

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

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TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by S. Casarotto 07/19/09

PEER PRESSURE

In the Old Testament we read the story of the old man Eleazar (2 Mac. 6, 18). He was a high priest of the Lord who in time of persecution refused to give way to peer pressure and break the Jewish law by eating pork. Despite the many pleas of his friends urging him to capitulate to the new ways, he stood his ground. He was not prepared, he said, "to play a part" simply to suit the pressures of the time. Giving in, he also said, might well suit man's fickle and changing laws but "God's almighty hand, living or dead", he said, as he was led to his death, albeit as a ripe old man of 90, "I may not escape". He realized that his actions would not only be an act of disobedience to God, but also a bad example to young people.

In the 15th century, Sir Thomas More, leading layman and virulent opponent of the developing Reformation, and John Fisher, made a Cardinal a month before he died (the only Bishop in all the land to stand against King Henry VIII) were both continually pressured to give in to what others around them saw as something obviously not worth dying for. All around them signed - a sad, but not unfamiliar, indictment of the power of peer pressure. But neither More nor Fisher, like Eleazar before them, were prepared to "play a part".

Peer pressure is very powerful, especially with young people who are searching for their identity and want to please their friends and idols. At the same time, adults very often forget to realize that young people learn more with their eyes than with their ears. The pressure of their peers is often compounded by the adults' pressure of consumerism, hedonism and sexual permissiveness.

UNITY and ORTHODOXY - Pope Benedict XVI has merged the *Ecclesia Dei Commission* into the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In the words of the Pope this decision was made out of charity and hope, especially toward the Society of St. Pius X founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefevre which is still separated from the Roman Catholic Church. This decision goes to the fundamental issues Lefevre struggled with: orthodoxy and collegiality. There are scores of traditionalist and liberal groups floating on different orbits of the ecclesiastic life. Hopefully, they will accept the pope's decision and its canonical consequences. Let us remember that Faith comes through the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and lives with the Church. "Tradition" was entrusted to the Magisterium of the Church and goes beyond and above any and all linguistic, liturgical and theological traditions. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 83). Let us pray for the Holy Father and for unity in the Church.

"One does not enter into the truth if not through charity." (St. Augustine)