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Letter to the Bishop

Arpád Fasang

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Editor's Note: Vol. 5, No. 6, was devoted in its entirety to the documentation of developments in the Lutheran Church of Hungary surrounding the "Doka Case." One document was missing, namely the first letter written to Bishop Zoltán Káldy requesting the rehabilitation of the late Bishop Lajos Ordass written by a Lutheran layman, Mr. Arpad Fasang. This letter did not reach us until after the issue was published. In order to complete the documentation, we are reproducing the English translation of this letter. Should additional documentation or responses reach us, we shall publish them as they arrive.

Paul Mojzes

To
D. Zoltán Káldy
Bishop of Southern District
Senior Bishop of the
Lutheran Church of Hungary

Budapest, December 25, 1983

Dear Bishop,

In the hope that my proposal will
- please God.
- strengthen the cohesion of the Lutheran Church of Hungary.
- positively influence the atmosphere of the General Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Budapest.
- positively influence the relationship between our Church and State.

I respectfully request you and through you all responsible officials of our Church rehabilitate Lajos Ordass.

What I recommend is not a legal, but an ethical and theological rehabilitation. Enough time has passed since Lajos Ordass' activities as bishop and since his death that we can now objectively, on the basis of facts and relevant documents establish that Lajos Ordass was not a reactionary, one who dreamt back the pre-war situation, or who later on became the "agent" of Western imperialism (among other things he was even accused of that). The opposite is true. He never betrayed his German origin; nevertheless he was faithful to his Hungarian country till his death and he sacrificed all his life to the cause of the Church of Christ and to the improvement of the conditions of the life of the Hungarian people. The history of anti-fascist struggles within our Church has been enriched by what he did against the diffusion of
Nazi ideas in Hungary and particularly in the Hungarian Church (here I refer to his writings, sermons, and other statements) and what he did on behalf of those who were persecuted on the ground of their ethnic origins or political beliefs.

Already in 1936 Lajos Ordass, the theologian wrote: "Our Church has no external means, means of power. We are not designated to rule, but to serve" (Keresztyén Igazság, 1936, p.245). In the middle of the War, he preached: "God ordered not only individuals, but also nations to serve. The commandment given to the nations is this: serve! and God, the Almighty, the only source of power, breaks the arrogance of power! God needs and will always need nations which are ready to serve. God needs not only large nations, but small ones too. The task of these small nations is not only to be subservient to larger nations, but to serve God. It is not by accident that God led us here. God sets tasks for us. If we are ready to fulfill these tasks, then our future is secure since no doubt God will have tasks for us in the future as well." (excerpts from the sermon delivered in the Parish in Kelenföld, Budapest, on December 31, 1943).

On these grounds we can state that Lajos Ordass was one of the earliest representatives of the most progressive theological trends. In the terminology now frequently used in the Lutheran Church of Hungary, Lajos Ordass is one of the pioneers and courageous advocates of "theology of Diaconia."

During his lifetime, Lajos Ordass has been subjected to numerous unjustified attacks. You, Mr. Bishop, I assume, are familiar with them, therefore I will not repeat them here. Self-respect dictates that we should give due acknowledgement to the contributions of this faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

With my letter I want to promote forgiveness and cooperation. The article you wrote yesterday in the newspaper Magyar Nemzet* encouraged me to write this letter - after long hesitation. I remember particularly vividly the following section of your Magyar Nemzet article which appeared in the Christmas Day issue of this newspaper, under the title "For life, peace and justice": "The Churches are increasingly emphasizing that their work for peace and justice ought to be guided by "ingenious love." We believe that love is ingenious, it finds solutions even there where no solution seems to be possible."

I request you, Mr. Bishop, to apply this principle in the case of the rehabilitation of Lajos Ordass, since after all ingenious love is a universally applicable principle. The idea of ingenious love obliges us to work for the causes of forgiveness and cooperation, obliges us to restore the honor of a fellow human being who has suffered so much and who has been humiliated so often.

In the anticipation of a positive response to my letter, I wish you a Happy New Year.

Sincerely yours,

Arpád Fasang, Jr.,
Pianist soloist of the Hungarian Philharmonic
Elder of the Lutheran Parish at Budapest
- Deák-tér