

AUSTRALIA'S BISHOPS' CRISIS OF LOYALTY – PART II

“For sixty years, we have witnessed the eclipse of the true Church by an anti-church that has progressively appropriated her name, occupied the Roman Curia and her Dicasteries, Dioceses and Parishes... [This] anti-church has usurped her authority...”

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò¹

Apart from the reasons already advanced, we suggest there was another division that Australia's bishops feared the priests' Statement of September 14th would expose, a division of their loyalties.

Each Australian bishop, whether he admits it or not, exercises two, offices—wears two hats—one as bishop of the Catholic Church, the other as functionary of another 'church', one whose leading characteristic is its deference to the secular. Given the preoccupation of its adherents with a delusion of a former Archbishop of Milan, this counterfeit might be termed *the synodal church of Vatican II*. Each of the failures listed in Part I of this paper, failures to behave as a true bishop, stems from the fact that each and every one of Australia's bishops has allowed his loyalty to Christ and to His Church to become submerged in loyalty to this entity.

The Catholic Church's apostolic tradition, which concluded with the death of the last Apostle, St John, was defined by the (First) Vatican Council (invoking the Council of Trent, Session IV) in *Dei Filius*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith. It is—

“that which has been received by the Church from the mouth of Christ Himself, or through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and has been handed down by the Apostles themselves and has thus come to us.”

Later, addressing the interaction between faith and reason, the Council refined it further:

“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*)’.” [Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*, 23, 3].

The Church's tradition is one; and it is complete.² A pope, and the bishops in union with him, can do no more than deepen the understanding of teaching the Church has held from her

¹ *Catholic Identity Conference*, October 24th, 2020, *How the Revolution of Vatican II serves the New World Order*, reproduced at https://www.superflumina.org/PGF_files/abp-vigano-revolution-of-vatican2.pdf Archbishop Viganò is a former Apostolic Nuncio to the United States.

² For a splendid exposure of the error, the reader might listen to the first of the audiotapes given by the late Fr Gregory Hesse S.T.D., S.J.D. available here - <https://archive.org/details/FatherHesse>

establishment to clarify it, as happened with the Doctrines of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin in the 19th Century, and of her bodily Assumption into heaven in the 20th.

At the Second Vatican Council, the assembled bishops sought to re-invent this teaching. In their Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* n. 8, they said this:

"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."

The statement savours of heresy (*propositio haeresim sapiens aut de haeresi suspecta*). The Church's tradition does not 'progress'; it was complete with the death of the last Apostle. Any progress is in understanding, in knowledge and in wisdom of what the Church holds. Nor does it 'grow' as a result of the ruminations or experiences of the faithful. Any growth occurs only in depth of perception, in realisation. By its blandness the statement opens the way for a reduction of the *sensus fidelium*—the sense the faithful have for Catholic truth in faith and morals *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* (always, everywhere, and by everyone)—to parity with a majority opinion.

In neglecting to reiterate the Church's constant teaching expressed in *Dei Filius* the bishops were guilty collectively, if not individually, of *material* heresy. They may have claimed they were maintaining the Church's teaching—and to that extent they were not guilty of *formal* heresy³—but they committed error and that error has brought great harm. For the bulk of the Church's bishops and clergy thereafter have taken the bland statement in *Dei Verbum* n. 8 as representing the Church's teaching.

The error gave rise to the way of thinking that the bishops were entitled to plumb the minds of the faithful to discover the Church's tradition. This is reflected in the slogan beloved of commentators after the Council, "We are the Church!" In due course the misconception led Carlo Maria Martini, late Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, to promote the mentality of 'the synod', a regular gathering of the faithful to assist in 'discernment'.⁴ At its heart is the theological error that the Church is engaged in a permanent exercise of change and adjustment. She is not.

The source of the error as of the misconception to which it gave rise was the Modernist heresy condemned by Pius X in *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (September 8th, 1907):

"Modernists... lay down the general principle that in a living religion everything is subject to change, and must in fact be changed. In this way they pass to what is practically their principal doctrine... evolution, to whose laws everything is subject... dogma, Church, worship, the Sacred books, faith itself..." [n. 26]

³ The terms 'material' and 'formal' are part of the Church's philosophical and theological terminology. They derive from the metaphysics of Aristotle refined by St Thomas Aquinas. By 'material' is meant *the error was uttered, or written*. By 'formal' is meant the bishops did so *intending to alter what the Church had maintained for 1900 years*.

⁴ On this topic the reader is invited to study the paper by Julia Meloni of September 20th, 2021 available at <https://onepeterfive.com/the-weapon-of-the-st-gallen-mafia-is-synodality/>

The heresy involved another error—

“the introduction of that most pernicious doctrine which would make of the laity the factor of progress in the Church...” [n. 27]

The Church in Australia

The Catholic Church in Australia has conducted synods in the past, meetings restricted to bishops, clergy and religious that thrashed out protocols for government of the Church to meet changing circumstances involving personnel and the challenges posed by the exigencies of changing times. The last of these was held in 1937.⁵ But it was not a synod such as this that Cardinal Martini had had in mind. Nor was it such a synod that Australia’s bishops, pestered by members of the laity claiming they were entitled to contribute to her tradition, authorised some 10 years ago. This sort of synod has met regularly ever since. Its latest exercise, a ‘plenary council’, commenced on Sunday last, 3rd October.

The following day Anthony Fisher, Archbishop of Sydney, penned a piece for *The Australian* newspaper in the course of which, unconsciously, he exposed the conflicting loyalties at work in him and in his fellow bishops.⁶ Using clever juxtaposition, he drew attention to the many benefits bestowed on what is now an almost completely secular Australian society by the Catholic Church over the past 200 years. But he confined his list to the material benefits for which the Church, in the course of her mandate to bring men to their destined end, was responsible. Nowhere did he mention her primary and spiritual end, or the infinitely more important spiritual benefits she had worked in the Australian populace over those two centuries which had contributed to refining the national psyche.

The Archbishop cited the maxim *Ecclesia semper reformanda* as an “ancient adage” providing support for the claim that the Church needed constant renewal and as justifying the ‘plenary council’ to consider innumerable submissions, written and oral, to determine how the Church should proceed. But the assertion was false, as anyone may ascertain by conducting a simple internet search. The maxim is not an ancient adage: it is a Protestant motto adopted by heterodox priests like Hans Küng to justify the Modernist urge for change the Council precipitated. That what the Archbishop and his fellow bishops are about is not for the good of the Catholic Church is clear from the fact that the maxim is utterly incompatible with the Church’s definition of sacred tradition.

Archbishop Fisher indulged in the error Catholics have grown used to hearing from post-Vatican II churchmen, that of confusing the Church with those ministers who, over 50 years, worked appalling harm among believers and non-believers by betraying their oaths and the Church’s explicit teaching. He laid the blame for their evil actions at the Church’s feet; none of the good the Church had produced, he said “makes the Catholic Church perfect”—this

⁵ See Peter J Wilkinson, *Catholic Synods in Australia, 1844 – 2011*, p. 6 at <https://www.catholicsforrenewal.org/News%20Items/P%20Wilkinson%20Synods%20April%202012x.pdf>

⁶ *Ready for renewal, not reinvention as a secular NGO*, *The Australian*, October 4th, 2021, p. 11

from a man allegedly versed in dogmatic theology! But if one accepts the reinvention of sacred tradition referred to above, the Archbishop's obfuscation makes perfect sense, as does his offhand remark "however divine the founder... *we* can always do better".⁷ For he thinks the Catholic Church was reinvented at Vatican II: that the Church is now something human, and imperfect, rather than something divine, the spotless Bride of Christ.

The alleged loyalty of the Archbishop and his fellow bishops to the Catholic Church is exposed by their pretence to be acting for her good when they are acting for her harm. They invoke her at every remove, as they must for their authority comes only from her. They hide behind her skirts but by their words and their actions they betray her. Their loyalty lies rather with this ersatz entity which they refer to as 'the Church' but which is another entity entirely.

The Catholic Church has the truth for she has Christ *Who is the Truth* (John 14: 6) and she imparts that truth to the faithful. This is what the seventy five priests, exasperated with their bishops' ambivalence, were seeking to defend. But the church to which Australia's bishops have pledged their loyalty, *the synodal church of Vatican II*, is intent on something else.

This, more than their exposure of the bishops' failure to uphold the Church's teachings in faith and morals, is the reason why, on September 22nd last, his bishop told the chief of the six priests responsible for drafting the Statement that their initiative "would be divisive".

Michael Baker

October 8th, 2021 — *St Bridget of Sweden*

⁷ Emphasis added.