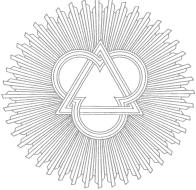

Most Holy Trinity Seminary Newsletter



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My dear Catholic people,

I promised in my last newsletter that I would explain the *Filioque* controversy, and why this dogma is so significant.

Prevost (“Leo XIV”) is utterly intent upon a reunion with the Greek schismatics. We saw his many interactions with them in his visit to Turkey not long ago.

He prefaced this meeting with them in a document which stated:

We must therefore leave behind theological controversies that have lost their *raison d'être* in order to develop a common understanding and, even more, a common prayer to the Holy Spirit, so that he may gather us all together in one faith and one love.

We must also take inspiration from the experience of the early church in order to restore full communion. The goal is a communion which does not imply absorption or domination, but rather an exchange of the gifts received by our churches from the Holy Spirit for the glory of God the Father and the edification of the body of Christ.

Although Prevost did not make clear reference to the *Filioque* doctrine, nonetheless the implication is obvious to all. This doctrine is the battle flag of the Eastern schismatics.

Historical background of the *Filioque* doctrine.

In 325, a general council of the Church was summoned in Nicea, a town in the vicinity of Constantinople, in order to counteract the then spreading heresy of Arius. This priest, later “Patriarch” of Constantinople, taught that Our Blessed Lord was not truly God.

The council Fathers produced a creed known as the *Nicene Creed*. The faithful are familiar with this term, but they should understand that the creed recited at Mass is, in fact, the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan* creed, which emanated from a second council held in Constantinople in 381. The original Nicene Creed reads as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father; which the Greeks call consubstantial, by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead And in the Holy Ghost.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, of 381 reads this way, that is, substantially the creed recited at Mass:

We believe in one God, Father omnipotent, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, that is, of the same substance as the Father, through whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh by the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, was made man and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and was buried and on the third day rose and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and of his kingdom there will be no end; and in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, proceeding from the Father, to be adored and glorified with the Father, who spoke through the prophets; in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church; we confess one baptism for the remission of sins and we await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

As the reader can see, the First Council of Constantinople greatly expanded the creed of the Council of Nicea.

This fact is of extreme importance in the Catholic Church's response to the Greek schismatics. The Catholic Church teaches that there are no new dogmas, but there are new dogmatic formulas concerning these same immutable dogmas. This simply means that with time, and usually in response to heresies, the Church will make *explicit* what is *implicit* in the dogma. These new formulas are not new dogmas, but explanations of existing dogmas. For this reason, the Church has made many dogmatic statements concerning already defined dogmas. A perfect example is that of transubstantiation, as an excellent explanation of the dogma of the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. This doctrine of the Real Presence, however, was not expressed by the term *transubstantiation* until the Second Lateran Council in 1215.

On the other hand, the Greek schismatics cite various texts of councils, notably of Ephesus

(431), which states: “*The holy synod decided that no one is allowed to declare or at any rate to compose or devise a faith other than that defined by the holy fathers who with the Holy Ghost came together at Nicea.*” Based on this and similar texts, they hold that the Church of Rome has no authority to add to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed.

Is it true that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son? Yes, it is true, and the Fathers of the Church attest to it, and the Greek schismatics formally accepted it twice.

Testimony of the Fathers. Saint Athanasius (296?-373) explicitly declares that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. He says “the Holy Ghost holds the same relation to the Son as to the Father,” and that the total substance of the Father is communicated to the Holy Ghost “through the mediation of the Son.” He calls the Son the fountainhead (source) of the Holy Ghost.

Saint Basil (330-379) teaches constantly that the Holy Ghost proceeds “from the Father through the Son.” He also affirms that “the divine dignity comes to the Holy Ghost from the Father through His only-begotten Son.”

Saint Gregory Nazianzen (329-390) says that the Holy Ghost proceeds equally from the Father and the Son.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa (335-394) says that the Holy Ghost “is from God [meaning the Father] and from Christ.”

Saint Epiphanius (310-403) asserts that the Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria (376-444) clearly states “The Holy Ghost flows forth from the Father through the Son,” and “The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son.”

These are all *Greek* Fathers from the early centuries.

The Greek schismatics freely admit that the Latin Fathers unanimously teach the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son. “In making this admission,” says the theologian Pohle, “they inadvertently condemn their own attitude; for it is absurd to imagine that the Latin Church, which for eight centuries with the Greek formed the one true Church of Christ, should

have harbored a disgraceful heresy during all that time.¹

It is clear, then, that *Filioque* was not an invention of the Latins, but has been attested to in the ancient Church by Fathers and Doctors, both Greek and Latin.

The theological argument. The theology concerning the Most Holy Trinity is extremely abstract and very difficult to understand. Indeed, it is the most difficult course which the seminarians take.

Suffice it to say this: At the Council of Florence in 1439, at which there were protracted discussions with the Greek schismatics about *Filioque*, the Latin theologians said that if the Holy Ghost did not proceed from the Father and the Son, but only from the Father, then He would not be a distinct Person from the Son. In other words, God the Father would have had two Sons, with nothing to distinguish one from the other. But this is absurd.

The teaching of the Church. From the beginning of the fourth century, the *Filioque* was inserted in the creed in several dioceses in Spain, France, and Germany. In the Acts of the First and Third Councils of Toledo [Spain], in 400 and 589 respectively, we find this tenet: “*We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, proceeding from the Father and the Son, to be adored and glorified.*” When questioned about why this was done, The Spaniards responded that they inserted *Filioque* in order to affirm more strongly the divinity of the Son, against the Arian heretics, namely the Visigoths, who had for a long time occupied Spain.

The custom of inserting this into the creed spread to France. Charlemagne, in 809, asked Pope Saint Leo III for permission to insert *Filioque* in the singing of the creed.

Pope Leo affirmed the doctrine as being of faith, but did not permit it to be inserted into the creed, for reason that it would disturb the Greeks,

who had asserted that no changes could be made to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed of 381.

It should be noted here that the Greeks were historically a contentious group, causing much trouble with Rome. At this time in the ninth century, they were enraged that Pope Leo III had crowned Charlemagne emperor in the West in the year 800, thereby effectively withdrawing the West from the Byzantine Empire.

Not long afterwards, however, the *Filioque* was inserted into the creed by Pope Saint Nicholas I, who reigned from 858 to 867.²

The Greeks went into schism in 857 because a certain Bardas Caesar, the uncle of the Byzantine Emperor Michael III, wanted to depose Saint Ignatius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and replace him with an impious man by the name of Photius. Pope Nicholas I refused. There was a lot of anti-Roman sentiment in Constantinople at the time, and the Greeks saw this incident as an opportunity to free themselves from the Roman primacy. Ignatius was removed, and Photius was put in his place. He was only a layman. He was consecrated a bishop a few days later by a schismatic bishop.

Pope Nicholas severely condemned these actions, and in a council held in Rome in 864, he deprived Photius and his schismatic consecrator of all sacerdotal honor, and declared the ordinations done by the schismatic bishop to be invalid³.

In reaction, Photius called a council, and among other objections to papal enactments, declared *Filioque* to be heretical.

Photius was eventually deposed, and the schism was healed. In 1053, however, the schism flared up again under the Patriarch Michael Caerularius, who again made the charge that the Roman Church falsified the creed by adding *Filioque*.

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council declared that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. The same was declared by the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. It was at this council

¹ Pohle, Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph, Ph.D, D.D. *The Divine Trinity*. (Saint Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1930) page 181.

² Murphy, John Nicholas. *The Chair of Peter*. (London: Burns and Oates, no date) page 131. Others claim that it was not inserted into the creed in Rome until the early part of the eleventh century, by Pope Benedict VIII (1012-1024).

³ Here “invalid” means *juridically* invalid, in the sense that the consecration would not give Photius the juridical dignity of bishop. It was not a declaration against its sacramental validity.

that the Greek schismatics sang *Filioque* three times during the creed. The doctrine was also upheld by the Profession of Faith of the Council of Trent in 1565, by the profession of faith prescribed for the Greeks by Gregory XIII in 1575, and finally by Saint Pius X.

In fact, the Council of Florence *defined* the dogma: “We define that this truth of faith be believed and accepted by all Christians, and that all likewise profess that the Holy Ghost is eternally from the Father and the Son and has His essence and His subsistent being both from the Father and the Son, and proceeds from both eternally as from one principle.”

Heresy. Consequently to doubt or deny that the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and the Son would be blatant heresy, pure and simple. Prevost, however, has relegated this defined dogma to “theological controversies that have lost their *raison d'être*.” For what else could he be referring to? This is the principal doctrinal obstacle between the schismatics and the Roman Catholic Church. There are others: Purgatory, divorce and remarriage, the Immaculate Conception, and, most of all, papal supremacy and papal infallibility.

For what underlies their dissidence is the fact they they reject the authority of the Roman Pontiff as the supreme teacher of all the faithful, and therefore ignore both the laws and magisterium of the Roman Pontiffs. They also reject even the possibility of a general council because, they claim, since the Latins are separated from them, there is no longer the possibility of having one.

The Greek schismatic bishops accepted the teaching of *Filioque* at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 and at the Council of Florence in 1439, but in both cases, upon returning to Constantinople, discovered that their people wanted no part of a reunion with Rome.

In an effort to win over the Greeks, the Council of Florence required them to accept the doctrine of *Filioque*, but did not require them to recite it in their creed, but could continue to use the Nicene-Constantinopolitan text from the Council of Constantinople in 381. For this was their long-standing liturgical custom.

Pope Benedict XIV (1749-1758) said he would permit them to do the same. Notice how

the Church has bent over backwards in order to receive heretics and schismatics back in the fold, but never by compromising a single iota of sacred doctrine.

Prevost, on the other hand, when reciting the creed in an ecumenical service with the Greek schismatics, passed over *Filioque*. This was a deliberate act of heresy, since in such a context the gesture could only be taken as a statement that the doctrine was “negotiable,” a theological controversy that has lost its reason for being.

Prevost's plan. As I see it, Prevost will consent to be recognized by the Greek schismatics as simply someone having a primacy in the form of a figurehead, but without any power to teach, to rule, or to sanctify.

The ultimate goal of the modernists is to turn the papacy into a type of moderator of a “family of churches,” which differ in beliefs, liturgy, and disciplines, but united into one “Church of Christ.”

Oscar Cullman, an observer at Vatican II, whom his fellow protestant theologian, Karl Barth, dubbed “adviser to three popes,” said: “The pope is the bishop of Rome and as such one could concede to him a leadership role in this scheme for a ‘community of churches’ which I have proposed. Personally I would see his role as being a guarantee of unity. He could accept this if he did not have jurisdiction over all of Christianity but a primacy of honor instead.”

A word of thanks. Let me express my thanks to all who donated to the seminary at Christmastime. Your sacrifices enable us to carry on the most important work, which is the formation of priests.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Donald J. Sanborn
Rector