

ARCHBISHOP VIGANÒ'S EXCOMMUNICATION

On March 4th, 1979, some five months after his election, Pope John Paul II issued his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*. It was expressed in the subjectivist argot of *phenomenology*, one of the raft of modern philosophies the Catholic Church had condemned 29 years prior.¹ The new Pope referred constantly there to 'the Church' while never once applying the adjective 'Catholic'. Towards the end of the encyclical he named it 'the Church of the new Advent'.² *Redemptor Hominis* has been characterised as programmatic, setting out the understanding of the Church reflected in what the bishops of the Second Vatican Council had taught. But in this encyclical the Pope confirmed that Vatican II had done something much more radical.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World', the Council's bishops had made this claim:

"According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown." [n. 12]

This inverted the teaching of the Catholic Church, elevating man and degrading God and His glory. In n. 13 of *Redemptor Hominis* Pope John Paul invoked a further sentence of the document which confirmed the Council's anthropocentric focus:

"[M]an is the only creature that God has willed for itself."³

Here he confirmed the Council's reduction of the Christian ideal to humanism.⁴

The Pope went on to invoke what the Council's bishops had essayed in their 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church', *Lumen Gentium*:

"The Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind."⁵

By a subtle shift they inferred there that the Church exists to serve humanity. But the Catholic Church is not a means, it is an end; the only entity in which the unity of mankind is achieved. No man can be saved unless he enters it.⁶ Again the Council inverted the Church's teaching.

The Pope invoked a third issue where the Council had inverted Church teaching.⁷

"[T]he Church in our time attaches great importance to all that is stated by the Second Vatican Council in its 'Declaration on Religious Freedom'... We perceive intimately that the truth

¹ Pius XII, *Humani Generis* (12.08.1950) n. 32 and see nn. 29 – 31 & 33, 34.

² *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4th, 1979) n. 20. In his study of the encyclical, *The Program of Pope John Paul II* (reproduced in Norbert L. Behrendt, *A Study of the Encyclical Redemptor Hominis*, January 1980, available at <http://www.the-pope.com/prog-jp2.html>) Dr Wigand Siebel interprets the Pope's 'new Advent' as referring to the flowering of the world-wide ecumenical movement, noting in support of this contention that at the end of *Redemptor Hominis* he ceases to speak of 'a new Advent of the Church' and speaks instead of *humanity's* new Advent (emphasis added). Cf. *The Program of Pope John Paul II*, Part I, 'The New Advent'.

³ *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 24

⁴ Christian ideals, says Fr Álvaro Calderón, turn into humanism when they are unhinged. "The dignity of man must be conjoined to four fundamental Catholic doctrines: the elevation to a supernatural end, the fall to original sin, the redemption through the sacrifice of Christ and the necessity of the Church..." Álvaro Calderón, *Prometheus: the Religion of Man*, Angelus Press, 2021, pp. 30-31

⁵ *Lumen Gentium* n. 1; *Redemptor Hominis* n. 7

⁶ Siebel, *The Program of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., Part II, 'A New Unity'.

⁷ In *Quanta Cura* (December 8th, 1864) Pius IX condemned this proposition: *Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, led by the light of reason, he thinks to be the true religion*. The condemnation was confirmed by Leo XIII in *Libertas Praestantissimum* (June 20th, 1888). Cf. https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/dignitatis_humanae_1.pdf & Siebel, *The Program of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., Part II, 'A New Freedom'.

revealed to us by God imposes on us an obligation. We have, in particular, a great sense of responsibility for this truth. By Christ's institution the church is its guardian and teacher, having been endowed with a unique assistance of the Holy Spirit in order to guard and teach it in its most exact integrity." [*Redemptor Hominis* n. 12.2]

In the course of doing so he exposed a *fourth* departure from Church teaching for he treats 'religious freedom' as *something which God had revealed* through the Second Vatican Council! Behind this solecism was an appeal to the terms of *Dei Verbum* n. 8, the Council's 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation' which asserted that sacred tradition is *something which progresses*. We return to this provision of *Dei Verbum* below.

Hence in four areas of the Catholic Church's teaching⁸ Pope John Paul proclaimed doctrine which, relying on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, abandoned orthodoxy in favour of heterodoxy. These inversions of Catholic belief contradict the contention that the Council was an ecumenical, or general, council of the Catholic Church. It is impossible that such a council would engage in *any* departure from Catholic principle, let alone those indicated. While they do not demonstrate it, for demonstration comes only through a study of its causes,⁹ they prove Vatican II's imposture. They confirm, moreover, that the effect of the Council, under the guise of reforming the Catholic Church, was to create a new and heterodox entity, an entity which it is appropriate to name 'the Church of Vatican II'.

With twenty/twenty hindsight something else becomes obvious: Paul VI's proclamation ten years earlier of a new mode of celebrating Mass, departing radically from that which the Catholic Church had celebrated for 1,500 years, its form codified in 1570 by Pope Pius V, was intended to entrench this *ersatz* Church in existence.

Dramatic effects flowed from these departures. Bishops, priests and religious were rendered members at once of *two different* institutions, the one of God the other of man. And since "no man can serve two masters", it was inevitable that bishops, priests and religious would come to hate the one and love the other, to be devoted to one and despise the other. (*Matthew* 6: 24) The confusion extended to the Catholic faithful, the majority of whom were led to believe that they were bound by the Council, much of whose content could be interpreted as orthodox, as that they were bound to attend Mass according to the new rite.

This majority was vigorous, too, in defending the Council and that novel celebration of Mass against those who argued that a revolution had taken place. Thus, the bishops of Vatican II, many of them negligent, many others—perhaps most—insouciant, and some few positively malevolent in heretical intent, drove a wedge into the household of the faith. The conflict between these two schools has marked the history of the Catholic Church ever since. It was entirely appropriate, then, for Archbishop Viganò in his statement of June 28th 2024 responding to a charge of schism levelled at him by the Dicastery for the *Doctrine of the Faith*, to cite Archbishop Lefebvre's characterisation of the subversive use of authority in the Church after the Council as "the masterstroke of Satan" —

⁸ At least!

⁹ Which we have done here - https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/dignitatis_humanae_2.pdf, and here https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/vatican_ii_www.pdf

“[he] who knew how to make use of the natural respect and filial love of Catholics for the sacred authority of the pastors to induce them to put obedience before the truth...”¹⁰

There were other consequences. While appearing to hold but the one divine office that accords with their title, each bishop assumed another - and distinct - office, that of a superior of ‘the Church of Vatican II’.¹¹ Inevitably, this came to conflict with his episcopal authority and to compromise it, one of the effects of which was to render him effete. Under the Council’s baleful influence the Church’s bishops submitted themselves to the secular protocols of democracy and ceased to conduct themselves like shepherds. Twenty years ago American commentator, George Weigel, summarised the effects:

“When shepherds become flocks, shepherds become sheep, and something in the nature of a shepherd is gravely damaged.”¹²

Time has only shown that he grossly understated the reality.

The confusion of membership of the two conflicting Churches and confusion of the powers proper to each extended to the popes. The power of excommunication belongs to a bishop in virtue of his divine office. *A fortiori* the power belongs to the pope since he is successor of St Peter and as Christ’s Vicar has the welfare of the entirety of Christ’s Church as his concern. But, since it is only a *secular* institution, when a pope purports to exercise the power of excommunication as superior of ‘the Church of Vatican II’ his act is ineffectual.

The Apostolic Constitution Ecclesia Dei

This was the issue in the dispute over Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre’s obduracy in adhering to the Mass canonised by Pius V and his insistence that the priesthood properly formed to offer that Mass must be maintained. The dispute came to a head when the Vatican under Pope John Paul refused to allow his reasonable request to consecrate bishops for no other purpose than to ordain priests who would celebrate Mass in proper form. It is exemplified in the apostolic letter *Ecclesia Dei* (July 2nd, 1988) issued by the Pope after the Archbishop’s consecration, without a papal mandate, of four priests as bishops on June 30th, 1988.

In that document the Pope charged the Archbishop with a schismatic act. He wrote:

“[t]he *root* of this schismatic act can be discerned in an incomplete and contradictory notion of Tradition. Incomplete, because it does not take sufficiently into account the *living* character of Tradition.”

In support of this claim he cited Vatican II’s ‘Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation’, *Dei Verbum* n. 8:

“The Tradition that comes from the apostles progresses in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth.”

But this paragraph misstates the teaching of the Catholic Church comprehensively.

¹⁰ Cf. https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/at-last-a-bishop-condemns-vatican-ii.pdf

¹¹ It might be put colloquially that since Vatican II every bishop has worn two hats, a divine one and a secular one.

¹² *The Courage to be Catholic*, New York 2002, p. 214

Apostolic tradition, which concluded with the death of the last Apostle, St John, was defined by the (First) *Vatican Council* (quoting the *Council of Trent ipsissimis verbis*) in *Dei Filius*, the Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith, as that which is contained—

“in the written books and in the unwritten traditions which have been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself; or [which] through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit have been handed down by the Apostles themselves and have thus come to us.” [Dz. 1787]

To this, addressing the interaction between faith and reason, the *Vatican Council* added—

“For, the doctrine of faith which God revealed has not been handed down as a philosophic invention to the human mind to be perfected, but has been entrusted as a divine deposit... to be faithfully guarded and infallibly interpreted. Hence, also, that understanding of its sacred dogmas must be perpetually retained which Holy Mother Church has once declared; and there must never be recession from that meaning under the specious name of a deeper understanding ‘Therefore... let the understanding, the knowledge, and wisdom of individuals as of all, of one as of the whole Church, grow and progress strongly with the passage of the ages and the centuries; but in its own genus alone, namely in the same teaching, with the same sense and same understanding’.” (*eodem sensu eademque sententia* - quoting St Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*, 23, 3) [Dz. 1800]

Accordingly, the understanding of Pope John Paul II expressed in *Ecclesia Dei* was not the understanding of the Catholic Church. It is false to assert that apostolic tradition *progresses* in the Church, false to assert it is something *living*. The claim in *Dei Verbum* reflects the errors of modernism and is heretical, and the understanding of Pope John Paul II expressed in *Ecclesia Dei* was that of the secular entity, ‘the Church of Vatican II’.

If it be objected that the Pope was simply declaring the penalty envisaged by canon 1382 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, a *latae sententiae* excommunication for consecrating a bishop without a pontifical mandate, the answer is that the Archbishop and those involved with him were excused by the law because they acted for the welfare of the faithful in the emergency precipitated by the blindness of Pope and Curia over the Council’s illegitimacy and the confusion of ‘the Church’ to which it had given birth with the Catholic Church.¹³

Pope John Paul went on, in n. 5 of *Ecclesia Dei*, to say this:

“[T]he extent and depth of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council call for a renewed commitment to deeper study in order to reveal clearly the Council's continuity with tradition, especially in points of doctrine which, perhaps because they are new, have not yet been well understood by some sections of the Church.”

But, in *Pastor Aeternus*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, July 18, 1870, the *Vatican Council* defined as dogma this proposition:

“The Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter that by His revelation they might disclose new doctrine, but that by His help they might guard sacredly the revelation transmitted through the Apostles and the deposit of faith, and might faithfully set it forth.” [Dz. 1836]

Accordingly, not only was this statement erroneous in asserting as true things which were false namely, (i) that there may be new points of Church doctrine, and (ii) that the Second

¹³ The first principle of canon law is *salus fidelium suprema lex*, otherwise *salus animarum suprema lex*. Cf. 1983 *CIC* canon 1752

Vatican Council was continuous with (and therefore consistent with) apostolic tradition, but it was in breach of Catholic teaching as to the limits of the competence of the papal office.

Hence, despite the claim that in *Ecclesia Dei* he acted as Vicar of Christ when he excommunicated the Archbishop, his fellow consecrator Bishop Antonio de Castro Mayer, and the consecrated bishops, Pope John Paul was acting as head of ‘the Church of Vatican II’, an entity lacking divine power and quite incapable of providing him with such power.¹⁴

Which brings us to Pope Francis’s recent action.

The Excommunication of Archbishop Viganò

The excommunication of Archbishop Viganò was purportedly carried out by the Dicastery for the *Doctrine of the Faith* on July 5th, 2024. No document setting out the justification for the action has been published at this point. News sources quote the following as the Dicastery’s reasons, which one may assume to be those of the Pope:

“[Archbishop Viganò’s] public statements manifesting his refusal to recognize and submit to the Supreme Pontiff, his rejection of communion with the members of the Church subject to him, and of the legitimacy and magisterial authority of the Second Vatican Council.”

These reasons reduce to four:

1. An act or acts involving a refusal to recognise the Supreme Pontiff;
2. An act or acts involving a refusal to submit to the Supreme Pontiff;
3. An act or acts involving rejection of communion with the members of the Church subject to the Supreme Pontiff;
4. An act or acts involving rejection of the legitimacy and magisterial authority of the Second Vatican Council.

We will deal with them in reverse order.

As to 4

It may be said straightway that this could be no ground for a charge of schism. If anything, the very contrary is the case. The one who insists that Council is consistent with the Church’s teaching is on a path of separation from the Catholic Church. The bishops of the Dicastery and the Pope, are not, despite the language employed, conducting themselves here as bishops of the Catholic Church but as functionaries of ‘the Church of Vatican II’.

As to 3

The issue turns on ‘the Church’ to which the charge refers. We do not think, with Archbishop Viganò, that the ‘Church of Vatican II’ has *replaced* the Catholic Church but that—at least since the publication of *Redemptor Hominis*, and probably from as early as December 1965—it has *co-existed with* the Catholic Church, sharing her offices, emoluments and officeholders and, like the tares in the parable, choking the Church’s salvific work. The Archbishop insists that he is in communion with the Catholic Church and its members, and his detailed reasonings bear out that claim. The Pope and his advisers *confuse* the Catholic Church with ‘the Church of Vatican II’—they run the two together—which results in uncertainty, i.e., doubt, and it is a principle of canon law that in a case of doubt a law does not oblige [1983 *CIC* canon 14].

¹⁴ There are yet other problems with the content of *Ecclesia Dei* which need not concern us here. Cf. the author’s *The Status of the Novus Ordo* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/status-novus-ordo.pdf

Accordingly, this ground too is baseless and the excommunication for alleged schism is ineffectual. Again, the bishops of the Dicastery and the Pope are not acting here as bishops of the Catholic Church but as functionaries of 'the Church of Vatican II'.

As to 2

The Archbishop refuses to submit to the Supreme Pontiff. Is he entitled to do so? The answer depends on what the Pope commands. The Archbishop cites the Pope's systematic failures to adhere to Catholic principle and Catholic teaching as his grounds. He may be justified in his refusal in respect of individual directions since no one is bound to obey the Pope when he departs from natural or Catholic principle. (St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 104, a. 5, & ad 2)

Is he entitled to refuse to submit to him generally? It is worth studying what Archbishop Viganò has to say as he anticipated the action to be taken by against him.

"We find ourselves in the surreal situation in which a hierarchy calls itself Catholic and therefore demands obedience from the ecclesial body while at the same time professing doctrines that, before the council, the Church had condemned; and at the same time condemning doctrines as heretical that up until then had been taught by all the popes.

"This happens when the absolute is removed from the truth and relativised by adapting it to the spirit of the world. How would the pontiffs of recent centuries have acted today? Would they judge me guilty of schism, or would they rather condemn the one who claims to be their successor? Together with me, the modernist Sanhedrin judges and condemns all Catholic popes, because the faith that they defended is mine; and the errors that Bergoglio defends are those that they, without exception, condemned. The words of the Jesuit martyr Edmund Campion in response to the verdict finding him guilty of treason in 1581 apply to the present Vatican no less than they did then to the defender of the Faith: *In condemning us, you condemn all your own ancestors.*

"I ask myself, then: what continuity can be given between two realities that oppose and contradict each other? Between Bergoglio's *conciliar and synodal church* and the one 'blocked by counter-reformation fear' from which he ostentatiously distances himself? And from what 'church' would I be in a state of schism if the one that claims to be Catholic differs from the true Church precisely in its preaching of what She condemned and in its condemnation of what She preached?

"The adepts of the 'conciliar church' will reply that this is due to the evolution of the ecclesial body in a 'necessary renewal'; while the Catholic Magisterium teaches us that the truth is immutable and that the doctrine of the evolution of dogmas is heretical. Two churches, certainly: each with its own doctrines and liturgies and saints; but whereas for the Catholic believer the Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, for Bergoglio the Church is conciliar, ecumenical, synodal, inclusive, immigration-ist, eco-sustainable, and gay-friendly..."¹⁵

The spirit of the world sought to enter Christ's Church through the action of the Council's bishops aided and abetted by the Conciliar Popes. The imposture was maintained by John Paul II and Benedict XVI who insisted, falsely, that the Council was in harmony with the Church's tradition. If Pope Francis has done anything he has, with his explicit departures from Catholic and natural moral principle, exposed the falsity of their claims.

¹⁵ https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/archbishop-vigano-i-accuse-bergoglio-of-heresy-and-schism/?utm_source=featured-news&utm_campaign=catholic A copy appears in the appendix to this paper: https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/at-last-a-bishop-condemns-vatican-ii.pdf

Given the confusion of the two Churches one might reasonably take the view that a member of the faithful such as the Archbishop can no longer submit generally to a pope who refuses generally to adhere to, let alone proclaim, natural or Catholic principle. The authority of St Thomas cited above suffices. If there is any doubt, that doubt is to be interpreted in the Archbishop's favour.

As to 1

The Archbishop refuses to recognise Pope Francis as the Supreme Pontiff. Is he entitled to do so? This charge depends not on the putative factual situation, but the law. *In fact* Pope Francis may have ceased to be Pope. Archbishop Viganò points to circumstances surrounding Jorge Bergoglio's behaviour prior to his election in support of his claim that he could never have been Pope, though his reliance on the bull *Cum Apostolatis Officio* of Paul IV as establishing that he could not have been validly elected is, with respect, ineffectual.¹⁶

In 2020 Pope Francis allowed it to be published in the *Annuario Pontificio* that the title 'Vicar of Christ' is but an historical title,¹⁷ the necessary implication of this act being that he no longer regarded himself as *Vicar of Christ*.¹⁸ What else is the Pope, if not the Vicar of Christ? (It is worth studying what Archbishop Viganò has to say in his statement, under the heading 'The *deminutio* of the Synodal Papacy', about the events, beginning with conduct of Paul VI, that foreshadowed this metastasis.)

Whatever may be the factual situation, *in law* Jorge Mario Bergoglio remains Pope (and every priest is bound to include his name in the Canon of the Mass) until the Church determines otherwise—which, of course, she may do retrospectively. Christ's words in *Matthew 28: 20* support this interpretation:

"Behold, I am with you through all the days that are coming until the consummation of the world."

And again in *John 14: 18*:

"I will not leave you orphans..."

Pope Francis may be little more than a figurehead pope but priests and faithful are entitled to rely on the Church's law until the issue of the legality of his tenure of office is determined.

In the peroration of his statement the Archbishop issues a *monitum* that bishops, priests and faithful would do well to weigh:

"I am convinced that among the bishops and priests there are many who have experienced and still experience today the excruciating internal conflict of finding themselves divided between what Christ the pontiff asks of them – and they know it well – and what the one who presents himself as Bishop of Rome imposes with force, with blackmail, and with threats.

¹⁶ Cf. footnote 3 in https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/at-last-a-bishop-condemns-vatican-ii.pdf

¹⁷ Pope Francis is referred to there simply by his name, Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Previous editions always featured the titles accorded the Pope, first, *Vicar of Jesus Christ*, then *Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman province, Sovereign of the Vatican City-State*. These titles are relegated to the foot of the page dealing with Pope Francis and identified as "historical" titles.

¹⁸ The device of allowing a view to be broadcast while not uttering it explicitly is typical of modernism.

“Today it is more necessary than ever for us pastors to wake up from our torpor: *Hora est iam nos de somno surgere* (Rom 13:11). Our responsibility before God, the Church, and souls requires us unequivocally to denounce all the errors and deviations that we have tolerated for too long, because we will not be judged either by Bergoglio or by the world, but by Our Lord Jesus Christ. We will give an account to Him of every soul lost through our negligence, of every sin committed by each soul because of us, of every scandal before which we have remained silent out of false prudence, through a desire for quiet living, through complicity.”

Michael Baker

August 15th, 2024—*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*