families who concretely live the Gospel of life, while the world scorns them.

Christian parents are the hidden heroes of our time, the martyrs of our century. Finally, I want to pay tribute to so many faithful and anonymous priests who have made the sacrifice at the altar the center and meaning of their lives. By offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily with reverence and love, they carry the Church without knowing it.

*How does this book complement your two previous volumes — [God or Nothing](#) and [The Power of Silence](#)? What does this one add to those two?*

In *God or Nothing*, I wanted to give thanks to God for God's intervention in my life. By *God or Nothing*, I would like to succeed in placing God at the center of our lives, at the center of our thoughts, at the center of our actions, at the only place he must occupy, so that our Christian journey can revolve around this Rock on which every man builds himself and structures himself until he attains "to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ" (see Ephesians 4:13).

*The Power of Silence* is like a spiritual confidence. We cannot join God; we can only remain in him in silence.

This last book is a synthesis. I try to clearly describe the current situation and describe its root causes. This last book indicates the serious human and spiritual consequences when man abandons God. But at the same time, *The Day Is Now Far Spent* strongly affirms that God does not abandon man, even when man hides behind the shrubs in his garden, like Adam. God goes in search of him and finds him, hence a glimmer of hope for the future.

*In recent years, the Church has suffered many controversies related to the questioning, according to some, of the Church's moral teaching by Church leaders, for example on Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love), ignorance of the magisterium of John Paul II (which the Pontifical John Paul II Institute has recently modified in a clear manner), efforts to undermine Humanae Vitae (Human Life) and the revision of the death penalty, to name just a few. Why is this happening, and should the faithful be concerned?*

We are facing a real cacophony from bishops and priests. Everyone wants to impose their personal opinion as a truth. But there is only one truth: Christ and his teaching. How could the doctrine of the Church change? The Gospel does not change. It is still the same. Our unity cannot be built around fashionable opinions.

The Letter to the Hebrews says: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching. It is good to have our hearts strengthened by grace and not by foods, which do not benefit those who live by them” (13:8-9) — because [of] “my doctrine,” says Jesus. “My teaching is not my own but is from the One who sent me” (John 7:16). God himself often repeats it to us: “I will not violate my covenant; the promise of my lips I will not alter. By my holiness I swore once for all” (Psalm 89:35-36).

Some people use *Amoris Laetitia* to oppose the great teachings of John Paul II. They are mistaken. What was true yesterday remains true today. We must hold firmly to what Benedict XVI called the hermeneutic of continuity. The unity of faith implies the unity of the magisterium in space and time. When a new teaching is given to us, it must always be interpreted in coherence with the preceding teaching.

If we introduce ruptures, we break the unity of the Church. Those who loudly announce revolutions and radical changes are false prophets. They are not looking for the good of the flock. They seek media popularity at the price of divine truth. Let’s not be impressed. Only the truth will set us free. We must have confidence. The magisterium of the Church will never contradict itself.

When the storm rages, you have to anchor yourself to what is stable. Let us not chase after fashionable novelties that may fade before we have even been able to grasp them.

*To what extent do you believe, as some critics do, that post-conciliar liturgical reforms have led to the current crisis in the Church of which you speak in your book?*

I believe that, in this matter, Benedict XVI’s teaching is luminous. He dared to write just recently that the crisis of the liturgy is at the heart of the crisis of the Church. If in the liturgy we no longer put God at the center, then neither do we put him at the center of the Church. In celebrating the liturgy, the Church goes back to its source. All its *raison d’être* is to turn to God, to direct all eyes towards the cross. If it does not, it puts itself at the center; it becomes useless. I believe that the loss of orientation, of this gaze directed towards the cross, is symbolic of the root of the Church’s crisis. Yet the Council had taught that “the liturgy is mainly and above all the worship of the divine majesty.” We have made it a flatly human and self-centered celebration, a friendly assembly that is self-aggrandizing.

It is therefore not the Council that must be challenged, but the ideology that invaded the dioceses, parishes, pastors and seminaries in the years that followed.

We thought the sacred was an outdated value. Yet it is an absolute necessity in our journey towards God. I would like to quote Romano Guardini: “Trust in God; nearness to him and security in him remain thin and feeble when personal knowledge of God’s exclusive majesty and awful sanctity do not counterbalance them” ([Meditations Before Mass](#), 1936).

In this sense, the trivialization of the altar, of the sacred space that surrounds it, have been spiritual disasters. If the altar is no longer the sacred threshold beyond which God resides, how would we find the joy of approaching it? A world that ignores the sacred is a uniform, flat

and sad world. By ransacking our liturgy we have disenchanting the world and reduced souls to a dull sadness.

*What aspects of the liturgical reform have had a positive or negative effect on the faithful, in your opinion?*

It is important to underline the profound benefit that the greatest variety of biblical texts offers for meditation. Similarly, the introduction of a moderate dose of vernacular language was necessary.

Above all, I believe that the concern for a deep and theological participation of the faithful is a major teaching of the Council. Unfortunately, it has been misused for agitation and activism. It has been ignored that the active participation of the people does not consist in distributing roles and functions, but rather in introducing the faithful into the depths of the Paschal Mystery so that they may accept to die and rise with Jesus through a more authentic and radiant Christian life based on evangelical values.

To refuse to consider the liturgy as *opus Dei*, as a “work of God,” is to run the risk of transforming it into a human work. We then enjoy inventing, creating, multiplying formulas, options, imagining that by talking a lot and multiplying formulas and options, they will be better listened to (see Matthew 6:7).

I believe that [Sacrosanctum Concilium](#) is an important text to enter into a deep and mystical understanding of the liturgy. We had to get out of a certain rubricism. Unfortunately, it has been replaced by a bad creativity that transforms a divine work into a human reality. The contemporary technical mentality would like to reduce the liturgy to an effective work of pedagogy. To this end, we seek to make the ceremonies convivial, attractive and friendly. But the liturgy has no pedagogical value except to the extent that it is entirely ordained to the glorification of God and to the divine worship and sanctification of men.

Active participation implies in this perspective to find in us that sacred stupor, that joyful fear that silences us before the divine majesty. We must refuse the temptation to remain in the human to enter the divine.

In this sense, it is regrettable that the sanctuary of our churches are not a place reserved for divine worship, that we enter them in secular clothing, that the passage from human to divine is not signified by an architectural boundary. Likewise, if, as the Council teaches, Christ is present in his word when it is proclaimed, it is unfortunate that readers do not have an appropriate dress that shows that they are not saying human words but a divine word.

Finally, if the liturgy is the work of Christ, it is not necessary for the celebrant to introduce his own comments. It is not the multitude of formulas and options, as well as the continual change of prayers and an exuberance of liturgical creativity, that pleases God, but *metanoia*, the radical change in our lives and behaviors seriously polluted by sin and marked by liquid atheism.

It is necessary to remember that, when the missal authorizes an intervention, it must not become a profane and human discourse, let alone a commentary on current events, or a worldly greeting to those present, but a brief exhortation to enter into the mystery.

Nothing profane has its place in liturgical actions. It would be a serious mistake to believe that worldly, spectacular elements would encourage the participation of the faithful. These elements can only promote human participation and not participation in Christ's religious and salvific action.

We see a beautiful illustration of this in the prescriptions of the Council. While the Constitution [on the Sacred Liturgy] has repeatedly recommended the conscious and active participation and even the full intelligence of the rites, it recommends in one movement the Latin language prescribing that "the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them."

Indeed, the intelligence of the rites is not the work of human reason alone, which should grasp everything, understand everything, master everything. The intelligence of sacred rites presupposes a real *participatio* in what they express of the mystery. This intelligence is that of the *sensus fidei*, who exercises the living faith through the symbol and who knows by attunement more than by concept.

Christ's passion is also a liturgy; only a look of faith can discover the work of redemption accomplished out of love. The only [thing] human reason sees in it is the failure of death and the horror of the cross. Entering the *participatio actuosa* implies that, like the disciples of Emmaus, we let ourselves be touched by the breaking of bread to understand the Scriptures.

As Pope Francis reminded us a short while ago, the priest does not have to give himself the appearance of a "showmaster" (or show host) to win the admiration of an assembly. On the contrary, he must participate in Christ's action, enter into it, become its instrument. Therefore, he will not have to speak constantly and face the assembly, but, rather, he will have to act in *persona Christi* and, in a nuptial dialogue, involve the faithful in this participation.

It is therefore appropriate that, during the Penitential Rite, the Offertory and the Eucharistic Prayer, all turn together to the cross or, better still, to the east, to express their willingness to participate in the work of worship and redemption carried out by Christ and through him by the Church.

*Why do you think more and more young people are attracted to traditional liturgy / the extraordinary form?*

I do not think so. I see it; I am a witness to it. And young people have entrusted me with their absolute preference for the extraordinary form, more educative and more insistent on the primacy and centrality of God, silence and on the meaning of the sacred and divine transcendence. But, above all, how can we understand, how can we not be surprised and deeply shocked that what was the rule yesterday is prohibited today? Is it not true that

prohibiting or suspecting the extraordinary form can only be inspired by the demon who desires our suffocation and spiritual death?

When the extraordinary form is celebrated in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, it reveals its full fruitfulness: How can we be surprised that a liturgy that has carried so many saints continues to smile at young souls thirsty for God?

Like Benedict XVI, I hope that the two forms of the Roman Rite will be mutually enriching. This implies getting out of a hermeneutic of rupture. Both forms have the same faith and the same theology. To oppose them is a profound ecclesiological error. It means destroying the Church by tearing it out of its Tradition and making it believe that what the Church considered holy in the past is now wrong and unacceptable. What a deception and insult to all the saints who have gone before us! What a vision of the Church.

We must move away from dialectical oppositions. The Council did not wish to break with the liturgical forms inherited from Tradition, but, on the contrary, to better enter and participate more fully in them.

The Conciliar Constitution stipulates that “new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.”

It would therefore be wrong to oppose the Council to the Tradition of the Church. In this sense, it is necessary that those who celebrate the extraordinary form do so without a spirit of opposition and therefore in the spirit of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

We need the extraordinary form to know in which spirit to celebrate the ordinary form. Conversely, celebrating the extraordinary form without taking into account the indications of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* risks reducing this form to a lifeless and futureless archaeological vestige.

It would also be desirable to include in the appendix of a future edition of the missal the Penitential Rite and the Offertory of the extraordinary form in order to emphasize that the two liturgical forms illuminate each other, in continuity and without opposition.

If we live in this spirit, then the liturgy will cease to be the place of rivalries and criticism and will finally lead us into the great heavenly liturgy.

*In many parts of Africa, although liturgies are often long, they are also characterized by free expressions of song, dance and applause — which some would describe as an abuse of a more reverent, dark and prayerful liturgy. And yet, orthodoxy is alive and well on the continent. How do you explain this?*

In Africa, the faithful sometimes walk for hours to go to Mass. They are hungry for the Gospel and the Eucharist. They walk for miles and come to Mass to stay with God for a long time, to listen to his word, to be nourished by his Presence. They give to God their time, their lives, their fatigue and their poverty. They give to God everything they are and everything they have. And their joy is to have given everything.



Their joy sometimes manifests itself too externally, and Africans must learn interiority and silence. They must ban applause and shrieking that have nothing to do with the mystery of God; they must eliminate speech, folklore, the exuberance of words that hinder the encounter with God. God dwells in man's silence and interiority; man's heart is the Temple of God — because I know that Africans know how to get down on their knees and commune with respect and reverence.

I believe that Africans have a deep sense of the sacred. We are not ashamed to worship God, to proclaim ourselves dependent on him. Above all, Africans are happy to let themselves be taught the faith without contesting or questioning it. I believe that Africa's grace is that of knowing itself and remaining a child of God.

I underline in this book that at the heart of modern Western thought there is a refusal to be a child, a refusal to be a father, which is basically a refusal of God. I discern in the depths of Western hearts a deep revolt against the creative fatherhood of God. We receive from him our nature as men and women. It has become unbearable to modern minds.

Gender ideology is a Luciferic refusal to receive a sexual nature from God. The West refuses to receive; it only accepts what it builds itself. Transhumanism is the ultimate avatar of this movement. Even human nature, because it is a gift from God, becomes unbearable to the Western man.

This revolt is in its spiritual essence. It is Satan's revolt against the gift of grace. Basically, I believe that the Western man refuses to be saved by pure mercy. He refuses to receive salvation and wants to build it by himself. The "Western values" promoted by the U.N. are based on a refusal of God that I compare to that of the rich young man in the Gospel. God looked at the West and loved it because it did great things. He invited the West to go further, but the West turned away, preferring the riches it owed only to itself. Africans know that they are poor and small before God. They are proud to kneel, happy to be dependent on an Almighty Creator and Father.

*The Church in Africa is well-known for her sense of community, sharing, transcendence and respect for the magisterium. How can these forces best be used to show the way forward for the universal Church, especially in those parts where secularism and nihilism have taken root?*

The West was at the root of the crisis. It is up to it to implement the antidote. To do this, we must start from the experience of the monasteries. They are places where God is simply and concretely at the center of life. God is the Life of man's life. Without God, man resembles a huge and majestic river that would have cut itself off from its source. Sooner or later, this river will dry up and die permanently.

We must create places where virtues can flourish. It is time to regain the courage of non-conformism. Christians must have the strength to form oases where the air is breathable, where, quite simply, Christian life is possible.

I call on Christians to open oases of gratuitousness in the desert of triumphant profitability. Yes, you cannot be alone in the desert of society without God. A Christian who remains alone is a Christian in danger. He will eventually be devoured by the sharks of the trading society.

Christians must gather in communities around their churches. They must rediscover the vital importance of an intense, continuous and persevering life of prayer. A man who does not pray looks like a seriously ill man who suffers from total paralysis of the arms, legs, and has lost the use of speech, hearing, sight. ... This man is cut off from all essential relationships. He is a dead man. To renew our relationship with God is to breathe, to live fully.

We must create places where the heart and mind can breathe, where the soul can turn to God in a very concrete way. Our communities must put God at the center of our lives, our liturgies and our churches.

In the avalanche of lies, one must be able to find places where the truth is not only explained but experienced. It is simply a question of living the Gospel! Not to think of it as a utopia, but to experience it in a concrete way.

*In many countries, the loss of popular piety seems to have accelerated the process of de-Christianization, especially among the working classes. How do you explain this loss of religiosity?*

In this book I explain that we dreamed of a “pure” and intellectual Christianity. We have refused to allow God to incarnate in our lives. The poorest are the first victims. I believe that the false theological opposition between faith and religiosity is the root of this error. The first manifestation of faith is our religious worship. The Rosary, pilgrimages, prayer on one’s knees, devotion to the saints, fasting have been despised and ridiculed as semi-pagan practices. Today, the Lenten fast, that is, the 40 days of abstinence and food deprivation, exists for many only in the ritual. This practice is abandoned. However, there is still medical fasting for the well-being of our body. Without concrete religious attitudes, our faith risks becoming an illusory dream.

*Why is the Pan-Amazon Synod so preoccupying to many people, including some respected cardinals? What are your own concerns about the Oct. 6-27 meeting?*

I have heard that some people wanted to make this synod a laboratory for the universal Church, that others said that, after this synod, nothing would be the same as before. If that is true, this approach is dishonest and misleading. This synod has a specific and local goal: the evangelization of the Amazon.

I am afraid that some Westerners will confiscate this assembly to move their projects forward. I am thinking in particular of the ordination of married men, the creation of women’s ministries or giving jurisdiction to laypeople. These points concern the structure of the universal Church. They cannot be discussed in a particular and local synod. The importance of its subjects requires the serious and conscious participation of all the bishops of the world. Yet very few are invited to this synod. To take advantage of a particular synod to

introduce these ideological projects would be an unworthy manipulation, a dishonest deception, an insult to God, who leads his Church and entrusts him with his plan of salvation.

In addition, I am shocked and outraged that the spiritual distress of the poor in the Amazon is being used as a pretext to support projects that are typical of bourgeois and worldly Christianity.

I come from a young Church. I knew the missionaries going from village to village to support the catechists. I have lived evangelization in my flesh. I know a young Church doesn't need married priests. On the contrary. She needs priests who will give her the witness of the lived cross. A priest's place is on the cross. When he celebrates Mass, he is at the source of his whole life, that is, at the cross.

Celibacy is one of the concrete ways in which we can live this mystery of the cross in our lives. Celibacy inscribes the cross into our flesh. That is why celibacy is unbearable for the modern world. Priestly celibacy is a scandal for the modern, because the cross "is foolishness to those who are perishing" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Some Westerners can no longer tolerate this scandal of the cross. I think it has become an unbearable reproach to them. They come to hate the priesthood and celibacy.

I believe that bishops, priests and the faithful everywhere in the world must rise up to express their love for the cross, the priesthood and celibacy. These attacks against the priesthood come from the richest. Some people think they are all-powerful because they finance poorer churches. But we must not be intimidated by their power and money.

A man on his knees is more powerful than the world. It is an impregnable bulwark against atheism and the madness of men. A man on his knees makes Satan's pride tremble. All of you who, in the eyes of men, are without power and influence, but who know how to remain on your knees before God, do not be afraid of those who want to intimidate you.

We must build a bulwark of prayers and sacrifices so that no breach will hurt the beauty of the Catholic priesthood. I am convinced that Pope Francis will never allow such a destruction of the priesthood. On his return from World Youth Day in Panama on Jan. 27, he [told](#) journalists, quoting Pope Paul VI: "I would rather give my life than change the law of celibacy." He added: "It is a courageous phrase, in a more difficult moment than this, 1968/1970. ... Personally, I think that celibacy is a gift for the Church. Second, I don't agree with allowing optional celibacy, No."

*This interview was translated from the original French by*

*Ben Crockett of EWTN News.*