

THE STATEMENT ON POPE FRANCIS

Readers will, doubtless, have read by now the statement dated May 2nd, 2024, the feast of St Athanasius, issued by a small group of Catholics including a priest and several academics from around the world, condemning Pope Francis for his teachings and behaviour. We are in general agreement with the authors' criticisms but differ over the views they have expressed about the Second Vatican Council.

The authors identify neo-modernist tendencies among the Church's theologians. They err, however, when they attribute a defect patent in that Council's document on divine revelation to an interpretation promoted by neo-modernist commentators. They say:

"The dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* was falsely presented as teaching neo-modernism, and as rejecting and replacing the teaching of the First Vatican Council on the nature of Catholic faith and the immutability of Catholic doctrine."

But in that document, *Dei Verbum*, it was *the Council's bishops themselves* who rejected and replaced the teaching of the fathers of the *Vatican Council* on the nature of the Catholic faith and the immutability of Catholic doctrine.

Adopting what the fathers of the *Council of Trent* had said on April 8th, 1546 of the Church's apostolic tradition, the *Vatican Council* said that 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." (*Dei Filius*, April 24th, 1870: Dz. 1787)

To this they added clarification by utilising words of St Vincent of Lerins in his *Commonitorium* 23, 3, which had been sanctified by repetition down the centuries —

"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*)'." (Dz. 1800)

Here, in contrast, is what the bishops of Vatican II taught in *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."

Let the reader mark the following about what they claim:

- it offends by ignoring completely the clear and precise teaching of the two ecumenical councils that preceded it which repeated what the Church has held since her inception;

- it neglects to temper the claim of an asserted ‘progress’ in the version of tradition it advocates with St Vincent’s essential qualification;
- it introduces subjective and evanescent elements into what is fixed and objective, the teachings uttered by Our Lord Jesus Christ or conveyed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles in the first century AD; and, critically,
- it breaches, in its recession from what the Church maintained under colour of a deeper understanding, the *Vatican Council’s monitum* against any attempt to do so.

If the claim in *Dei Verbum* n. 8 is subjected to the categories of the theological positions the Church has long maintained,¹ it is capable of being characterised at least, as—

propositio mala sonans, a proposition offensive to Catholic religious feeling;

propositio temeraria, a proposition that deviates without reason from general teaching;

or,

piarum aurium, a proposition capable of conveying misunderstanding by reason of its form of expression, and therefore offensive.

But in fact it deserves stronger condemnation, for it has the characteristics of—

propositio haeresim sapiens aut de haeresi suspecta, a proposition savouring, or suspect, of heresy; and even,

propositio heresi proxima, a proposition close to heresy because opposed to a truth of the faith.

These theological flaws on so central an issue to the Catholic faith marked the Second Vatican Council for what it was, an imposture. It was not an ecumenical, or general, council of the Catholic Church, nor were its determinations those of the Church, merely opinions of a bishops’ collective after the fashion of the pseudo-synod of Pistoia (1786). And, as the Church in due course condemned that synod in Pius VI’s bull *Auctorem Fidei*,² so in due course will she condemn the ‘Second’ Vatican Council.

As the passage in *Dei Verbum* n. 8 attests, the bishops who attended Vatican II frequently betrayed or confounded the Church’s teachings. Insofar as they repeated what the Church had taught constantly before it, that teaching was not enhanced by anything they said.

Accordingly, the Statement on Pope Francis is defective in its assertion or implication that the Second Vatican Council enjoys ecclesiastical authority. Its authors’ appeal to that synod serves only to perpetuate the harm for which it is responsible. In relying on its authority, moreover, they cut the ground from under their feet, for Pope Francis himself relies on the Council, its errors and its semi-modernist ethos.

There are other matters that deserve to be noted about the Statement. First, it follows a document entitled *Correctio Filialis* dated July 16th, 2017 which condemned certain views that Pope Francis had by then expressed, whose initiating signatories numbered sixty two (62), including one bishop, Mons. Bernard Fellay SSPX—not, be it noted, a bishop regarded by the Church’s prelates as formally associated with her—and nineteen priests. Only one of the

¹ Cf. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Cork, 1955, p. 10

² Cf. https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/auctorem-fidei-intro.pdf

priests who signed the earlier document has signed this one. No bishop has signed it. Given Bishop Fellay's views about Vatican II, the authors would not have expected his support.

Secondly, the authors are right to say that *the members of the hierarchy of the Church have a duty to act in order to prevent Pope Francis from causing further harm*. They are right to call on him to resign, to repent and do penance for his actions. They are right to appeal, in the event of his refusing to do so, to the Church's 5,600 odd cardinals and bishops to declare that he has lost the papal office. But with the greatest of respect to them, especially for their courage in endeavouring to perform a duty which properly falls on each and every one of the Church's bishops, the prospect of any adequate response is nugatory.

Thirdly, the Statement laments, but does not seek to explain, why *not one of the* Church's bishops has been prepared publicly to condemn the Pope over the flawed teachings and appalling behaviour its authors document. Not one of them has chosen to conduct himself as a shepherd of Christ's flock. Not one has had the courage of a Paul in face of an erring Peter.

Why is this so?

The bishops' problem is that their faith, nominally directed to Almighty God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is in fact focused on the subsidiary god of neo-modernism. That they are unfaithful to Christ and His Church is manifest in innumerable ways—

- in their failures to stand up before the world for natural moral principle;
- in their failures to behave like men who have been given powers, which exceed any earthly power, to be exercised for the good of the Catholic faithful and for all mankind;
- in their failures to provide leadership in opposition to the atheistic zeitgeist that afflicts the world and is producing immense harm in every nation; and,
- (to sum up) in their failure to stand up for Catholic principle.

Is it any wonder the bishops decline to reproach the Pope when by their systematic inaction they are busy supporting the heterodox program on which he is engaged?

The bishops' collective ineffectuality is a result of the pernicious influence of the very synod on which the authors rely, Vatican II. The debility to which that Council gave rise might have been avoided by the more orthodox among them save for one factor which ensured the neutering of their powers.

The oldest expression of the Church's liturgical law is *lex orandi statuat legem credendi*—the law of what is to be prayed establishes the law of what is to be believed. Put bluntly this means that *if a priest celebrates a false liturgy he proclaims a false religion*. On April 3rd, 1969, conforming to the errors in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the synod's document on the sacred liturgy, Pope Paul VI introduced a new liturgy of the Mass. He imposed, or sought to impose, on clergy and faithful alike throughout the world the celebration of this novel rite in place of the Church's canonised, millennial, rite of offering Mass. The consequence of this, consistent with the liturgical principle stated above, was a direction to Catholic clergy and faithful alike to proclaim a false religion.

Paul VI's constitution, *Missale Romano*, breached an indelible rule that the Church, established by Christ and of which He alone is the Head, had established four centuries before in determinations of the *Council of Trent* and of Pope Pius V. The details are set out below. It follows that the *novus ordo missae* is an *illicit* rite and unpleasing to Almighty God. But more than this: because it proclaims a faith other than the faith established by Christ and propounded by His Church, the rite of Paul VI is a *schismatic* rite. Accordingly, every bishop who celebrates the *novus ordo missae* proclaims adherence to a false faith, a faith which is Catholic in name only.³

The Council of Trent & the Bull Quo Primum

In canon xiii of its Seventh Session (March 3rd, 1547) the *Council of Trent* ruled as follows:

If anyone shall say that the received and approved rites of the Catholic Church customarily used in the solemn administration of the sacraments may be contemned, or be omitted at pleasure by the ministers without sin, or be able to be changed by whomsoever pastor (*any pastor whatsoever*) of the churches, into other new rites: let him be anathema. [Dz. 856]

On July 14th, 1570, following a specific directive of the *Council of Trent*, Pope Pius V codified the form in which Mass was thereafter to be celebrated in the bull *Quo Primum*. He wrote, *inter alia*:

In order that all everywhere may adopt and observe what has been delivered to them by the Holy Roman Church, Mother and Mistress of the other churches, it shall be unlawful henceforth and forever throughout the Christian world to sing or to read Masses according to any formula other than that of this Missal We have published; this ordinance to apply to all churches and chapels, with or without the care of souls, patriarchal, collegiate and parochial, be they secular or belonging to a religious Order, whether of men (including the military Orders) or of women, in which conventual Masses are, or ought to be, sung in choir or read privately according to the rites and customs of the Roman Church... and We decree under penalty of Our indignation that to this newly published Missal nothing at any time is to be added, subtracted or altered; this We determine and ordain to hold in perpetuity by virtue of this constitution.

...

We strictly command, and We issue this command by virtue of holy obedience, that each and every patriarch, administrator and other person of whatsoever ecclesiastical dignity, be he even a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church or possessed of any other rank or pre-eminence, set aside wholly and entirely in the future all other observances and rites and Missals, no matter how ancient they may be, that they have been accustomed to use, that they reject them entirely, and that they sing and read Mass according to the rite, the mode and the norm of this Missal which is now issued by Us; and let them not presume to add or recite other ceremonies and prayers in the celebration of Mass than those that are contained in this Missal.

...

No one may be required to offer Holy Mass otherwise than determined by Us; neither Pastors, Administrators, Canons, Chaplains, or other secular priests or religious of whatsoever Order or by whatsoever title designated: and We likewise determine and declare that no one may be compelled or pressed by anyone to change this Missal, or that this letter should ever be recalled, or its effectiveness be restrained, but that it shall forever remain valid and have the force of law...

...

³ For those who object to what is said here and insist that they adhere to fulness of what the Catholic Church believes and teaches while continuing to attend the *novus ordo* I do not deny they may do so. My argument is that the rite militates against the faith and may lead to its loss, especially among those whose faith is weak.

No one, whosoever he be, is permitted to infringe or rashly contravene this notice of Our permission, statute, regulation, mandate, precept, grant, indult, declaration, will, decree and prohibition; nor is he allowed, temerarily, to act against it. But should anyone presume to attempt to do so, let him know that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of Saints Peter and Paul, His Apostles.

In performing this service for the Church Pope Pius V addressed a matter which was not merely one of discipline and capable of being modified by a later pope, but one which went to the essence of the faith and its practice—for nothing is more central to the faith than the manner of celebrating Mass. In doing so he bound his successors as effectively as did Pope Pius IX in 1854 in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* proclaiming the dogma of the *Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin*. He did so as effectively as did Leo XIII in 1896 in the Bull *Apostolicae curae* declaring the nullity of Anglican orders. Anyone who wishes to study the issue further should read the document *The Status of the Novus Ordo Missae* on this website.⁴

The Council of Trent & the 'Second' Vatican Council and its Novus Ordo Missae

The *Council of Trent* was called to respond to the immense harm wrought in the Church by the Protestant revolt. It was inevitable, then, that a synod of Catholic bishops seeking to defer to Protestant principle at the expense of the Catholic, should endeavour to diminish the authority of *Trent's* determinations.⁵ This they did in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (*inter multos locos*) where they sought to diminish to relative force *Trent's* absolute canons.

Others have documented the departures from the right liturgical order of Holy Mass found in the rite inspired by Vatican II.⁶ The writer will focus on but three.

1. Consistent with the mentality expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the new rite operates to diminish the reality of the Mass, the Eternal Sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered for mankind, in favour of the Protestant protocol that it is but a commemorative meal. This is reflected in innumerable features but particularly in the abandonment in every Catholic church of the only fit place for its celebration, the altar dedicated and sanctified with relics of the saints (which none should profane), in favour of a mere table and the practice of the priest celebrating Mass with his back to the altar.

2. The Eternal Sacrifice the Church has celebrated since her inception embodies the three essentials: *oblation*, *immolation* and *consummation*. In the *novus ordo missae*—

- *Oblation* (the Offertory) is reduced to a cipher, the prayers offering to God the Father the Victim which the bread and wine signify and Whose Body and Blood they will become is replaced with a prayer borrowed from a Jewish meal blessing with the faintest acknowledgement of what will follow.
- *Immolation*, achieved, and signified, by the separate consecration of the Body and Blood of the Victim, has been rendered problematic because of the defective training of the rite's priests. Where the belief of the celebrating priest is aligned with modernist or neo-modernist theory there must be real doubts as to whether the sacrifice takes

⁴ https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/status-novus-ordo.pdf

⁵ As it was inevitable that its proponents and the bishops who attended it claim for this ersatz Council an authority identical with that of *Trent*. But in fact they claim it has greater authority!

⁶ As, for example, H J.A. Sire, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, Kettering OH, 2015 (Angelico Press), pp. 270 et seq.

place. Moreover, until the mistranslation of the words of Consecration of the wine was corrected, there were real doubts about its achievement.

- *Consummation* of the Sacred Victim is confused with communion of the faithful. The consummation of the sacrifice of the Mass is accomplished, *and accomplished only*, by the priest's communion. The communion of the faithful is not of its essence and is added for their nourishment and edification. This is why the preparatory prayers ordained by the Church - Confiteor, absolution and blessing - are prerequisite to its distribution. The defective assertions in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, embodied in the novel rite, that shifted the focus from sacrifice to communion rite, are further demonstrated by the aberration of their omission in the *novus ordo*.

There is no acknowledgement by any priest offering the novel rite that he has offered Christ's sacrifice for the glory of the Blessed Trinity. Nowhere is there to be found in it redaction of the prayers *Suscipe sancta Trinitas* (at the close of the Offertory of the canonised rite) and *Placeat Tibi sancta Trinitas* (at the Mass's end) whose content are characteristic of all valid rites of Mass.

3. The protocols of the Second Vatican Council have impacted to diminish the effectiveness of the Church in the world. Its priests frequently refrain from fulfilling their daily obligation to offer the Sacrifice for which they were ordained with excuses which appeal to secular mores, such as that a priest needs a break from the rigour of its constant celebration.

There is another, more insidious, effect of the protocols. The writer recently attended a nuptial Mass in the *novus ordo* where six priests concelebrated. In doing so, each priest satisfied his obligation under the new regime to offer Mass that day. But in lieu of the Church's offering of six Masses there was offered but one. The impetratory effect of Christ's offering for the living and the dead, for the sanctification of the world, was diminished by a factor of five. Back in 2003 he attended morning Mass in Paris celebrated at the chapel in the crypt of the *Société des Missions Étrangères* in the Rue du Bac where some thirty priests concelebrated. The result of their cooperation was the diminution of the impetrative value of Christ's Offering by a factor of 29!

In support of this contention, Fr Paul Philippe remarked when concelebration was mooted in 1962 how the practice blurs the unique hierarchical role of the priest who is assimilated in the Mass to Christ the Priest. It diminishes, moreover, the principal effect of propitiation and impetration for the living and the dead. The effect "is not the same in one concelebrated Mass as it is in many Masses celebrated by several priests".⁷

The abiding characteristic of our modern world is the utter lack of leadership, religious, moral or political, coupled with growing immersion of the populace in the disturbing ideologies of Marx and Marcuse. The authors of the Statement have highlighted the lack of leadership in the Petrine office. But they have ignored its presence among the episcopacy as they have ignored the root cause of the evils, the crippling of the effectiveness of the Church's ministers by that appalling synod.

⁷ Fr Philippe was commenting on the teaching of Pius XII. Quoted by Bishop Tissier de Mallerais, *The Biography of Marcel Lefebvre*, transl. from the French by Brian Sudlow M.A., Kansas City MO, (Angelus Press) 2004, p. 278.

The historian Henry Sire did not underestimate the evils let loose on Christ's Church in 1962 when he wrote:

"[The amiable liberalism] of John XXIII inflicted a wound on the Church from which it will take centuries to recover."⁸

Michael Baker

June 11th, 2024—*St Barnabas*

⁸ *Phoenix from the Ashes*, op. cit., p. 182