

What Has Happened to Mother Angelica After Defending Fatima?

Having been silenced by the Vatican since 1960, the year the Third Secret of Fatima was to be revealed to the Church and the world, Sister Lucia of Fatima went to her eternal reward on February 13, 2005. On April 2, 2005 the long reign of John Paul II ended with his own death, and Catholics now pray for the repose of his soul.

But the crisis in the Church rages on — just as predicted in the Third Secret. Millions of Catholics remain unconvinced that the Vatican's disclosure of the obscure vision of a "bishop dressed in white" being executed outside a half-ruined city is all there ever was to the Secret that had been kept under lock and key in the Vatican for more than forty years.

Speaking for members of the faithful all over the world, Mother Angelica, the feisty and tradition-minded foundress of the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), made the following declaration on her live television show of May 16,

2001:

"As for the Secret, well I happen to be one of those individuals who thinks we didn't get the whole thing. I told ya! I mean, you have the right to your own opinion, don't you, Father? There, you know, that's my opinion. *Because I think it's scary ...*"

Some seven months later, following the first of two strokes (and a series of previously undetected mini-strokes), Mother Angelica left the airwaves as EWTN's live television host. As noted in a biography of Mother Angelica by EWTN personality Raymond Arroyo, "By the end of 2001, Mother Angelica's detachment from EWTN was complete."¹ Mother's role at EWTN is now reduced to leading the Rosary in short pre-recorded segments and the broadcast of some of her old television shows — censored for "theological correctness" by EWTN's current management, which, as we shall see, has become decidedly Modernist in its orientation.²

One might say that Mother

Angelica has been “Sister Lucy-ized”—but not on account of the strokes. While EWTN says the strokes have rendered Mother Angelica unable to appear on television, in truth she had already been driven from her position of control over the network she founded by an episcopal power play orchestrated with the assistance of a Vatican congregation.

Mother Angelica vs. Cardinal Mahoney

It all began in November 1997 with Mother’s unforgettable televised denunciation of the infamous Cardinal Mahony, that celebrity prelate who is the very embodiment of post-conciliar Modernism and decay in the Church. Mother rightly denounced Mahony’s “pastoral letter” on the Holy Eucharist as a Modernist obfuscation of the true doctrine of the Mass. Under pressure from Mahony’s friends in the Vatican apparatus, Mother made an on-the-air apology; but the “apology” was even more defiant than the original commentary. For nearly an hour Mother “served up a point-by-point critique of the pastoral letter,”³ demonstrating that Mahony had slighted and thus undermined the doctrine of transubstantiation.

An infuriated Mahony filed a canonical complaint in Rome. Arroyo quotes one elderly curial Cardinal as admitting that “Mother Angelica has the guts to tell him [Mahony] what we do not.”⁴ Mahony’s canonical complaint ultimately went nowhere, but he had already begun to agitate the Vatican apparatus to take action against Mother. Arroyo quotes Mahony’s director of media relations as stating “The Cardinal wants the Holy See to do something about Mother Angelica’s whole attitude that she is not responsible to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops or to any of the individual bishops.”⁵

Bishop Foley vs. Mother Angelica

Then Mother Angelica tangled with another liberal prelate, Bishop David Foley, the ordinary of her diocese in Alabama. Foley had no real authority over Mother’s apostolate, the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration. Nevertheless, he insisted that in the new Shrine to the Blessed Sacrament Mother was building in Hanceville, Alabama, no Masses were to be said in the traditional “ad orientem”⁶ manner — that is, facing the altar and God in an eastward di-

rection, rather than facing the people.⁷ When Mother refused to knuckle under to this illegal demand, in October 1999 Foley issued a preposterous decree stating that Mass facing the altar — an unbroken tradition of the Church from her earliest days — was an “illicit innovation or sacrilege” and that anyone “guilty” of this “sacrilege” would be subject to “suspension or removal of faculties.” All Masses in his diocese, Foley declared, would “henceforth be celebrated at a freestanding altar and... the priest would face the people.”⁸

In a courageous act of resistance to this abuse of power, Mother Angelica boycotted the dedication of the new Shrine in December 1999, presided over by none other than Foley himself, who celebrated Mass facing the people. Arroyo reports that a clearly humiliated Foley called Mother to the podium to say a few words, but “in silent protest” she remained with her nuns in the cloistered area behind the altar, refusing to serve as Foley’s prop.⁹

Foley and Vatican Bureaucrats Against Mother Angelica

Clearly determined to get revenge, Foley went to the Vatican as the representative

of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to demand action against Mother Angelica (no doubt with Mahony’s blessing). Foley, with the advice of Cardinal Medina, head of the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, promulgated “norms” that banned any televised Mass facing East (i.e. the altar) in his diocese and requiring Mass facing the people. EWTN complied with these “norms,” even though they were as preposterous and illegal as Foley’s earlier decree, for Foley had no authority to ban the Church’s immemorial practice, on television or otherwise.

But the matter did not end there. Foley also induced the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to send an Apostolic Visitor, Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez of San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Alabama to investigate the entire EWTN operation.¹⁰ It quickly became apparent that the aim of the visitation (which took place in February-March 2000) was to establish that Mother Angelica’s order, the Poor Clares, owned EWTN’s assets, including the new Shrine, and not EWTN’s civil

corporation board of directors, of which Mother was CEO with full veto power over the board's decisions. If it could be established that Mother's order owned the assets, then the whole EWTN enterprise could be subjected to ecclesiastical control, including the possible appointment of a "progressive" replacement for Mother Angelica herself.

In desperation, Mother made a prudential decision that in retrospect was a huge mistake —

Fearing that Archbishop Gonzalez's report to the Vatican would recommend an ecclesiastical takeover of her apostolate, Mother surrendered all control over EWTN to the lay people who run it today. At an emergency board meeting in March of 2000, she resigned as CEO of EWTN, relinquishing her veto power, and with it her control over EWTN's affairs. At the same meeting EWTN's board amended the corporate bylaws to insure lay control and preclude any control in the future by a bishop, priest or religious.¹¹ Thus, instead of continuing her direct resistance to liberal prelates, Mother Angelica thought she could defeat them by a strategic retreat.

One reviewer of Arroyo's

biography opines that "by resigning, Mother Angelica had defeated her enemies within the Church and entrusted her network to lay people who shared her orthodox views. ..." As we will see, however, Mother's retreat was actually a complete rout. For it was precisely Mother's "enemies within the Church" who had gained the victory by driving her from her position of control over EWTN, leaving the network entirely in the hands of lay people, many of them ex-Protestants, who did not have her traditional pre-Vatican II spiritual formation and old-fashioned Catholic militancy. The nun Arroyo calls "the undisputed matriarch of Catholic communications"¹² had been neutralized.

Mother is Completely Ousted by 2001

Mother would hang on as EWTN's live television host until December 2001, but the process by which EWTN would be fatally compromised in its mission of presenting the integral Catholic Faith was already in motion. With Mother Angelica's departure as the network's signature personality by the end of 2001, the original vision of the network as a counter-Modernist force

for a Catholic restoration was quickly lost and has never been recovered. Mother's vision has been replaced by an "ecumenical," watered-down blandness, delivered largely by ex-Protestant ministers, combined with lame attempts at "cool" Catholicism with a heavy emphasis on rock music.¹³

The new and "slicker" EWTN appears to be in large part the work of its vice president for production, Doug Keck, who had for twenty years headed operations at a cable TV conglomerate whose programming included The Playboy Channel. It was Keck who, as Arroyo writes, was responsible for "transforming the on-air look and content of the network." And it was Keck who offered the opinion that "proved to be decisive" in Mother's decision to turn over control of the network to Keck and the other lay board members: "Mother, I think you're right. I think you need to step back to protect the network," said Keck at the fateful board meeting.¹⁴ And so she did.

Less than six years later, EWTN's programming now exhibits the same emasculation and liberalization of the Church militant that we see

everywhere today in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.

This discussion presumes, for the sake of charity, that those responsible for EWTN's Modernist content do not subjectively intend to depart from the Faith. They may even think in their distorted view of the situation — a view which leads them to condemn faithful Roman Catholics as "extreme traditionalists" — that they are actually defending the Faith. Some may even possess that state of mind Our Lord warned His disciples would be that of the Pharisees: "Yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God." (John 16:2) **FC**

EWTN: A Network Gone Wrong is a great book. It is a case study of how the insidious heresy of Modernism spreads its poison. This book explains the current crisis in the Church and how Modernism effects the loss of an incalculable number of souls to hell for all eternity.

This extract is taken from the Foreword of the book: *EWTN: A Network Gone Wrong*. This Foreword is entitled "Overview: The Banishment of Mother Angelica."

Footnotes: [1] Raymond Arroyo, *Mother Angelica: The Remarkable Story*


of a Nun, Her Nerve and a Network of Miracles, (NY: Doubleday, 2005) page 317 (hereafter “*Mother Angelica*”). [2] The heresy of Modernism, famously condemned by Pope St. Pius X in his monumental encyclical *Pascendi (On the Doctrines of the Modernists)*. [3] *Mother Angelica*, page 262. [4] *Ibid.*, page 264. [5] *Ibid.*, page 267. [6] Latin for “toward the East.” [7] Contrary to popular perception, no legislation from Rome has ever prohibited Mass facing the altar. Rather, the option of Mass facing the people has been introduced, with the “option” becoming only a de facto (not legal) norm. [8] *Mother Angelica*, pages 287-288. [9] *Ibid.*, page 292. [10] The entire

affair is recounted in great detail in *Mother Angelica*, Ch. 18, pages 298ff. [11] *Ibid.*, pages 307-309. [12] *Mother Angelica*, page 215. [13] None of this is to suggest that *Mother Angelica* represented utter perfection in her presentation of traditional Roman Catholicism. Nevertheless, *Mother Angelica* represented the network’s best hope for becoming a vehicle of Catholic restoration. Now with her removal from any position of control over EWTN there was nothing to restrain the liberalizing tendency that has subverted its mission. [14] *Mother Angelica*, pages 303-304.

**Reflections on the
Silencing of Sister Lucia**
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her life.

Her life of prayer, renunciation, silence, obedience and charity reflected the Immaculate Heart and drew others to follow her example. May we draw from the treasury of Lucia’s life so that we ourselves may also be echoes of Our Lady’s love for each of us.

The life of Sister Lucia — may it serve as a faithful reminder of what it means to love the Immaculate Heart of Mary. 

The above essay is taken from the introduction to the book, *Sister Lucia: Apostle of Mary’s Immaculate Heart* by Mark Fel-

lows.

Footnotes: [1] See, for example, Antonio Socci’s book, *Il Quarto Segreto di Fatima [The Fourth Secret of Fatima]* published November 2006; Antonio Socci’s reply of May 12, 2007 to Cardinal Bertone’s book, “Dear Cardinal Bertone — who between you and me — is Deliberately Lying?” (see www.fatima.org/news/newsviews/052907socci.asp), also see Christopher Ferrara’s (2008) book, *The Secret Still Hidden*. [2] See, for example, “*Mother Angelica Live*” (TV Broadcast of May 16, 2001); Father Luigi Bianchi (October 26, 2001, *Inside the Vatican news service*), *The Fatima Crusader*, Issue 64 (July 2000). [3] See Christopher Ferrara’s book, *The Secret Still Hidden*, on the obvious and many self-contradictions of Cardinal Bertone regarding what he says about the Fatima Message and Sister Lucia. [4] Regarding the few words attributed to Sister Lucia by Cardinal Bertone, Antonio Socci concludes that Bertone’s report of Lucia’s words are “such as to not have objective credibility”. See Christopher Ferrara’s *The Secret Still Hidden*, “*A Disastrous Interview.*”