

# "Shadow Magisterium" Directs Attacks On Bishop Sullivan

By FRANK MORRISS

(Special to *The Wanderer*)

BATON ROUGE, La. — If Fr. Daniel Drinan, C.M.F., and "The Friends of the Diocese" are the shock troops in attempting to drive the defenders of authority off their commanding heights, they have the support and assistance of a fifth column, a counter-magisterium that has the sympathy of perhaps one-third of the Diocese's clergy, though the

hardcore of it is made up of considerably less.

It existed to some degree from the time of the formation of the Diocese and the coming of its first Bishop, the Most Rev. Robert E. Tracy, 14 years ago. Bishop Tracy had himself been a chaplain at the Louisiana State University. Some say his premature retirement was made inevitable by some of the same forces that have opposed Bishop Sullivan since his coming in

1974, and which are now in full bay against him, scenting that the controversy with the Claretians and dislike of him by certain "progressive" Churchmen could bring about his overthrow.

In six days' stay in Baton Rouge and through interviewing scores of persons I learned something about this shadow magisterium, that is determined to have its version of

(Continued on Page 7)

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(Continued from Page 1)

"authority" (one subject to its opinions and desires) or have none.

They consider themselves the true interpreters of Church doctrine, particularly the Second Vatican Council. Those opposed to that view they attempt to intimidate or silence.

There is a vision of a pluralistic Church embracing any theological viewpoint, no matter how extraordinary or radical that view. Some of the Claretian staff members in the past have certainly been involved with part of this counter-magisterium. One former chaplain is said to have interrupted Mass by declaring he did not believe in the Eucharist. A former director of the center publicly declared he did not believe in the "static" Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. A number of the Claretians were part of the mass exodus from the practice of the priesthood over recent years.

It cannot, however, be ascertained or honestly said that the present director is of similar opinion or attitude. Fr. Drinan indeed considers himself — and undoubtedly honestly — to be something of a conservative. It is difficult to give him full credit in that regard however, in the face of his declared pride in the *U.S. Catholic* magazine, published by his Eastern Province of the Claretians. After all, a magazine that could publish at length the opinions of Fr. Hans Kueng (May issue), including that Catholics should have general permission "to go to other churches for the eucharistic meal" could hardly draw pride from any conservative Catholic. Indeed, would not any true Catholic condemn such extremism?

### MAJORITY RULE

To return to the shadow government of the Church that operates within the Baton Rouge Diocese, I have learned it rejects the idea of the visible, institutional Church, a Church unified in belief, for one that is guided by the Spirit, a spirit that obviously not only blows where it will, but in several directions at once.

They are of the opinion — as is, incidentally the leader of the "Friends of the Diocese" — that authority rises from below in the Church. It is no wonder then that a man of Bishop Sullivan's determination to exercise and defend the prerogatives of a member of

the Hierarchy (to say nothing of fulfilling his Episcopal duty) would be a hated target.

This counter-magisterium (as with the "Friends") confuses the virtue of willing obedience with "blind obedience," and evidently feels resistance to even legitimate exercises of authority are required to purge oneself of any taint of such blindness. Thus it preaches in the Baton Rouge Diocese (as, of course, elsewhere) that acceptance of *Humane Vitae* is not a duty; indeed rejection of it is called for by "reason."

Efforts by Bishop Sullivan to enforce the opinion of Rome that First Communion should precede First Communion have met with resistance, I have learned. Some priests and pastors simply ignore diocesan instructions in that regard.

Special holydays in the Baton Rouge Diocese, such as Christmas and Easter regularly are considered excuses for "general absolution," though the present Pope and his immediate predecessors have given strict rules limiting that privilege. Again, here, the Bishop is simply ignored in efforts to gain compliance with law. One parish has confessions only by appointment.

Consultation means for this counter-magisterium the Bishop's surrendering his final decisive voice to a "majority." He is considered recalcitrant and anti-Vatican II for not promising that consultation will mean actual capitulation. The Bishop is considered, at the most, as a sort of chairman of the board. Still, the Bishop of Baton Rouge has attempted to make consultation work, and he has consultors for every field. The fact that some refused to continue under the terms that the Bishop always has the final word and that Bishop Sullivan had to find other consultors is used against him in charges he rejects consultation.

Some Sisters in the Diocese give at least comfort to this force. The convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph was used for one of the press conferences of the "Friends of the Diocese," a conference — one of many — to agitate against the Bishop's decision and to call for protest against it.

### WHAT DETERMINED THE COURSE AGAINST HIM

Emphasis on Marian and Eucharistic devotion by Bishop

Sullivan was met by ridicule. Statements from at least one pulpit charged that his pastoral declaring a Holy Year of true devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament had "set the Church back two decades."

It may, indeed, have been this pastoral effort of the Bishop that determined the course against him, as the raising of Lazarus determined the Sanhedrin in the opinion Jesus had to be stopped. The order against Fr. Charles Curran's use of diocesan facilities could be said to be what sealed the decision to make the arrest in Gethsemane.

Bishop Sullivan called for monthly Eucharistic Holy Hours, with the Eucharist visible in a monstrance; Benediction to conclude the Holy Hours; instruction in the Eucharist as "sacrifice, food, Real Presence;" women Mass servers (acolytes) were barred (in keeping with Vatican instructions); leavened bread for the Eucharist was prohibited.

It can be imagined how distasteful if not repugnant much of this was to the counter-magisterium. How "Catholic" it all is, how unecumenical, how medieval. The Bishop was said to be attempting to revive ancient and outmoded devotions.

### A VIRULENT POWER

To many Catholics — including some in the Baton Rouge Diocese — who have been living overly sheltered lives the idea of the existence of such a shadow force is not credible. It is the imagination of the conservative alarmists that creates such things.

Take it from one who has traveled considerably in the cause of Catholic journalism. This force exists. It influences those high and low, some without even being aware they are influenced. But it exists, and exists in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

A few names I could supply, but to no use. The names are known to those who need to know them. The question now is whether the courage exists to resist this virulent power, this counter-authority, or whether it will have its way in Baton Rouge, as it has so many places elsewhere not privileged to have as courageous a champion of Catholic truth and episcopal rights and authority as Bishop Sullivan.