

ANIMADVERTENDA IN SCRIPTIS

facta a Remi J. De Roo, Episcopo Victoriensis (Canada)

circa

Schema Emendatum Propositionum

DE ACCOMMODATA RENOVATIONE VITAE RELIGIOSAE

Nota a word is said about Hermits in the Code of Canon Law. One is left with the impression that they are excluded from the category of Christians recognized by the Code as Religious. For Canon 487 defines the religious state as a "stabilis in communi vivendi modus, quo fideles, praeter communia praecepta, evangelica quoque consiliis servanda per vota obedientiae, castitatis et paupertatis suscipiunt".

This Canon treats religious life as essentially lead in common, since it supposes as a minimum requirement association with a canonically erected society. It requires no less essentially what are known as the public vows of religion.

Hermits therefore, if not already religious by a previous profession, cannot under present conditions be considered as such. On the other hand, if they are already religious, their new condition as hermits creates a problem solved until now only by the granting of an indult of exclaustation "ad nutum S. Sedis" (Cfr. Canon 639).

The Latin Church however, is experiencing an ever-growing renewal of the life of hermits. It is urgent therefore that the Western Church officially recognize the life of hermits as a state of perfection. And Vatican Council II should make a point of this.

A declaration by the Council would destroy many prejudices and misunderstandings. It would reassure the Hermits that the Church still considers their life as both legitimate and sanctifying.

And the normal consequence of this approval in principle should be the establishment of appropriate canonical legislation. Monks and other religious, members of societies without vows and of Secular Institutes, would thus be enabled to respond to a vocation as hermits by a simple and easily followed procedure.

Such legislation would protect the vocation of Hermits from arbitrary interference by religious superiors. It should remain simple and flexible, for the life of the hermit is something very personal by its very nature. To impose numerous precise and rigid norms on every hermit without distinction would cause great harm.

The abnormal situation whereby a prospective Hermit cannot leave his community except by secularisation should also be corrected. (Cfr. Canons 640 - 643).

Here are some of the arguments in favor of the official recognition of Hermits:

1. The fact of the growing renewal of this type of life. This indicates a special influence of the Holy Spirit who inspires initiatives beneficial to the Church and the modern world. The influence of the work of Father de Foucauld illustrates this point well.

2. The sanctifying value of the hermit's life. This has been proven by the countless Christians who have followed it in the course of history.

3. Its contribution to the life of the Church. The Hermit fills a prophetic role. He lives by anticipation in heaven. He reminds the world and the Church that the building of an earthly city is not the final end of all things. Fleeing the noisy whirlwind of worldly activities, he opens his heart to the Holy Spirit in an atmosphere of calm and interior recollection. Thus he pursues an essential calling of the Church, the direct contemplation of God.

His life, like that of Christ in the desert, is essentially a combat with the devil. If he triumphs, the Hermit does so by his total submission to God. And this victory necessarily influences the entire life of the Church.

4. The ecumenical value of the hermit's life. The solitary life of the hermit seems to have known no decline in the East. Its restoration would enhance the vitality and inner integrity of the Western Church.

5. Finally, recognition of the Hermits would correct the impression still prevalent in the Western Church that the practice of the evangelical counsels is limited to that form of institutionalized community life commonly known as the religious life.

As the Bishop of a Diocese where a colony of some ten Hermits is in the process of development, I earnestly request of this Second Vatican Council the official recognition of the life of the Hermits as a state of perfection in the Church.

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