

Paul Aulagnier, R.I.P.

May 29, 2021

Three weeks ago there died in France an ex-Society priest to whom we all have an immense debt, because he was for several years a decisive support to Archbishop Lefebvre in the founding and constructing of the Society of St Pius X. I think Fr Paul Aulagnier (1943–2021) was never so happy as during those years, because the Archbishop's doctrine was so faithful and his leadership was so human that Fr Aulagnier was inspired to function in a profoundly Catholic manner, no longer so easy for a number of us when the exceptional Archbishop died in 1991. In fact, Fr Aulagnier parted company with the Society in 2003, and he may have continued to serve Catholic Tradition in various forms thereafter, but he surely missed his venerated and beloved Archbishop.

Fr. Aulagnier's vocation began in the prestigious French Seminary in Rome just when it was being shaken to the core in the immediate aftermath of the disastrous Second Vatican Council. Several seminarians fled for Catholic refuge to the Seminary that the Archbishop was trying to put together in Fribourg, in Switzerland, but due to the tormented times it was having a rocky start, and the Archbishop after a first year almost gave up. Here is where seminarians Aulagnier and Tissier entered Church History by jointly persuading the Archbishop to persevere. Many more vocations then arrived, and the Seminary flourished from then on, by means of which in those dark years the Archbishop would save for better days Catholic Tradition: doctrine, the Mass, the sacraments, the priesthood – where would these be today had there been no Écône? Here is the major debt we owe to Fr Aulagnier and Bishop Tissier.

Having come to the Archbishop in 1969, he was ordained priest by him in 1971, and he was his right hand man as First Assistant of the Society from 1973 to 1982 and as District

Superior of France from 1976 to 1994, 18 years in which he was constantly travelling all over France to build up with the Archbishop the network of priories, schools, convents and other works, which have been the basis of the Society's presence and influence in France to this day. Here one would say he was at his happiest and most fruitful, carrying good sense and good cheer to souls in all directions.

Nor did Fr Aulagnier only receive from the Archbishop. In 1970 he encouraged him to found both the priestly Seminary in Écône, and the Society, to frame the apostolate of the priests who would be ordained but foreseeably refused any framework for their ministry by the official Church henceforth given over to the Conciliar religion. And that is how it turned out.

In 1976 when the Archbishop was on the eve of the historic ordination of the first important batch of priests from Écône, it was on Fr. Aulagnier's door that he knocked in a moment of hesitation before finally taking this decisive action, and it was Fr. Aulagnier's encouragement that finally decided him. Again, where would the priesthood and the Church be today had either of them faltered?

And in late May of 1988 when the Archbishop gathered together in the middle of France a large number of the leading defenders of Catholic Tradition, priests and Sisters, to deliberate whether he should go ahead in June with consecrating bishops for Tradition without Rome's official permission, the Sisters were valiant to a man (sic), but the priests nearly all advised delay, except Fr Aulagnier, who said, "Rome's philosophy and theology are no longer Catholic I am afraid of the agreement they are offering us I fear Roman cunning . . . we risk being eaten up by modernist Rome." He was right then. He is still right today.

Dear Fr. Aulagnier, immense thanks! May you rest in peace, and may yours be a great reward!

Kyrie eleison.