

CULT FICTION

The Protestant Cuckoo in the Catholic Nest

Kiko Argüello's Neocatechumenal Way, also known as the Neocatechumenate or the Neocats or, as it smugly and grandiosely self-styles itself, "The Way"



KIKO ARGÜELLO'S "THE WAY"

"Traditional Christianity, with Baptism, First Communion, Sunday Mass, Commandments of God, was not Christianity. It was dirt. We were pre-Christians. (...) God called us now to found a catechumen movement turned towards rebirth (of real Christianity)."

The above words are found in the Neocatechumenate Orientation Guide, a 373 page manual written by two Spaniards, Kiko Arguello, an artist and flamenco guitarist, and Carmen Hernandez, an ex-nun. Kiko and Carmen are the founders and leaders of the Neocatechumenate Way.

I first became interested in the organization calling itself the Neocatechumenate Way some years ago in Rome, when I found myself dining, quite by chance, with some ex-members. What I learned over a good bottle of wine so concerned me that I made a point of dining with the same people on three or four further occasions. My curiosity aroused, I have subsequently quizzed ex-members extensively in the UK.

I am not one of those traditional Catholics who believe that everything I disagree with should be suppressed. However, I passionately believe that the dignity of my fellow man is such that when one is asking people or groups to make important decisions about their lives, particularly their spiritual lives, one has an obligation to be honest, everything up front and out in the open, with all one's cards on the table.

It very quickly became obvious to me that *the Way* (The Way is what its apologists like to call the Neocatechumenate Way) was like an iceberg and what its apologist permitted you to see was barely even the tip.

"A source of division"

The Neocatechumenate Way has been a sign of contention and a source of division within the Catholic Church for many years. Some claim the Way is a blessing of the Spirit, but many consider it to be dangerous in doctrine and methodology; and compare it to a sect, calling it "a church within the Church".

They have patrons in high places, including the Holy Father, and Rome has recently given them its formal approval. But then Rome has also given traditionalists its formal approval by setting up the commission, Ecclesia Dei, and the prelature of the Association of St Jean Marie Vianney. Rome has always been a deal more catholic and liberal than

its detractors would give it credit. However, the faithful may be excused in these confusing times for taking such ecclesial approval with a very large pinch of salt. After all, it is just a couple of decades ago that the l'Armée de Marie was enthusiastically and officially approved by the Church, only a mere decade later to be formally suppressed by an embarrassed Episcopacy which had finally woken up to the fact that its foundress was claiming to be the reincarnation of the Virgin Mary and was, as many of the laity had been trying to tell them all along, as barmy as a box of frogs.

This recognition of their movement by Rome is shamelessly exploited by the Neocatechumenate's apologists. For example, they will let slip casual asides such as, "When the Pope sent me to England as a missionary, I did not speak English." As a trained salesman, I can assure you that there is absolutely nothing casual about such asides; they are deliberate subliminal selling techniques, which they are taught to use. Their purpose is to plant in your subconscious the thought that if these come from the Pope they must be okay. Clearly if such claims were made boldly and up front, they would arouse suspicion and be challenged, so the trick is to drop them casually as asides and pass quickly on before people have time to think and react. The notion that the Pope, over the head of the Archbishop of Westminster and the entire English episcopacy, would personally commission some Italian layman who couldn't speak English to go and convert the English (like St Augustine) is such arrant nonsense that it beggars any comment other than, "Yea - and I'm Napoleon Bonaparte."

The biggest difficulty about coming to a balanced opinion about the Way is their institutionalized secrecy. Nothing is written down for public consumption. Their apologists are evasive. Public questions from those attending their introductory meeting are not invited. Questions are deflected with answers such as, "This will become clear in time." There is no true dialogue with enquirers. You are expected for the most part to just sit and listen. Their sales technique is best described as "*softly softly catchee monkey*". This hard-nosed stonewalling even extends to bishops. One hundred and twenty European bishops took part in a five-day presentation of the Way in April 1993 at a hotel in Vienna (all paid for by the Neocatechumenate). Many of the bishops were disturbed and disillusioned to find that they were required to sit down, shut up and just listen for five days! Those who wanted to ask questions were not permitted to

do so. One brave Italian tried to speak up, but was rudely silenced by Carmen Hernandez, on the outrageous grounds that he had not allowed the movement to enter his diocese and was therefore not entitled to ask questions!

Clearly all movements are not the same. It is an interesting exercise to compare the heavy veil of secrecy which so defines the Way, with the Church's most recently canonized saint's, Josemaria Escriva's *modus operandi*. St Josemaria Escriva would typically stand up before a crowd of several thousand and announce, "Ask me any question you want, about any subject you want," and then he would spend an hour or two taking questions. The children of light clearly have nothing to hide.

The only way to find out much about the Neocatechumenate Way is to question people who have come out of the movement. But members are bound to silence and I have found even ex-members sometimes feel constrained by this ethos of secrecy. Two ex-members I wanted to question felt they needed to be "absolved" by a priest from this obligation before they could talk freely about their experiences to me!

The only other source of information is that provided by high placed moles within the movement. Fortunately a number of such people in recent years have been prepared to photostat and leak copies of Kiko's and Carmen's teachings, one assumes as a prelude to leaving the movement themselves. Principal among these leaked documents is the Neocatechumenate Orientation Guide, a 373-page typed volume, written by Kiko Arguello and Carmen Hernandez, which is their instruction course for their leaders. This revealing document would not normally be seen by the ordinary rank and file member, let alone the general public. One of the recurring instructions of Kiko in this manual is, "*Don't tell this to anybody else. If people knew this, they would go away quickly!*"

The Way is like proceeding through a series of locked interconnected rooms. You enter the "first room" where you are told what your task is. When you have completed this task, the "next room" is unlocked and you learn your next task. When you enter "room one", there is no way you can know what is in "room ten", unless someone who has reached "room ten" has come out of the movement and is prepared to talk. To complete the process reputedly takes twenty years. I have not yet found anyone who has come out who has been in longer than four to five years.

The "sales pitch" to induce you to enter "room one" is all very inoffensive and even attractive to orthodox Catholics - much about the love of God and implementing the reform of Vatican II. You will be beguiled by many personal testimonies from earnest people along the lines, "My life was an utter mess until the Way turned round my life and brought me back to God and the Church and joy everlasting." Members talk about the Way with great enthusiasm; they feel compelled by "missionary" zeal to share the "wonders" of the Way with other "brothers and sisters". The fact that their children practise their faith is casually dropped repeatedly into the conversation - but then so do the children of Mormons, and for that matter most traditional Catholics.

Many of them are clearly good earnest people and the Church certainly desperately needs the sort of radical re-commitment to Christ, the faith of His Church and orthodoxy that at first glance they appear to be preaching, for there will be and can be no new evangelisation without it.

One current member of the Neocatechumenate wrote to me to take issue with my deprecation of the institutionalised secrecy of the movement. His argument was that had he known the sort of things he would be required to become involved in (doorstep evangelising was one example he gave of the type of activities to which he was alluding), he would never have "signed up" in the first place. He then drew the conclusion from this that, as it was a good and positive thing that he was now involved in such activities, the secrecy was fully justified. I am content to leave readers to make their own evaluation of the moral merit of this line of argument.

Some criticism of "The Way" needs to be treated with circumspection

The Way at first glance appears unimpeachably orthodox. You will not, for example, find members campaigning for women or married priests or denouncing the Church's teaching on artificial birth control, or embracing any of the other items from the dreary litany of liberal causes. The Way is also exemplarily pro-life, its members often having large families. And you will not find, for instance, such modern Church absurdities as non-Catholics or lapsed Catholics standing as Godparents at Catholic baptisms.

Consequently, much of the criticism they receive, even from high places, comes from prelates and others whose basic instincts are about as Catholic as those of Master Masons. Such people, taking

the facade of orthodoxy at face value and observing their success, believe them to be an obstacle to the promotion of their own private belief systems. The Way will be denounced by such pseudo-Catholics for being fundamentalist and reviled for its aggressive proselytizing.

Gordon Urquhart, an ex-member of Focolare (another of the modern movements) wrote a book entitled *The Pope's Armada*. This book has become the "Bible" of the opponents of the Way. However, Gordon Urquhart is a self-confessed homosexual who also abandoned his wife and three children. Such witnesses are obviously radically disaffected and have a great number of large axes to grind, so need to be treated with a considerable degree of circumspection. Nevertheless, much of the factual information in this book is endorsed by ex-members of the Neocatechumenate and cannot therefore be merely dismissed out of hand.

Bishop Mervyn Alexander famously banned the Way from his Clifton diocese and set up some sort of counselling service for those damaged by the

Way. However, Bishop Mervyn Alexander is regarded by many Catholics as a modernist who Protestantised his Clifton diocese with the help of his liberal underlings. His successor, Bishop Declan Lang, a true thoroughbred modernist from Bishop Hollis's Portsmouth stable, has kept these measures in place. This prelate's invitation to a Lutheran female "bishop" (who preaches that we don't need the Pope and that divorce should be celebrated in church) to preach in his cathedral should tell the faithful all they need to know about this shepherd's private agenda. Sadly, the implosion of the diocese of Clifton under such men is as cast-iron guaranteed, with or without the help of the Way, as was the implosion of Liverpool under Archbishop Worlock. The judgment of such men will inevitably be treated with considerable caution by orthodox Catholics. Nevertheless, to be fair to both these bishops, the divisions, trouble and indeed widespread anger caused in three parishes in the Clifton diocese by the Neocatechumenate are well-documented matters of public record.

SOME DOCTRINAL SPECIFICS

A depressing and pessimistic doctrine of man

Kiko and Carmen write in their guide, *"Man is not saved by good works(...), Jesus Christ did not come to give us a model of life, an example (...). The Holy Spirit doesn't lead us to perfection, to good works (...), Christianity doesn't require anything from us (...). God forgives freely the sins of those who believe that Jesus is the Savior."* A more clear statement of Lutheran doctrine, as opposed to Catholic doctrine, it would be difficult to find.

I believe that one of the most obvious signs of the children of light is their irrepressible merriment. I know many dear priests in the traditional movement who appear most of the time as if they are struggling to suppress a giggle that just keeps tenaciously refusing to be contained. These men are such a contrast to the apologists for the Way, who look for much of the time as if they have cod liver oil swilling round their back teeth.

These catechists are fond of repeating that man (me and you) is "zero plus sin". But this view of man is not the Catholic view of man. It is a Protestant fundamentalist view of man or, more precisely, it is a Lutheran view of man. The Catholic view of man is that we are made in the image of

God and this bestows on us an inestimable value and dignity. While we are certainly *damaged* by original sin, and therefore have a propensity to actual sin, we remain essentially good. Grace perfects nature. It was Luther who preached that man was so utterly corrupted by the fall that he was "zero plus sin" and all God could do was draw a veil over him, rather like hiding a doggy-do under a silk handkerchief. This depraved and pessimistic view of man is light years from the Catholic view.

For several years I have struggled to understand why Kiko rejects the Church's doctrine of redemption. For example, in the Neocatechumenate Orientation Guide (Page 62) Kiko writes, *"the [Vatican] Council has replaced theology and there is no more mention of the dogma of redemption"*. Clearly this is heretical; in fact there are no less than fifty-one paragraphs dealing with the doctrine of redemption in The Catechism of the Catholic Church. But my problem was "why?" - what was the root error driving the Neocatechumenate leaders' rejection of such a basic Catholic doctrine?

According to Kiko, Christ's death on the cross was not a propitiuous sacrifice. That idea is, according to Kiko, a pagan notion imported into Catholicism after the Peace of Constantine. God is not offended by sin, in Kiko's theology, for that would imply that God could be damaged by human beings, which is absurd. Thus a sacrifice to appease

the offence is meaningless. Christ died, according to Kiko, because God wanted to demonstrate that he loves us in spite of our sin and that the "death" of sin could be vanquished by a spiritual resurrection.

On page 17 of the of catechists' typed notes for their 1988 National Convention in England one finds this piece of primitive Lutheranism, "Jesus Christ has given his life for the sinners. He has loved the sinners and this is a great revelation because this means that when I commit a sin or when I commit thousands of sins I know that Jesus Christ does not reject me at all *since my sins cannot separate me from God. Your sins do not have the power to separate you from God.*" [My emphasis]

It was easy to understand why they rejected other fundamental Catholic doctrines. It was easy to understand why they rejected the doctrine of Christ's sacrifice on the cross; if there is no redemption, Christ's sacrifice would obviously be pointless. It is easy to understand why they reject the sacrifice of the Mass; Kiko writes, "***The notion of sacrifice entered in the Eucharist by condescension for the pagan mentality (...). At the beginning of the Church, in the theology of the Mass, there was no sacrifice of Jesus, no sacrifice of the Cross, (...).***" No sacrifice on the cross, no sacrifice of the Mass. But why reject the Church's teaching on redemption in the first place?

My eureka moment came in the Autumn of 2002 while attending a series of so-called catechesis given by apologists for the Way in my local parish. As an ex-Protestant my ear may be better tuned than some cradle Catholics to spot these thought patterns. This depressing pessimistic view of man ("zero plus sin") was the starting point for Luther's neurotic creed. If you believe that man is so utterly damaged by original sin that he is beyond all possibility and hope of reform, and that the very best therefore that God can do is "impute" holiness to him by throwing a veil over him, then of course you must reject the Catholic doctrine of redemption; you can't redeem that which is essentially ontologically unredeemable, i.e. "zero plus sin"!

Whilst reflecting on this depressing litany of man as "zero plus sin", I just happened to be watching a documentary on EWTN, the American Catholic television station, about a group of American Catholic surgeons who annually give up their holidays to work free in a children's hospital in Peru. In the course of the programme one was introduced to a little three year old boy who had been horribly disfigured by a cooking fire in his village.

He had no ears or nose and his mouth was just a formless hole in his face. His mother had walked for three days through snow from her mountain village to bring him to the children's hospital. When she arrived at the hospital, the surgeons found that they had not one but two patients, for they had to amputate both the mother's feet, so badly damaged were they by frostbite! This mother had sacrificed both her legs to save her child! And I am supposed to believe that this untutored Indian woman is "zero plus sin"! Even the suggestion is near blasphemy. We are a race of kings exiled by sin, or tarnished gods temporally banished from Eden, but never never "zero plus sin". Man, even at the one cell zygote stage, is something so infinitely precious one should fall to one's knees before him!

False Tradition

According to Kiko, the history of the true Church founded by Christ came to an end with the *Pax Constantinia* and does not resume its course until the 20th century with the Second Vatican Council, having remained frozen for about 1600 years.

The Neocatechumenate insist its intention is to return to a way of being Church that's similar to the first Christian communities. There is a half truth here because undoubtedly in the early Church people would have met in small groups, secretly and behind closed doors. But this was not because such a mode of carrying on was intrinsic to Christianity; it was the result of the intermittent persecution the Church suffered during the first three hundred years. Once the persecution ended, the Church quickly evolved into a more open structure.

The Church has condemned on more than one occasion the primitive concept of tradition which harps back in a simplistic way to what the early Christians did or didn't do. Sacred tradition is not something one needs to go digging for with a JCB and a bevy of professional archaeologists and historians in tow. Sacred Tradition is a living thing which is passed on from one generation of Catholics to the next and unfolds, develops and grows over the centuries under the guidance of the Magisterium and the breath of the Spirit. The Church today may be likened to a large and beautiful oak tree; it is quite ridiculous to bewail the fact that it no longer resembles the original acorn.

There is much similarity between the Way's false concept of tradition and that of the Protestant reformers - and indeed of much goofy post-Conciliar thought. The line of thinking goes something like this: the Holy Spirit was in the early Church, but

somehow disappeared from the scene at some time. The Church then became corrupt or at least spiritually dead for centuries. However, fortuitously the Holy Spirit turned up again on my birthday, or at Vatican II, or on some other momentous occasion involving me, or with which I am personally empathetic, and now all can be restored to its original purity. "Original purity" of course being a loose concept that I reserve the right to define as suits my personal taste.

Actually this teaching that the Church went astray after the Peace of Constantine comes out of the Baptist sect. Some Baptist apologists argue that theirs is not a church which was formed at the Reformation, but that they are a sort of remnant of Bible-believing Christians left over from the first four centuries, before the Peace of Constantine. This sort of historical gobbledygook is their imaginative response to the Catholic claim that a church founded sixteen centuries after the death of Christ by the Protestant reformers can hardly claim to be the church founded by Christ.

To refute this nonsense, one need merely point out that for the first four centuries there was no New Testament, the collection of twenty-seven books as we know it, for these "Bible-believing" Christians to base their faith upon. The list of twenty-seven separate books which were to be finally included in the New Testament was drawn up by the Church *after* the Peace of Constantine - as also was the formulation of the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Divinity of Christ - not bad for a "corrupt" Church!

The Way's Doctrine of Idolatry

The Way has a very developed, or rather a conveniently stretched, doctrine of idolatry. One of the things kept under wraps from enquirers is the very heavy time commitment *demand*ed of members: two/three to four evenings a week, and often Sundays and weekends in addition! Thus for example, if you have a large family and find your commitment to your children and family makes it difficult to give up the time mandated by membership of the Way, or you decide to spare your children attendance at some of their long-winded services, you will be accused of making your children an "idol". If you object to standing around for a hour or two waiting for one of their long-winded services to start, you will be told by the leaders that time is clearly for you an "idol".

Ex-members suggest that the Way is the real "idol" of those who follow the Way. A true story related to me by an ex-member in Bristol will illustrate this aspect. A young man, who was not a baptized

Christian, joined her community. After a couple of years involvement with the Way he met a good Catholic girl from the parish (who was not a member of the Way) and they planned to marry. When the Way discovered that he planned to marry a Catholic who was not a member of the Way, they refused to baptise him! The man had to leave the Way and seek baptism in his parish to marry his practising Catholic girlfriend!

The break up of marriages is a recurring theme in complaints against the Way. Because the Way *mandates* such a heavy commitment of time and energy this inescapably puts stress on many marriages, especially where one partner is involved with the Way and the other not. Any attempt to reduce one's time commitment to the Way to ease the strain on one's marriage will be met by the objection that you are making your marriage an "idol" by allowing it to come between you and God - whose will is always equated with the Way. One does not need much imagination to realize the devastating effect that this doctrine will have on some marriages.

In this doctrine of idolatry, the Way is preaching the direct opposite of, for example, Opus Dei and their founder St Josemaria Escriva, who teach that it is in their very commitment to children, family, spouses and their careers that the laity are sanctified - not by masses of feverish ecclesial activity.

Transubstantiation

The reason the Way is not concerned about scattering crumbs and fragments of the consecrated bread and treading them underfoot is because Kiko and Carmen reject what the Church traditionally believes and teaches concerning transubstantiation. Kiko writes in his Neocatechumenate Orientation Guide (Page 317) "*there is no Eucharist without the assembly (...). It is from the assembly that the Eucharist springs.*" This is also of course another reason why their leaders do not believe in priests. If it's the assembly that brings about the Real Presence and the host is merely a symbol, who needs priests?

The leaders of the Way believe that once the celebration is finished, Christ is no longer present. Consequently, they are opposed to the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, genuflecting, Eucharistic adoration, daily communicating and tabernacles etc. Carmen Hernandez famously stated to a priest that if Christ wanted to be among us in this manner, he would have come as a stone, not bread that goes mouldy.

It is not clear where Kiko and Carmen are getting these heretical ideas. One suspects that it is more

likely to be such theologian as Karl Rahner or Edward Schillebeeckx O.P. than the Protestant reformers. Or possibly lesser luminaries such as the Americans, Tad Guzie S.J. or Monika K. Hellwig, or from ex-priest Anthony Wilhelm's book, *Christ Among Us*.

So there you have it. All those canonised saints, all those thousands of holy monks and religious women, all those millions of faithful Catholics, who have spent hours on their knees every week for centuries adoring the Blessed Sacrament. They are all heretics adoring cookies! - so much for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It will come as a bitter disappointment to many to discover that in spite of the orthodox public facade maintained by the Way, they are just as much cafeteria Catholics as the rest of our post-Conciliar dissidents.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1183. "The tabernacle is to be situated 'in churches in a most worthy place with the greatest honour.' [Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*: AAS (1965) 771.] The dignity, placing, and security of the Eucharistic tabernacle should foster adoration before the Lord really present in the Blessed Sacrament of the ALTAR. [Cf. SC 128.]

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

Having personally sat through fourteen (some twenty-one hours) of the lectures of their catechists, I can personally testify that conspicuous by its complete absence was one single reference to the The Catechism of the Catholic Church! This is odd for an organization seeking to present a facade of orthodoxy because the Holy Father has repeatedly decreed that all future catechesis should be based upon it. To reject the Catechism of the Catholic Church honestly and up front would of course draw down upon them heavy ecclesiastic censure, so they appear to deal with this problem, at least as far as their external catechesis is concerned, by simply ignoring it - as far as the Neo-

catechumenate Way is concerned the Catechism of the Catholic Church seems never to have happened, it simply doesn't exist.

A current member has since written to assure me that the Catechism is now widely referred to within the movement and that the new constitution being forced on the movement by Rome has many references to the Catechism. If this is true, it must be welcomed. Yet as late as 2002, over a decade after the Catechism was published, there was not one single reference to it in their lectures directed at outsiders. Even the occasional reference to it would of course still fall far short of the Holy Father's wish that future catechesis should be *based* upon it.

There is also a question mark over Kiko's understanding of the resurrection. He writes in his Neocatechumenate Orientation Guide, "The memorial Jesus left us in His resurrected SPIRIT from the dead (...). How did the Apostles see Jesus Christ resurrected? In themselves, made a vivifying spirit." The doctrine of the resurrection of His BODY is conspicuous by its absence. This could possibly explain Kiko's motive in ordering the suppression of the creed in his liturgy.

According to the theologian, Fr Enrico Zoffoli, the Catechism of the Catholic Church rejects Kiko's teachings on sin, atonement, redemption, the Church, confession, the Mass, the priesthood, altars and the Christian life. Throw in his clear rejection of the faith of the Church concerning the Real Presence and it becomes clear that the heavy veil of silence drawn over the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the Neocatechumenate Way is far from a mere oversight or accident.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is Kiko's and Carmen's Achilles' heel. Bishops and priests would only need to mandate that they used it as the *basis* of their so-called catechesis, *both* in and *outside* their movement, and enforce that mandate strictly for them to either change beyond recognition or implode like a popped balloon.

LITURGY

Their liturgy reaches its culmination at the Passover Vigil, which is an all night affair. Young and old are baptised during the Vigil and baptism is always by total immersion. It is important to understand that this vigil is normally celebrated *separately* from the parish! So in parishes in which the Way are present there will be two Easter Vig-

ils, an open one for the parish and a closed one for the Way! Where this (not surprisingly) has caused problems, as in St Nicholas of Tolentino's parish in Bristol, the parish vigil was dropped and parishioners were left with no option but to attend the Neocatechumenate's all-night vigil! An ex-member has related to me how the vigil finished

with a community breakfast at 6am in a large local hotel, for which everyone was required to pay £25! My informants had asked to be excused the breakfast because of family commitments but were instructed by the leaders of the Way that their place was at the community breakfast. The discipline exercised by the leaders over the members is another facet which defines the Way.

Their weekly Masses are also celebrated behind closed doors separately from the parish. These closed private Masses are radically different from parish Masses. Altars are strictly taboo. A table decorated with flowers is set in the middle of the church with the brothers and sisters of the newly-formed community and their catechists encircled round it. The Mass typically will last ninety minutes and takes place on a Saturday evening. There is a certain amount of what may be called liturgical dancing, circling the table and such like. There is little kneeling. Indeed in some cases the Way has been responsible for the kneelers being stripped out of churches. This, paradoxically for an organization so anxious to maintain the facade of orthodoxy, contrast starkly with the Church's normal liturgical law which mandates that even bishops kneel in their cathedrals during the consecration when they are present at Masses at which they are not a celebrant. The bread for the Mass is baked by the members themselves and resembles an ordinary loaf. In the breaking and sharing of our Lord's body, crumbs and fragments are inevitably scattered all over the church and trodden underfoot. This of course would and should scandalize any genuine Catholic.

Before the priest's homily, anyone "*can share with his fellow brothers and sisters what the Lord has communicated to him in the readings and how his life has changed because of the Way*" - Note: not "changed" because of one's baptism, one's Catholicism or one's commitment to Christ, but specifically because of *the Way*. Further, during the Prayer of the Faithful, everyone is encouraged to pray out loud, freely, expressing whatever feelings he or she has.

Their Mass superficially is basically a turbo-charged version of the folk/charismatic model - very much of the folksy, horizontal, happy-clappy, post-conciliar genre, with which we are all now so familiar in the West, and which very clearly is far from being everyone's liturgical cup of tea. One can hardly argue that a preference for a rite that is somewhat more dignified and classical is a sign that one has not made a radical commitment to Christ. Saint Pio and Saint Josemaria Escriva both refused to celebrate the Novus Ordo, the latter fa-

mously describing his stance as "holy obstinacy". Are we really supposed to deduce from these two recently canonized saints' preference for the traditional rites of the Church that they had failed to make a radical commitment to Christ?

The Neocatechumenate's "Mass" contains serious omissions from the normal public liturgy of the Church. For example, on Kiko's orders the creed is not recited - one can make one's own guess at the reasoning behind this order. The *Orate, Fratres* is omitted on Kiko's orders, because it mentions sacrifice and Kiko denies the Mass is a sacrifice. The *Agnus Dei* has similarly been suppressed by him because of the reference to taking "away the sins of the world." Kiko denies that Christ takes away sin because of his belief that man is forever and always ontologically "zero plus sin". The *Lavabo* (washing of hands) and *Domine, non sum dignus.et sanabitur anima mea* are both omitted on Kiko's orders. This is again because of Kiko's Lutheran theology. The *Lavabo* is a symbol of God purifying us, but God cannot purify us because in Luther's theology we are unredeemable. The *Domine,i non sum dignus.et sanabitur anima mea* is omitted again because this prayer suggests that Christ can sanctify us, when in Kiko's theology we are and always will be "zero plus sin" and there is nothing that we or grace or God can do about it.

It is claimed by the Neocatechumenate leaders (and I have yet to see anything to dispute their claim) that these omissions and general mucking about with the liturgy of the Mass, have been approved by officials of the Liturgical Congregation in Rome. If this is true then it is indeed a grave scandal.

One may legitimately question whether the Neocatechumenate "Mass" is actually a valid Mass. The Church teaches that for the Mass to be valid it is necessary for the priest to intend to do what the Church does. However, the Church intends to offer a propitious sacrifice, but Kiko and Carmen *explicitly* deny the Mass is a propitious sacrifice, so how can their priests intend to do what the Church does? One may note in passing that the reason the Church holds that Anglican orders are invalid is precisely because their rite intentionally omitted the notion of a propitious sacrifice.

Their founders have clearly bought into the shallow post-Conciliar theology and Protestant view of the Mass which sees it as nothing more than a festive banquet modelled on the Last Supper, rather than a re-presentation of the divine sacrifice that was merely *initiated* at the last supper (a crucial distinction) and not consummated until Our Lord on the Cross cried out in a loud voice, "Father into

your hands I commend my spirit." and yielded up his spirit for us.

There are over eighty paragraphs in Catechism of the Catholic Church teaching that the Mass is a *divine* Sacrifice:

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1410. "It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic SACRIFICE. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic SACRIFICE. "

Compare this teaching of the Church with Kiko and Carmen's in their Neocatechumenate Orientation Guide. The Mass is only "*the memorial of the Pasch of Jesus, of his passage from death to life*", and again: "*The notion of sacrifice is a condescension for the pagan mentality (...). At the beginning of the Church, in the theology of the Mass, there was no sacrifice of Jesus, no sacrifice of the Cross, no Calvary, but only a sacrifice of praise.*"

I cite below two canons of the Council of Trent (22nd Session):

(Canon 1) "If anyone say that in the Mass, a true and real SACRIFICE is not offered to God (...), let him be anathema"

(Canon 3) "If anyone says that the SACRIFICE of the Mass is that only of praise and thanksgiving, or that it is a mere commemoration of the SACRIFICE consummated on the Cross but not a propitiatory one (...) let him be anathema"

Traditional Catholics will also want to ask the same question they have been asking for the last thirty years of the Novus Ordo, with only deafening silence for answer: is it really better that our liturgy should seek to drag Christ down into our pedestrian, workaday world, rather than seek to raise our hearts and minds up to the throne of the Most High, as the Eastern Rites do and our classical Roman Rite did until 1967? Further: are we really the better off for having ditched holy intimacy for an unbecoming familiarity, or is this not rather part of that post-Conciliar move away from worshipping the Lord God Almighty to worshipping a god all-matey, made in our own image?

This stunted doctrine of the Mass, and their denial that the Mass is a sacrifice, is also the reason that Kiko forbids the use of altars, which are portrayed as some sort of pre-Christian left-over where wrathful gods were appeased by pagan sacrifices. Their Mass absolutely must be celebrated on a table set in the middle of the Church, a post-Conciliar fashion started by the Lutherans. The problem with hitching one's fortunes to fashion is that fashions go faster than they come, and this particular one is already very definitely on the wane. Indeed, the tide has so turned that there are now a number of architectural firms making a good living specializing in turning the sort of modern soulless worship spaces favoured by the Way back into proper churches.

In passing one should note that the Catechism of the Catholic Church makes no less than twenty-seven favourable references to altars:

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1181. "A church, 'a house of prayer in which the Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, where the faithful assemble, and where is worshipped the presence of the Son of God our Saviour, offered for us on the sacrificial ALTAR for the help and consolation of the faithful

The Way also doesn't like the idea of priests, so insists on calling them "presbyters". This again is almost certainly because their founders and leaders deny the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice. As any Protestant can tell you, if you don't have a sacrifice you don't need a priesthood - it is all terribly simple really.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has sixty-nine paragraphs on the ordained priesthood.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

563. "'Because it is joined with the episcopal order the office of priests shares in the authority by which Christ himself builds up and sanctifies and rules his Body. Hence the priesthood of priests, while presupposing the sacraments of initiation, is nevertheless conferred by its own particular sacrament. Through that sacrament priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the PRIEST in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head.'"

CRUEL DECEIT OF THE RANK AND FILE

The most evil aspect of the Neocatechumenate is their calculated deceit of their own rank and file who are for the most part clearly exemplary good people. The ordinary member will never be told by the leaders that the reason that they are required to call their priest "presbyters" is because they do not believe in priests. The ordinary rank and file are never told that the reason they are not permitted to use altars is because Kiko denies the Mass is a sacrifice. When ordinary members express concern about the fragments of the consecrated host scattered about, they will be discouraged by their catechist from clearing them up, but they will not be told that the reason they are being so discouraged is because their leaders deny the doctrine of transubstantiation and believe the host to be a mere symbol of the presence of Christ. When they celebrate their festive banquet in place of the Mass, they will not be told that it is because Kiko and Carmen reject the Church's whole theology of the Mass, redemption, sacrifice, the lot.

Kiko and Carmen have clearly learned much from the *modus operandi* of the professional dissenters, radical feminists and militant sodomites ensconced in most of the chanceries of the English speaking world who have been gnawing away for years at the fabric of the Church, like termites from the inside. If you want to change the beliefs of Catholic, it is a waste of time doing it honestly and out in the open. This will merely bring the Magisterium of the Church down on your head. What you must do is change the orthopraxis that underpins and gives expression to the beliefs you want to change. This will not always be easy: you will need to invent an entirely spurious reason to support the change. Try and keep it above the heads of the ordinary faithful by using seemingly learned complex theological insights and as many long words as possible, and throw in something about

the "Spirit of Vatican II". You will always be able to find "useful idiots" at the parish level only too eager to implement your changes; it gives them a sense of purpose and importance. These tame parish progressives can easily be kept blissfully unaware of the defective theology and even anti-Catholic agendas which lie behind your insidious chipping away at the orthopraxis and traditions of their forefathers.

For instance, if you do not believe in transubstantiation, encourage Catholics to receive the host in the hand standing. If you don't believe in the ordained priesthood, strip out the altar rails and encourage laymen to flood the sanctuary for all sorts of spurious reasons, and then call the priest the "President" - or better still, "Bob". If you don't believe in Eucharistic adoration, come up with some complicated liturgical theory as to why the tabernacle should be removed from the main altar to the closet, while at the same time paying lip service to Eucharistic adoration to put the faithful off your scent. If you don't believe the Mass is a sacrifice, encourage charismatic festive banquet-style celebrations. The trick is never to reveal your hand, just be very patient and leave time to do your corrosive dirty work.

An example of Kiko and Carmen deceit of their followers was bought home to me sharply recently in conversation with an ex-member. I happened to mention in passing that Kiko, in his Neocatechumenate Orientation Guide, states that the history of the true Church founded by Christ come to an end with the Pax Constantina and does not resume until the Second Vatican Council. The lady in question drew in a sharp breath and exclaimed, "Does he! We were never told that - but I did often wonder why we had so many long-winded lectures on the Pax Constantini." She had been a member for four years!

SLICK SALES TRICKS USED BY THE WAY TO SELL THEIR LITURGY

The Teddy Bears' Picnic-style "Mass" of the Way is so radically different from the traditional liturgy of the Church that their apologists have to devote a great deal of skill and time to softening up ordinary Catholics to accept it. They basically use five well rehearsed tricks. We shall consider each of these tricks in turn.

Trick No: 1 (Promote the post-Conciliar myth of the DIY liturgies of the early Christians)

One of the post-Conciliar fabrications heavily promoted by the Way in order to soften you up to accept their turbo-charged charismatic style of liturgy is the fable that the Mass of the early Chris-

tians was an unstructured spontaneous event, a festive meal which took place round the kitchen table with every one encouraged to chip in their two penny worth, somewhat like a special birthday party with Jesus as an important guest. They are not of course the only movement in the modern Church with a vested interest in promoting this fairy tale; the Charismatics also promote it. According to this fabrication, the formalised liturgies of the Church were written centuries later. This falsehood has become wildly accepted for no better reason than that it is so often repeated. However, the *objective* truth is that there is not one scrap of historical evidence to substantiate this myth.

Allow me to relate a true story. Back in the eighties a young Jewess named Rosalind Moss converted to the fundamentalist Protestant brand of Christianity. She then trained as a missionary and went to South America to convert all those ignorant superstitious Catholics to Christ. In the meantime her brother back home, much to her horror, became a Catholic. He eventually persuaded her to attend a Mass with him. After the Mass he enquired, "What did you think Ros, wasn't it wonderful?" She records that she was in such a state of shock it was some while before she was able to respond, but she then exclaimed, "Wonderful? Chris, that was awful! That wasn't a Christian service, it was a *synagogue* service!"

Are we really supposed to believe that the early Church had no formal liturgy, it was just partying spontaneously in the Spirit, and many *centuries* later when the Church got around to writing formal liturgies, the Church just happened by sheer chance to write liturgies so similar to those of our Jewish forefathers in faith that two thousand years later a young Jewess, coming out of a Catholic church in the USA, could exclaim, "That wasn't a Christian service, it was a *synagogue* service!"?

Is not the more probable explanation: the early Christians being Jews, and many of their priests being ex-Jewish priests, celebrated their Jewish liturgies, suitably adapted? The Passover, the model for our divine liturgy, is a ritualised liturgical meal. I have a Jewish liturgical manual I purchased from a Jewish book shop for the Passover on my desk. It is as thick as a pre-Conciliar Catholic missal and it even has the dual text, the sacred language of their liturgy (in this case Hebrew) in one column and the vernacular in the other. The offering of bread and wine and the image of the lamb of God already had the central place in Jewish Liturgy; the difference for Christians was the Lamb of God now had a name. After

all, had not Christ said, "I come to fulfil, not to destroy."

The same point could be made about Gregorian chant, the music of the Church until Vatican II. This is the music of the synagogue. Are we similarly supposed to believe that when the Church got round to writing sacred music to accompany the liturgy some half a millennium after the resurrection, it just happened to write the same sort of liturgical music as sung by Christ and the apostles. Is it not much more probable that we never ceased to use it?

The Neocatechumenate Way are very keen on the Bible, but they seem to have missed the blindingly obvious in Revelations. What do we find in Revelations? We find robed priests, congregations chanting "holy, holy, holy," virgins, candle sticks, the smoke of incense, the invocation of angels and saints, heavenly choirs, musical instruments...and a lamb, a lamb slain on an altar, on an "*altar*" please note. Now ask yourself, was St John having a vision of a pontifical high Mass in St Peters taking place some fourteen centuries into the future, or was he alluding to liturgies that were taking place at the time and with which his contemporary readers would have been familiar? Just ask yourself which is the more probable explanation.

Trick No: 2 (Just lie about Vatican II; after all, everyone else does. Most people won't have read the documents anyway, so you can say what you like and get away with it)

Apologists for the Way will claim that Vatican II ushered in a new Mass. This is a boldfaced lie, and does not become any less of a lie merely because it is so often repeated. Vatican II mandated that Latin Rite Catholics should retain Latin as the language of their liturgy and that the faithful should be taught the Latin responses; it further mandated that Gregorian chant should remain the music of the Church. Vatican II said nothing about breaking with 2000 years of tradition by turning priests to face the people. It also said nothing about tearing up the Church's ancient liturgy and writing a new fashionable liturgy to accommodate the spirit of the age.

The principal expert responsible for drafting the Council decree on the sacred liturgy was a Greek Rite Catholic, Abbott Boniface. It is significant that not one of the other ancient churches of Christendom in full communion with the see of Peter, and whose bishops were equally present at Vatican II, tinkered with their ancient liturgies after Vati-

can II. Interestingly, a motion at a synod of Greek Rite bishops in 2002 to translate their rite into the vernacular was rejected by all but two bishops!

since the war. The Church in this country was growing dramatically after the war up to Vatican II. It started to implode immediately after Vatican II - just when many of the liturgical novelties so favoured by the Way began to be foisted upon us.

Trick No: 3 (Distort History)

Another lie perpetuated by their apologist is that the Church in this country had been shrinking

The actual statistics as opposed to the Neocatechumenal fairy tales:

	Mass Attendance	Priests	Baptisms	Marriages	Converts
1945 The end of the War	1301622*	6200	70015	28814	8319
1962 Opening of 2 nd Vatican Council	2198557*	7550	122562	46860 Up a staggering 63% in a mere 17 years!	14483 Up a staggering 74% in a mere 17 years!
1965 Closing of 2 nd Vatican Council	2320246* Up a staggering 78% in a mere 20 years!	7808	136350 Up a staggering 95% in a mere 20 years!	45166	12728
1967 Promulgation of Novus Ordo	2277000*	7811 Up 26% since the end of the war!	134055	46112	10308
2002	1005522 Down 57% since the end of the Council	6090 Down 22% since the end of the Council	64032 Down 53% since the end of the Council	13039 Down a Massive 72% since the start of the Council	4402 Down a Massive 70% since the start of the Council

* Data extrapolated from secondary data

Trick No: 4 (Mock the traditional liturgy of the Church)

Rubbish the Church's traditional liturgy by saying things like, "In the past priests stood in the corner muttering incoherently with their backs to the people." This vision should be reinforced by a bit of absurd miming. Such ignorant caricatures are offensive to traditional Catholics and indeed ought to be offensive to all right-minded Catholics.

I have met very few priests who mutter incoherently, and the tiny minority who do are just as likely to be Novus Ordo priests as traditionalists. I

have known hundreds of priests who articulated clearly the beautiful words of the Church's ancient liturgical prayers, whether in Latin or English, and whatever their orientation vis-à-vis the people.

Many still do so in Latin of course, as does the Holy Father to this day when he celebrates a public Mass. They do this out of obedience to Vatican II, the real Vatican II, not the mythical one of the Neocatechumenate. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican II's decree on the Sacred Liturgy, mandated:36 (1) "The use of the Latin language, with due respect to particular law, is to be preserved in the Latin rites. ...54 A suitable place may be al-

lotted to the vernacular in Masses which are celebrated with the people, especially in the readings and "the common prayer,".....Nevertheless care must be taken to ensure that the faithful may also be able to say or sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them."

In the traditional Roman Rite priests offer Mass facing the liturgical East, facing that is toward the *parousia* of the risen Christ. So do the priests of all the other *ancient* churches of Christendom in communion with the See of Peter. Further, so do all the schismatic, yet undoubtedly venerable, Eastern churches: including the Great Church (i.e. the Patriarchate of Constantinople), the Nestorians, the Egyptian Copts, the Abyssinians, the Jacobites, the Malabar Christians and the Armenians. If there was ever a tradition in the Church of saying Mass facing the people, why is it that the only people who now do it are the heretical churches of the Reformation and (*for the last thirty years only*) Novus Ordo "Latin" Catholics? To describe this venerable and universal tradition as "with his back to the people" is as silly as suggesting that when General Patton tore through the Nazis' southern flank at the head of the Third Army, he did so with his back to his troops.

As for following Christ, Christ's lingua franca was Aramaic, but in the temple he worshipped in Hebrew, as his fellow Jews do to this very day. I have often mischievously wondered whether Our Blessed Lord received snide asides after the last supper about "mumbling in a foreign language" from his Aramaic speaking apostles, those that is who were too intellectually lazy to learn the Hebrew responses of their liturgy.

Trick No: 5 (Use a very slick sales trick used by double glazing salesmen)

To prepare one for their radically different liturgy the Way employ a sales technique used by all professional salesman. The human mind is so constructed that presented with two choices, it will accept the lesser evil or more good. Thus a salesman will say to you, "May I see you at 2 o'clock or 5 o'clock." You mind thinks, "I've have to pick the children up at 5 o'clock, so I'll make it 2 o'clock." Only a minority spot the fact that the real choice they had, i.e. to see him or not to see him, had been removed by this sleight of hand.

Now lets observe the sleight of hand of the Neocatechumenate Way's salesman. What he has to do is soften you up to accept a liturgy which is about as much like the traditional liturgy of the Church as Cheddar cheese is to a gatepost. One can have sympathy with him, for this is no easy task as one can well imagine. Let's explore what he would have to say if he were to tell the truth, i.e. give you the real choice. His sales pitch would have to go something like the following: "*The Church, both East and West, has got her public worship of God hopelessly wrong for the best part of 2000 years. The Rite of most, if not all, of our canonised saints, two hundred and fifty or so popes and all our martyrs was profoundly mistaken. So we have come up with this party-style celebration meal round a table to replace it.*" He probably wouldn't sell too many tickets, would he?

Now lets observe closely the sleight of hand used to make this choice acceptable. First we are presented with an option, with the aid of a little drawing, of a pre-Christian pagan offering sacrifices on an altar to appease the anger of wrathful gods. The drawing helps to reinforce this spurious option. We are then presented with option number two, the horizontal folksy ninety minute "bean feast" of the Neocatechumenate, which we are told (again mendaciously) was the fruit of Vatican II. Now what Catholic, given a choice between a pagan offering sacrifice to wrathful gods and a Vatican II-sanctioned celebration, would not choose the latter?

But wake up, get real, this is not the real choice you are being offered. I have never, nor has any other Catholic to my knowledge, offered sacrifices to wrathful gods. What we do is re-present to God, together with Our Lady and all the angels and saints and heavenly choirs, the perfect and wonderful sacrifice of his only Son on the Cross. I do this in love and wonder and gratitude to our God who is all goodness, all truth, all justice, all mercy, all beauty and all being! And because my Lord is so awesomely wonderful I chose to offer him the best, the best music, the best architecture, the best altar, the best sacred vessels, the best vestments and the best liturgy, and, for good measure, I throw in my unworthy self. I choose this, not your knees-up round a miserable table, Mr Neocatechumenate salesman, thank you very much for the offer all the same.

METHODOLOGY OF THE WAY

The following is a brief synopsis of *some* of what happens to those who join the Way.

The "Convivence"

After completing fifteen "catechesis" held in the parish, the new member is obliged to participate in a convivence (meaning, a time of living together) which starts on a Friday evening and finishes Sunday afternoon, and from this the new community will be formed. The convivence is a crescendo of feelings and new experiences and is designed to trigger something in you to become very deeply and incisively involved, not in your parish, nor in the Church, but in *the Way*.

First "Scrutiny"

After about two years one arrives at the first scrutiny. There are two important elements to this, one is to "prove" one's detachment from material things, "test oneself in the treasures" is their jargon, the second is to publicly reveal one's cross.

To "test oneself in the treasures", your catechist would invite you to rid yourself of those things you are most attached to, for example, money, but it doesn't necessarily have to be money; it can be jewellery or other such things. The catechists "invite" you to donate something personal, something you are particularly attached to, to someone who would neither know who donated it nor where it came from.

The moment which can sometimes take on dramatic heights for the person involved is when every "brother" and "sister" is compelled to confess in front of the whole community and the catechists what his or her personal cross is. This moment can be marked by very powerful emotions - members often confessing with tears and with great internal resistance. This may be no big deal if your personal cross is ingrowing toenails, but what if it is something much more personal, like the knowledge that your spouse was once unfaithful, or that you are impotent and can no longer consummate your marriage?

Many quit at this point. But the catechists reassure the ones who stay by pandering to their egos, *"not everybody is called to be salt and light. The Lord has invited you."* One thus takes on the identity of a saved one, one of their Gnostic elite, who feels special to be one who is on a mission for the Church, to which not everyone is called. Subtly, the noose has begun to tighten. It tightens most of

course for the lonely and those with a weak ego or low self esteem.

The Second Scrutiny

The real turning point comes with the second scrutiny about two years later. The conviction that there is no salvation outside the Way is emphasised even more; outside the Way one would be outside the Church. The catechists repeatedly tell the ones who have tried to quit that, *"Outside the Way you'll be with the dead because this is the road the Lord has chosen for you."*

The person facing the second scrutiny is required to sit in the middle of the room with a crucifix in front of him. A panel of "scrutineers" are facing him, this panel might typically include a priest (sorry "presbyter"). The remaining members of the group are seated round the room. Other groups may also be invited to participate, so that there will be strangers as well as friends of the "victim" in the room. The "victim" will be told that to lie, would be the equivalent of lying to Christ at his last judgement. This is emphasised by drawing his attention to the fact that he is sitting facing a crucifix.

He is then bombarded with questions from the panel of scrutineers designed to draw out details of his past life, with a particular emphasis on sins below the belt. Things which the Church wisely regards as sacrosanct between one's conscience, one's confessor and God's infinite mercy may now be required public knowledge.

An example of the sort of questioning tactics used would be, "You have been married ten years, but you only have two children. How have you achieved this if you have not used artificial contraception?" Marriages again can be endangered by spouses publicly confessing to minor infidelities, long confessed and repented, and of which their partner may hitherto have been ignorant.

This sort of public self-flagellation may provide a thrill for some rather strange personality types, the sort that appear on or watch awful television programs like Big Brother one would imagine, but if another person is involved, is it kind or just? For example, if I publicly confess that for ten years I regularly beat my wife, is there not a flip side to this coin? For I have also told the assembly that my wife is such an inadequate silly woman that she has been prepared to put up with that for ten years. Should I not have her free informed consent before I betray her in that way?

It should be noted in passing that secular psychologists have been using similar techniques of group psycho-babble for thirty years. But such techniques in the secular world have been largely abandoned, even by those who pioneered them, because they have had the integrity to face up to the appalling and lasting damage that can be done to people by such methods and group dynamics.

Tithing and Scams

After the second scrutiny you will be required to turn over ten percent of your earnings to the Way. This is done in the manner that all collections are done among the Neocatechumenate; the contributions are put in a bag that is called "the garbage" to encourage contempt for one's money. Note that one is not instructed to give ten per cent of one's income to charity, or to the Church, but direct to *the Way*. On top of tithing there will continue to be other collections for other purposes. The Way publishes no accounts, so you have no means of knowing what happens to your money. Any enquiry will be met with the objection that clearly money is for you yet another of those (you've guessed it) "idols".

One defence of their failure to produce accounts trotted out regularly by their leaders is the biblical text, "*Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*" A more mendacious misuse of Scripture to serve one's own ends it would be difficult to imagine; for the text in question has absolutely nothing to do with not being transparent about the use of money with which one has been entrusted. It is extracted from a passage of Scripture in which Our Lord is condemning the Pharisees for making an ostentatious public display of their piety; clearly an entirely different issue.

One repugnant scam operated by the leaders of this cult to help new members to part with their

money works as follows. Say just for argument that you are among thirty new members at a Neocatechumenate gathering. The leaders announce a collection for some ostensibly worthy cause and urge you to be generous. You put a ten pound note into the collection. Feeling that you may have been a little more generous than most, you anticipate that when the collection is counted it will have raised between £200 and £300. Imagine your surprise then when the final sum is announced and that it is in excess of £3000! Everyone in the room assumes that he must have been exceptionally mean as everyone else must have contributed an average of at least a £100! The effect of this is to put enormous pressure on you next time there is a collection to contribute a good deal more than that "miserly" £10.

However, what has actually happened is that the leaders have drawn some £3000 out of some central fund and covertly added it to the collection. This sick scam played on trusting decent folk, possibly including old age pensioners and unsupported mothers on benefit, should have Dell Boy choking on his cigar, let alone a Christian who takes the Ten Commandments even half seriously. That this scam is ordered from the top cannot be doubted. How else account for reports of it from ex-members as geographically dispersed as the West Country of England and Rome! One ex-member in Rome recounted how the first time she realized what was going on was when she herself was asked to help organize this scam. She wrote, "I felt as if I had been stabbed." Not herself having imbibed the institutionalised venality which so characterises this cult, she protested to a Neocatechumenate priest (sorry "presbyter") present. His advice to this scandalized soul was not to be so judgmental! And these are the folk we are being asked to believe are a new movement of the Spirit!

THE CHARGE OF SECTARIANISM

The most serious charge laid against the Way is that it is a sect, a church within a church. The word "sect" is clearly selected by its enemies for its maximum negative impact. Nevertheless, this charge is very difficult to refute, for the very least that can be said is that they manifest many sect like qualities. Even their choice of their favourite name, i.e. *the Way*, not *a Way* or the Neocatechumenate Way, but the Way, should be enough to sound a few alarm bells.

They are deeply divisive

Their unusual and private liturgies and weekly Masses, from which the parish's ordinary riffraff are excluded, are obviously divisive and sectarian in nature and have indeed been the cause of much division and pain in many parishes. Because of their "progression of locked rooms" method of formation, once they have taken over a parish, there will not be one group but several groups, each at a different stage of the Way. Each of these groups will have its own catechists, its own closed Saturday evening Mass, and thus need the services

of a priest. Given the heavy demands made on priests, it is not difficult to understand why once they are well entrenched in the parish, ordinary parishioners start to feel second-class, neglected and discontented.

Once the Way is established in a parish it will also in time insist on taking over all catechesis: RCIA, baptism, confirmation, marriage and anything else you like to think of. The Way are being perfectly logical in this because you see they are ... *the Way*. More importantly they have a sacred mission to protect people from pagan errors such as the doctrines of the sacrifice of the Mass, atonement, the Real Presence etc., which will be inevitably perpetuated by anyone using the Catechism of the Catholic Church as the basis for their catechesis. Yet again this has understandably sparked bitter controversy in parishes.

However, there is another facet to this which should in fairness be mentioned. Many rank and file members of the Way are basically orthodox in that they wish to embrace the faith of the Church and remain blissfully ignorant of the deep heresies which motivate Kiko and Carmen. Good parish priests, acutely aware that the RCIA program in their own and many parishes has been infiltrated by Modernists, radical feminists and assorted dissenters for their own nasty ends, turn in desperation and good faith to the rank and file members of the Neocatechumenate Way for help. In these confused times, this is surely understandable.

Their proselytising is different in character from other movements of renewal in the Church. A Franciscan friar, for example, would preach and seek to lead one to a radical conversion to Christ, but the need to become a Franciscan is not part of the deal. Opus Dei can and indeed do organize splendid retreats, but it is not part of the package that you become a card-carrying member of Opus Dei. But even in its proselytising the Way reveals its institutionalised chronic lack of integrity. When they come into a parish they are forbidden to tell the truth about why they are there, i.e. they don't say we are here to try and form a cell of the Neocatechumenate Way, they deliberately hide their true intention behind the facade of feigning to offer adult catechesis.

This divisiveness extends not just to the parish community, but reaches into the home. Thus on page 28 of the notes for their 1988 Convivence we read that the catechist feels in communion with two of his sisters who have joined the Neocatechumenate, but "*With the rest of my family, I am a stranger to them. And it is very difficult for me to stay there and very dangerous for me also. More*

than a week with them - very dangerous. You feel that this is not your place, you feel a stranger." Is it any wonder that marriages are broken up by such preaching?

Internal jargon

A powerful indication of the cult mentality of the Way is found in their internal jargon. Up until about 1990, for example, parishioners who were not members of the Way were referred to internally as "pagans". This may seem startling, but it makes perfect sense once you understand Kiko's Lutheran theology. Pagans you see offer sacrifices. Sunday Mass-going Catholics are present at the sacrifice of the Mass, hence, Sunday Mass-going Catholics are "pagans" - QED. One ex-member said to me, "I was always uncomfortable with having to use this term because if Catholics who are not members of the Way were pagans, the Pope must be a pagan." The honest retort is "Yes of course he is", if your definition of a pagan is someone who offers sacrifices, for the Pope offers the sacrifice of the New Covenant every day.

This term was suddenly dropped; discontinued in fact overnight. This abrupt abandonment of a term in general use up to that point, is another indication of the military-style discipline to which members are subject.

The term may have been dropped, but the theology behind it has not. I have come across cases of Neocatechumenate leaders arguing that when a member's marriage is on the rocks as a result of their involvement with the Neocatechumenate Way, he or she should seek an annulment from their Catholic partner on the basis of the Pauline Privilege. The Pauline Privilege is the doctrine that when one party in a pagan marriage becomes a Catholic, if the pagan party seeks to restrict their practise of their new faith, the marriage may be dissolved by the Church in favour of a marriage with a baptized person.

Adulation of their Founder

Another clear sect-like characteristic of the Neocatechumenate is their adulation of their founder and their zeal in carrying out whatever he orders. Everything *absolutely* must *be signed* by "Kiko", the paten, the chalice, the cross, the lectern, and whatever else is used! Kiko's writings, while kept strictly secret from outsiders, are treated as if they were sacred texts inside the Way. In this they are not dissimilar to the Mormon Sect, which also treat their founder as a latter-day prophet and his writing as sacred text.

I cannot think of any other Catholic leader in history who had such hubris that he felt that he had the right to arrogate to himself the authority to rewrite the Mass to accommodate his dissent from the faith of the Church. Nor can I think of any other movement in history whose followers were so slave-like in their mentality that they would have gone along with it without a whimper of protest.

The Neocatechumenate's liturgies and Masses are liberally infused with Kiko's music. He is a flamenco guitarist and writes all his music and hymns in this style. This is fine if you are a flamenco buff, but if your taste is a little more catholic and runs to Palestrina for instance, it is more likely to wind you up than raise the heart and mind to God.

Even their catechesis is clearly by rote, carrying out Kiko's or Carmen's instructions to the letter. This is given away by the fact that their apologists, who work in small teams, frequently turn to one another for prompting and will quietly interject if someone has forgotten something that was in the script.

Seeing Kiko in action was the beginning of the end for one ex-member. He related to me, "Having invariably kept his supporters waiting for an hour or more, Kiko would swagger into the room dressed dramatically all in black and then rant like a demagogue."

Promise of Salvation

In one of these "holy texts" of the Neocatechumenal Way, Kiko states, *"I saw a parish priest who spent his whole life battling against us and who hated us. It only took one night when he was struck with a tachycardia (an irregular heart beat) strong enough that he started taking his life seriously and he completely changed."* Many stories like this one are told among the people in the community and especially by the catechists to encourage the people to see the Way as the best the Church has to offer.

Members of the Way are promised salvation by accepting the Way as a style of life that's unique and clearly for a privileged few. Something often said by the catechists is, *"If you take on this way, you will have the spirit of Jesus Christ. We feel that it's been true for us in our lives."*

Members of the Neocatechumenate often feel persecuted and they demonize those who don't belong. Sects typically demonize those who don't think like they do, because they need to create an external enemy (a scapegoat) on which they target

all their individual fears and anxieties and justify their own very strange ring-fenced existence.

Wounded by the Way

One of the sales techniques used by the Way is to encourage individuals and couples whose lives have been turned round by the Way from the spiritual poverty of drugs, alcohol, broken marriages, fornication, abortion etc., to give public testimony to this moral conversion. There is absolutely no reason to doubt the truth of such stories, nor to minimise the grace of conversion to which these individuals and couples are testifying. If people become alive to God's love, and are given a purpose and a close supportive network, lives will undoubtedly be transformed for the better. But the same would be true for many Protestant sects, Quakers, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, etc., and even non-Christian movements. I have two personal friends whose lives are clearly a deal more meaningful because of their Islamic faith. The point is that one cannot make the simplistic presumption that the grace of moral conversion equals orthodox Catholicism.

However, there is a darker side to this story. I became painfully aware in the course of speaking to ex-members that for every life which is the better for having come into contact with the Way, there are others which are quite deeply wounded. The Neocatechumenate salesmen don't tell you about this side of course. They cannot be faulted for this. It is not their job, they are there to sell their product.

To understand this wound, we have to understand that man operates on two planes of awareness, the conscious and the sub-conscious. Consider the example of a child who from an early age has been repeatedly told by the authority figures and significant others in its life that it is worthless. It doesn't matter how aware in adult life they are at the conscious level that this is untrue, the wound, the "feeling" at the sub-conscious level that they are worthless, may well dog them for the rest of their lives. Similarly, the rank and file members of this cult are repeatedly told for years, several nights a week, by what are authority figures and now the significant others in their lives that inside their cult they are among the elect, the saved, the salt, the chosen few, and outside there are just the others, spiritual death, "pagans", those the Lord in his mysterious ways has not chosen. Even devout good Catholics are counted among these "others". Consequently, when a person comes out of the movement, however clear and valid are their reasons for leaving, they can be left with deep

wounds at the subconscious level. I have spoken to people who have left this sect over ten years ago, yet who are clearly still carrying this monkey on their back.

When happily married couples leave, there is a element of mutual support to help them cope, but one shudders to imagine how people who do not

enjoy this element of mutual support may cope. They will of course get absolutely no support from the people who have supposedly been their closest friends for years. As far as they are concerned one is now among the dead; "*outside the Way you are among the dead*"; they have been telling you this for years.

WHY THE WAY IS SO SUCCESSFUL IN GAINING DEVOTEES.

The current state of the English church

To understand this phenomenon, we need to have the courage to take a hard and honest look at the post-Conciliar Church in the English speaking world. After Vatican II, prelates, their paid spin-doctors and liberal Catholics were running around like slightly intoxicated headless chickens proclaiming the dawn of some bright new golden age for Catholicism. Catholics, and there were more than a few (there were even leading Catholic thinkers in our ranks, such as Professors Dietrich von Hildebrand and Jacques Maritain) who insisted in pointing out that the Emperor had no clothes, were denounced and marginalized for not being open to the spirit. This insult invariably came from someone who had self-certified his own openness to the Spirit. In the new Gnostic post-Conciliar Church there was nothing worse than not being "open to the Spirit." I often reflected on Chesterton's sobering remark that, "When Jones follows the inner light, Jones follows Jones."

Thirty years later, the devastation of the Lord's vineyard is now so advanced that even those responsible for it are hard put to deny it. True, the odd elderly slightly senile cleric, who has presumably been asleep for the last thirty years under his altar slab, will occasionally shuffle out and mutter a few Modernist platitudes about renewal and the Spirit of Vatican II, before shuffling off again. The response of the faithful usually requires less effort than a good yawn. The feeling aroused is rather like that evoked at the sight of hair growing on a corpse: somewhat repulsive but absolutely nothing to get excited about. Catholics like myself are still marginalized and ignored, but that is now understandable. If there is one thing worse than someone who keeps chanting that the Emperor has no cloths, it's the smart jerk who has been proved right all along.

The following are the actual verifiable truths about the English Church since Vatican II. You may

need to pray for the grace of Christian courage to face these truths, but unless and until we face the truths, there is absolutely no possible prospect of recovery. These are the truths that the hirelings who have sat on their purple-clad butts for the last thirty years and twiddled their thumbs like Pilate while Christ's body haemorrhaged away would rather were swept under the carpet while they continue to peddle their Modernist lies about their marvellous non-existent renewal.

They have devastated our Mass attendance, which is now *considerably less than half* of what it was before Vatican II. They have emptied our seminaries, those that is that they haven't yet closed. By peddling Modernist drivel such as ICONS in our schools (and the rest of the evil garbage that now passes for RE) they have alienated almost 100% of our youth. They have reduced Catholic baptism by fifty percent and Catholic marriages by a whopping two-thirds. Our liturgy in many parishes is more akin to a teddy bears' picnic organized by Ronald McDonald than anything one could describe with integrity as divine liturgy. We have lost the working classes and our intelligentsia. Our congregations (increasingly ageing and predominantly female) are served by elderly clergy unable for the most part to reproduce themselves. For every ten people who found conversion to the faith attractive prior to Vatican II, less than three do today. Even that is not the end of this miserable story, because many converts these days don't become Catholics. They are Roman Protestants let in by the Modernists who have infiltrated the RCIA programs. One high-profile "convert" recently stated that the Church's teaching on sodomy was wrong, its teaching on contraception plain silly, and then added (as if it actually still mattered) that she did not believe that any Pope was infallible, particularly the present one!

Sodomites have been ordained and promoted to high office in the Church, while the inevitable sexual scandals involving adolescent boys have become almost a daily occurrence. As one wag put it,

the faithful are relieved these days if their priest is found in bed with a woman. Priests in America are dying of AIDs at over four times the national average for the general population. Many of our once great orders are now rotten to the core. Of 26 novices who entered the Missouri Province of the Jesuit order in 1967 and 1968, only seven were eventually ordained priests. Of these seven, three have so far died of AIDs, and a fourth is an open sodomite now working as an artist in New York. The priest-artist deplors the fact, not that his fellow Jesuits engaged in buggery, but that they did not take "safe-sex" precautions. And if you think that England is any better, think again. On Sunday, June 10, 2001, Bishops Crowley and Rawsthorne, and Father Jim O'Keefe, the president of Ushaw seminary, travelled from the North of England to London, to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass, behind the back of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, to celebrate twenty-five year of homosexual love between Julian Filochowski, the director of CAFOD, and his lover, Martin Pendergast, ex-Carmelite priest and militant gay activist.

We in England are currently in terminal meltdown, losing over 3000 souls a month. Humanly speaking, we will not have a Church in this country worth speaking about in twenty-five years' time. Paradoxically, while our bishops bleat about the shortage of priests, they have more priest *pro-rata* now than 30 years ago, because they have been losing their laity faster than they have been losing their priests. Take Bishop David Konstant for example, in spite of losing priests, he had approximately one priest for every 251 Mass going Catholics when he took Office in 1985, Compared with one priest for every 164 Mass going Catholics in 2002.

It is truth that sets us free.

Our Lord said that it is truth that sets us free. The most insidious facet of the post-Conciliar meltdown of the Western Church is the unhinging from truth of most of our shepherds. Sadly, many of the laity have been sucked into this mindset like train carriages dragged behind an engine. One could give a hundred examples, but I shall concentrate on one because it is both recent and classic. In September 2002 the entire American hierarchy spent several days locked together discussing their paedophile crises. What's so odd about that, I hear you ask? What is odd about it is that they don't have a paedophile crisis! The victims of paedophiles are pre-adolescent children, both girls and boys, but over eighty percent (in some studies over ninety percent) of the victims of the current sexual scandals in the American Church are not pre-adolescent

children, they are adolescent males. The American church does not have, nor ever did have, a paedophile crisis, what it does have is a deep homosexual crisis! Only three or four of the 300 or so bishops present were prepared to address this truth; the rest preferred the easy lies of our contemporary secular liberal culture! One gnarled old reporter summed it up best, "Everyone could see plainly what needed to be done, except apparently the 300 men responsible for actually doing it!"

Do not the scriptures warn that the day will come when even the elect will be deceived?

The response of some faithful Catholics is very understandable. Imagine you are standing at a cliff edge on an apparently solid rock. Unexpectedly the rock starts to disintegrate and the next thing you know you are clinging to the cliff face. Very soon you are running out of strength and facing the very real prospect of plunging into the abyss. At this point a charismatic stranger dressed all in black appears at the cliff top and throws you the end of a plastic clothesline. Do you, "A" enquire into his motives for being there? "B" ask him to produce a laboratory report on the tensile strength of the line he has just thrown you? "C" close your eyes, whisper a prayer and grab it with both hands?

Orthodox Catholics who love the Church find themselves on what appears in human terms to be a sinking ship, led by officers who have spent the last thirty years punching holes below the water line, or more often than not, so as to keep their own hands squeaky clean, encouraging or turning a blind eye to others punching holes. Is it any wonder that when a *seemingly* seaworthy and well-ordered lifeboat comes alongside, such as the Neocatechumenate, people are prepared to abandon the ship to board the lifeboat in droves?

The skilfully maintained public masquerade of orthodoxy of the Neocatechumenate makes them attractive to faithful Catholics, who have grown sick and weary of the dissent and disobedience, even among the episcopacy, which has done so much damage to the post-Conciliar Church. Even the criticism of the Way from such sources drives the orthodox into their arms, being well aware that the sneers are coming from wolves dressed in sheep's clothing in our midst, they are tempted to a knee-jerk reaction along the lines that: "*If men such as these are against it, then I for one am for it!*"

Yet another blind alley

One day perhaps we shall have a litany begging the heavens to preserve us from post-Conciliar pseudo-

renewals. "Dear Lord from Cursillo - preserve us O Lord; from Marriage Encounter - preserve us O Lord; from RENEW - preserve us O Lord; from ALPHA - preserve us O Lord; from the Gnostic church of the Charismatics - preserve us O Lord; from false ecumenism - preserve us O Lord; from this seemingly endless post-Conciliar Modernist disintegration - make haste to save us O Lord." The Neocatechumenate are merely the latest blind alley. They are much better financed and more skilfully led than the rest, but that merely makes them the most dangerous so far. They will appear ostensibly an attractive option to some good trusting if gullible souls, yet they are just another post-Conciliar blind alley.

When the Lord's vineyard has been so devastated there can be no quick-fix. One has to roll up ones sleeves and start replanting, tending and rebuilding and be prepared to bear the cross of seemingly endless frustration. What has taken thirty years to destroy, may take a hundred to rebuild. One must therefore have the faith to sow seeds so that others may reap. One needs to be prepared to face patiently and charitably the active opposition of those who have neither the humility, nor grace or the wit

to face honestly the devastation their shallow fidgety minds have wrought upon us. One may legitimately take some encouragement from the fact that the faithless generation which brought this disaster upon us is now beginning to die out. We need to rediscover our traditions, and return to obedience, orthodoxy and holiness of life. We need to have the courage to stop licking the boots of the men in high places who have brought the Church in this country to its knees. We must be prepared to remove our children from so-called Catholic schools where there is no orthodox catecheses - poor and bad catechesis, such as ICONS, are worse than no catechesis. We need to stop financing bishops who encourage or turn a blind eye to dissent and disobedience. This may not win you friends in this world, indeed you may have to face a mild white martyrdom, but it is to this that the Lord is surely calling faithful Catholics. As Mother Theresa taught, "Christ does not ask us to be successful, merely faithful." If anything is to save what is left of the Church and parish life in this country, it is prayer, self-sacrifice and holy courage, not quick-fixes like leaping into sectarian lifeboats.

CONCLUSION

How has Kiko managed to con the Holy Father so comprehensively?

Kiko has managed to con the Holy Father by using a very simple sales technique used by all professional salesman, known in the jargon as "pressing hot buttons." What are John Paul II's hot buttons? That's easy: the gospel of life, evangelization and youth.

So whenever Kiko and his cohorts are in the presence of the Holy father they work these three hot buttons like professional salesman. Firstly, they continually stress in his presence their movement's opposition to abortion, artificial contraception and sterilization etc. - that's the gospel of life hot button pressed. Secondly, they reel off statistics about their rapid world-wide expansion - that's the evangelization hot button pressed. Finally they ensure that at any youth gathering, their youth are up early and at the front of the crowd waving Neocatechumenate banners - that's the youth hot button pressed. That's all there is to it really, all quite simple.

Kiko doesn't of course say to the Pope, "Oh by the way, Holy Father, behind your back we refer to you as a pagan because you offer sacrifices, the alleged sacrifice of the Mass, every day." Nor does

he say, "Oh by the way, Holy Father, I've completely rewritten the Church's liturgy to exclude all reference to sacrifice, redemption, atonement etc. Do you mind?" And he most certainly doesn't tell the Holy Father that his movement's apologists are trained to talk every week for sixteen weeks in parishes without once mentioning the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The Pope isn't a mind-reader. Like the rest of us, he sees what he sees, not what is deliberately concealed from him. Good people are by nature trusting and are therefore also by nature perhaps the last people to spot the sort of deep duplicity practiced by Kiko and his movement.

If you embrace the Way, you must logically accept that the Church for the last sixteen centuries has got most of her doctrines hopelessly wrong.

There are some logical conclusions from joining the Way which I doubt if many have thought through. You see, if you embrace the Way, you must logically accept that the Church for the last sixteen centuries has got most of her doctrines hopelessly wrong, including redemption, Our Lord's sacrifice on the cross, the sacrifice of the

Mass, individual confession, the Real Presence, the nature of man, sin, sanctifying grace, the nature and purpose of the Catholic priesthood etc. But if you accept that the Church was hopelessly wrong for so long on all these matters, you cannot possibly hold that the Church is infallible in matters of faith and morals. But if you do not believe the Church is infallible in matters of faith and morals, there is no logical compelling reason to remain a Catholic; for any other sect or indeed religion could be just as right as or even more right than the Church. Kiko of course, like his father in faith, Luther, falls back on scripture, or rather his private interpretation of scripture. But if the Church is not infallible in matters of faith and morals, how can we be sure that her teaching that the Scriptures are inspired and without error is true? Indeed, how do we know that the Church has even selected the right books to include in the New Testament, or not excluded ones that should have been included? The Neocatechumenate is consequently driven back, as ultimately must be all heretics, to personal feelings, e.g. "It has been so for me". But, "it has been so for me" can be claimed with equal truth and conviction by Buddhists, New Age gurus and indeed atheists. Once the subjective, "it has been so for me", becomes our yardstick for what is true, than every man becomes his own Pope, and one might as well pack up and go and worship trees.

"The Devil was always a liar"

I recall a moving scene in the film, *Escape from Sobibor*. A line of bedraggled Jews are queuing to enter the gas chambers, which they had been told were showers, when suddenly an elderly Jew stepped out of the line and bending down, scooped up a handful of dust. Then holding his hand up to the face of one of the Nazi officers, he allowed the dust to trickle slowly through his fingers and, as the last fragments slip away, said quietly and deliberately, "One day your lies will trickle through your fingers like so much dust."

I have not the slightest doubt that Kiko's empire, built on the dust of lies, one day will implode similarly. Kiko and Carmen have so far managed to con even Rome with their public masquerade of orthodoxy, and by diverting Rome's eyes away from their doctrines to their alleged fruits, a sleight of hand at which they have become masters. They publicly feign deep loyalty to the Pope, while denying behind his back the foundation doctrines of the Church he leads! I'll say one this for them; you

have to admire their brass! The pair of them mendaciously yet skilfully managed to keep secret even from the rank and file members of their movement their personal dissent from many, if not most, of the basic tenets of the Catholic faith. Yet there is absolutely nothing more certain in heaven or on earth than that one day their facade will crumble and their lies will trickle through their fingers like so much dust.

When that day comes, as come it will, I shall take no pleasure in saying, "I told you so," anymore than I took pleasure in saying "I told you so" after the *'l'Armée de Marie'* debacle, or indeed the current state of the English church. One can only weep and pray for the souls lost, confused and hurt by the horrible, indeed wicked, negligence of our post-Conciliar shepherds. Luther may well be doing somersaults in eternity over this Trojan Horse inserted by his spiritual children into the very heart of the Church, but this is one Catholic who intends to keep his feet firmly planted on the rock of the Catechism of the Catholic Church .

Postscript

At the time of writing, Kiko and Carmen are in the process of negotiating a new constitution with Rome as part of the approval process for their movement. I am told (I am not able to confirm that this is from a reliable source) that this new constitution will be cross referenced with the Catechism of the Catholic Church . Two very serious questions arise that need to be answered:

1. Will this new constitution leave Kiko and Carmen the wiggle room they need to continue to advance their heresies, or will it be watertight?
2. And, if it is watertight, does this mean that Kiko and Carmen have recanted their many manifest serious heresies and returned to the faith of the Church, or have they simply concealed them in order to obtain the official approval they so desire for the advancement of their movement?

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