

THE STATUS OF THE *NOVUS ORDO MISSAE*

And while they slept an enemy came and sowed cockle all among the wheat...

Previous papers on this website concerning the *novus ordo* have focused on its effects. This paper will look at its causes. We rely, unashamedly, on the reasoning of theologian and canon lawyer, the late Fr Gregory Hesse.¹

In the execution of the commission given him by the Council of Trent, Pope Pius V in his Bull *Quo primum* (July 14th, 1570) canonised the form of the Roman rite of Mass. He said this:

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...

...

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.

This Bull headed every edition of the Roman Missal that followed down to, and including, that published by Pope John XXIII in 1962. It was supplemented by Bulls in similar terms of Pope Clement VIII (*Cum sanctissimum Eucharisticae Sacramentum*) in July 1604, of Pope Urban

¹ Fr Gregory Hesse S.T.D., J.C.D. was born in Vienna in 1953; and ordained a priest in St Peter's Basilica, Rome, in 1981. He was secretary to Alfons Maria Cardinal Stickler, Archivist of the Vatican Secret Archives and Vatican Librarian 1986-1988; he died of complications due to diabetes on 25th January, 2006.

VIII (*Si quid est in rebus humanis*) in September 1634, and of Pope Pius X (*Divino afflatu compositos*) in November 1911. The respect accorded Pope Pius V's Bull by his successors is unprecedented if that Bull was no more than a document addressing a matter of discipline. The norm in such a case is for the new Pope to replace, with his own, his predecessor's bull which ceases thereafter to be in force. The deference shown *Quo primum* by his successors demonstrates that each of them agreed with its author that the Bull addressed a matter of faith, not discipline, and that it was, indeed, irreformable.

Is it possible for Christ's Church to reject what Pius V established so forcefully in *Quo primum*? No pope until Pope Paul VI thought so. Those today who argue it was reformable invoke other papal prohibitions such as that in the Brief of Pope Clement XIV *Dominus ac Redemptor* which in 1773 "discontinued permanently, and completely abolished" the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). The Brief provided that its terms were "always and forever valid, firm and efficacious... and that [they were to] be inviolably observed..." Yet, in 1814, Pope Pius VII saw in them no obstacle to his restoring the Jesuits with the Bull *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*. Why then, it is argued, should Pope Paul VI have been prevented by the language of *Quo primum*?

The Need for Distinction

One of the abiding problems of the early 21st, as of the late 20th, century is the inability of people to make distinctions.² This is an inevitable effect of the loss of a grasp of metaphysical principle that has accompanied the flourishing in the world, and in the Church, of the philosophy of materialism. A typical instance of this defect is found in the assertions in the writings of Pope John Paul II that all men are saved.³ That all men are saved is true *only in potency*. Since God's will is salvific for all men; all men *are able to be* saved—except those already in Hell. *In act* (in fact) some will go to Hell, so these assertions of Pope John Paul are false. This error, typical of the facile reasoning of the bishops of the Second Vatican Council, was incorporated in gratuitous alterations in the translation into the vernacular of the words of consecration in the *novus ordo missae* (since prohibited), and may have invalidated them.

Reality is largely comprised of what is immaterial. The influence (its soul) that makes a dog be a dog is immaterial. You can divide material things but not immaterial ones. Chop a log in two and you have two pieces of wood. Chop a dog in two and you cease to have a dog because a dog shares in its soul's indivisibility. Immaterial things can only be known through distinction. Papal documents are distinguished between those that address *means*, matters of discipline, and those that address *ends*, matters of faith or morals. Documents such as *Dominus ac Redemptor* deal with matters of discipline, and are reformable. Documents such as *Quo primum* address matters of faith, and are irreformable.

² The fundamental metaphysical distinctions are those between objective & subjective, formal & material, actual & potential. In the field of law (*ordinationes rationis*) there is the distinction between valid & licit. They are founded on the supreme principle of Logic, the principle of non-contradiction, which says that the same thing cannot be and be not at the same time.

³ E.g., *Redemptor Hominis* (4.3.1979) n. 13; *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18.5.1986) n. 52; *Wednesday Audience* of 4.2.1998.

The principle *Legem credendi lex statuit supplicandi* (or *lex orandi, lex credendi*)—the law of prayer establishes the law of belief—was laid down by Prosper of Aquitaine (390-455 AD).⁴ In the modern world it is understood in reverse, as if belief determines the form of prayer. This inversion of understanding is largely due to remarks of Pius XII in *Mediator Dei* (November 20th, 1947).⁵ The ravaging of Catholic belief that has accompanied the *novus ordo* is eloquent, however, of the accuracy of the principle in its original form.

In *Quo primum* Pope Pius V codified the form of the Mass in the Latin Roman rite to ensure the uniformity of its celebration. He did so *because the law of prayer establishes the law of belief*, and no action is more central to Catholic prayer than the Mass. Hence the Bull resembled a papal definition of what is to be believed, such as the Immaculate Conception or the Assumption. A pope can bind all his successors in faith and morals forever and this is what Pius V did in *Quo primum*. This explains the force of the Pope's declaration that anyone who would presume to alter its terms should know that he would thereby incur the wrath of Almighty God, which is what would befall him were he to seek to alter some teaching of the Church a pope had defined.

A document with similar force to Pius V's *Quo primum* is the Apostolic Letter *Apostolicae curae* (September 13th, 1896) of Pope Leo XIII condemning Anglican Orders. Pope Leo expressed himself with similar force when he said (in n. 40)—

“the present Letter... shall be now and forever in the future valid and in force, and it is to be inviolably observed both judicially and extra-judicially by all persons of whatsoever degree or pre-eminence...”

No pope would presume to depart from *Apostolicae curae*. Yet, that Bull dealt with what is of the essence of the Mass no less than did *Quo primum*.

Pope Pius V's words in *Quo primum* reflect the force of the words used by the Council of Trent three years prior in Session 7 Canon XIII on the Sacraments in General:

“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 disparaged, 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.”⁶

⁴ *Patrologia Latina* 51 pp. 209–10 *Let us consider the sacraments of priestly prayers, which having been handed down by the apostles are celebrated uniformly throughout the whole world and in every Catholic Church so that the law of what is to be prayed may establish the law of what is to be believed.*

⁵ He says that it is an error to “see in the liturgy a sort of touchstone by which to judge which truths are to be held by faith”. Yet in a subsequent paragraph he says: “[T]he whole liturgy contains the Catholic faith in as much as it is a public profession of the faith of the Church. This is why, whenever some divinely revealed truth has to be defined, Popes and Councils have frequently used the liturgy as a theological source of arguments. Our Predecessor Pope Pius IX, for example, did this when he defined the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Similarly whenever some doubtful question was under discussion in the Church the Fathers have been accustomed to seek light also in the venerable and traditional sacred rites”, and he cites Prosper's original principle in *Indiculus de gratia Dei* (“Catalogue concerning the grace of God”). See *Mediator Dei*, nn. 46 et seq. When in *Munificentissimus Deus* (November 1st, 1950) he defined the doctrine of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven, Pius XII again acknowledged the force of the original principle.

⁶ *Si quis dixerit, receptos et approbatos Ecclesiae Catholicae ritus, in solemnibus sacramentorum administratione adhiberi consuetos, aut contemni, aut sine peccato a ministris pro libito omitti, aut in novos alios per quemcumque ecclesiarum pastorem mutari posse: anathema sit.*

The Status of the Novus Ordo

Every valid rite of Mass of the Catholic Church, Fr Hesse argues, is addressed to the honour and glory of the Blessed Trinity. In the Roman rite this is expressed in the prayers *Suscipe sancta Trinitas* at the close of the Offertory, and *Placeat tibi* after the *Ite Missa est*. Let the reader study the *novus ordo* missal to see if he can find anywhere in its texts a prayer acknowledging that the Mass so offered is addressed to the honour and glory of the Blessed Trinity.

Where do these considerations leave the *novus ordo missae*?

(i) *Summorum Pontificum*

In his Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum* (July 7th 2007) Pope Benedict XVI referred to the *novus ordo* as the *forma ordinaria* of the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970, and to the rite promulgated by Pope Pius V in 1570 as the *forma extraordinaria* of the same Roman Missal. There are a number of errors involved in these assertions.

The first is that it adopts the error embraced by Paul VI that the manner of offering Mass in the Roman rite is no more than a matter of discipline so that he was entitled to ignore the terms of the *Council of Trent* and those of Pius V in *Quo primum* in promulgating his 'new' rite. (Fr Hesse contended that Paul VI had neglected to promulgate the *novus ordo*. On reflection we think that, though it was done clumsily, it was in fact – eventually – promulgated.)⁷

The second follows on the first. There are not two rites in which Mass may be offered, a *forma ordinaria* (that set forth in Paul VI's alleged Missal) and a *forma extraordinaria* (that laid down by Pius V). There is only one rite, only one Roman Missal, that of 1570. The third error is his assertion that the "new Missal" was an expression of the Missal promulgated by Pius V. It was not. Pius V spoke clearly in *Quo primum* as anyone can see who studies its terms. Insofar as he adopted the error at the heart of Paul VI's initiative, Benedict XVI is as guilty of breaching the law set out by the Council of Trent and by Pius V as his predecessor.

Accordingly, the *novus ordo* should be categorised as the *forma illicita*, the *forma contra legem*, or the *forma prohibenda* of the celebration of Mass.

In astringent comments on October 24th, 2020 concerning the present position of the Catholic Church as a result of the revolution accomplished by Vatican II and endorsed by the popes who followed it former Apostolic Nuncio to the USA, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò said:

"[I]n the ecclesial sphere, the *Deep Church* uses the moderate 'conservatives' to give an appearance of offering freedom to the faithful. The Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*... for example, while granting the celebration in the extraordinary form, demands *saltem impliciter* that we accept the Council and recognise the lawfulness of the reformed liturgy. This ploy prevents those who benefit from the Motu Proprio from raising any objection, or they risk the dissolution of the *Ecclesia Dei* communities. And it instils in the Christian people the dangerous idea that a

⁷ He said "We wish to give the force of law to all that we have set forth concerning the new Roman Missal... we hope... that the Missal will be received by the faithful as an instrument which bears witness to and which affirms the common unity of all..."

good thing, in order to have legitimacy in the Church and society, must necessarily be accompanied by a bad thing, or at least something less good. However, only a misguided mind would seek to afford equal rights to both good and evil.”

(ii) *Ecclesia Dei*

This brings us to a consideration of Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter *Ecclesia Dei* (July 2nd, 1988) which, lamenting the action of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his co-consecrators in consecrating, as bishops of the Catholic Church on June 30th previous, Fathers Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson and Alfonso de Galarata, against the Pope’s specific wishes, charges them with the commission of a schismatic act.

The document is, to say the least, problematic. Pope John Paul says (in n. 4)—

“[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.”

He cites in support 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.

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, as—

“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 said this:

“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].

Accordingly, the understanding of Pope John Paul II expressed in *Ecclesia Dei* is 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.⁸

Pope John Paul goes on, in n. 5 of the apostolic letter, 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, the (First) 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.”

Accordingly, the Pope's statement was in breach of Catholic teaching as to the limits of the competence of his office (and was therefore intrinsically erroneous). It was erroneous also in asserting as true, things which were false namely, (i) that there may be new points of Church doctrine, and (ii) that the Second Vatican Council was continuous with (and therefore consistent with) apostolic tradition. The extract from *Dei Verbum* n. 8 proves—if nothing else was available (!)—that that Council was *not* part of the Church's apostolic tradition.

Let us go back to n. 3 of *Ecclesia Dei*. The Pope says there:

“The act of disobedience to the Roman Pontiff (in ordaining the four priests bishops)... constitutes a schismatic act.”

There are two issues here. First, the penalty for disobeying the Pope's specific direction; second, the issue of whether such disobedience constitutes an act of schism.

* At no time in the history of the Church, prior to events in China in 1951, had the illicit consecration of a bishop been visited with excommunication. The appropriate penalty was suspension (cf. for example, 1917 *CIC* can. 2370). The reason is obvious. Someone who fails to comply with a law of the Church, whether with or without a specific papal order directing compliance, is not necessarily rejecting the Pope's authority completely. Hence, the imposition of a penalty of excommunication for doing so is *prima facie* grossly excessive.

In August 1951 a directive of the Holy Office ordered by Pope Pius XII addressed a specific case that occurred under the new Communist regime in China where excommunication was an appropriate penalty. In 1976 Pope Paul VI faced something similar with the illegal consecration of bishops in El Palmar de Troya in Spain by Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc which, subsequent events demonstrated, entirely justified the penalty of excommunication imposed, because consecrators and consecrated rejected the papal authority.⁹ The revisers of the Code

⁸ It derives from the *nouvelle théologie*, a Modernist intellectual movement, whose exponents sought to oust from the Church the philosophy of St Thomas. The movement, condemned by Pope Pius XII in *Humani Generis* (August 12th, 1950), had immense influence on the *periti* at Vatican II. The subjectivism which characterised it was shared by the phenomenologist, Archbishop Karol Wojtyła, who became Pope John Paul II.

⁹ Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palmarian_Catholic_Church

of Canon Law, influenced no doubt by this recent history, saw fit to include a provision in stronger terms than that in the 1917 *Code*, which became Canon 1382 of the 1983 *Code*.

* Schism *eo ipso* involves excommunication because the schismatic *cuts himself away from the Church*; he rejects the Pope's authority absolutely. (Schism is a sin against charity; heresy, in contrast, is a sin against faith—*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 39, a. 1, ad 3). The crime of schism cannot be committed by a person simply refusing one of the Pope's commands, for a bishop, priest, religious or member of the laity, might be entirely justified in doing so while continuing to accept the Pope's authority generally. In elevating an act of apparent disobedience to the level of schism *Ecclesia Dei* was dishonest. It also revealed that the Pope did not consider himself bound by the law; there was no provision in the 1983 *Code* that rendered such a consecration a schismatic act.

It is for the Church in due course to rule whether the excommunications were valid. Given the patent flaws in *Ecclesia Dei* one must wonder what possible authority it could have had. As to its claim that the consecration of bishops was an act of schism, this was unfounded. Neither Archbishop Lefebvre nor the consecrated bishops rejected the authority of the Pope. It was notorious that the members of the *Society of St Pius X* prayed for the Pope every day. They continue to do so today.

The formal lifting of the excommunications by Pope Benedict XVI in January 2009 would seem to have restored, in some measure, the injustice that resulted from the publication of *Ecclesia Dei*, though the Pope persisted in denying that the *Society* had canonical status in the Church. As to the allegation of schism, it is noteworthy that, in his explanatory letter of March 10th following, Pope Benedict resiled from his predecessor's allegation that Archbishop Lefebvre and his co-consecrators, and the bishops consecrated, were guilty of the charge when he did no more than say that an episcopal ordination lacking a pontifical mandate "raises the danger of schism". It is hard to believe that the former Cardinal Ratzinger had had no hand in drafting *Ecclesia Dei*, so his concession marked a change of heart.

(iii) *Legality and Illegality*

Some thirty years ago a Sydney priest reported to this commentator a remark made to him by a priest who worked in one of the offices of the Roman Curia that the time was one of great illegality in the Church. The clumsy way in which Pope Paul VI went about promulgating his 'new Roman Missal' in 1970 is illustrative of the problem. Another is the act of whimsy of Pope John Paul II in mid-1994, against the Church's existing law (repeated in the Instruction *Inaestimabile donum* April 17th, 1980), in allowing female altar servers where the *novus ordo* was celebrated.¹⁰ The attitude reflects the thinking that a pope, a bishop, when it suits, may rule

¹⁰ The Vatican's public position is that this was permitted in March 1994 as the result of an interpretation of Canon 230 §2 of the 1983 CIC by the *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments*, but the Pope had given public assurances that he would not permit female altar servers, and the *Congregation's* interpretation did no more than demonstrate the ambivalence of a poorly drafted provision. The Pope's volte face occurred shortly after the appearance of his *motu proprio Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (May 22nd, 1994) declaring that the Church had no authority to ordain women priests. A cynic might regard it as a consolation prize for Feminism-inspired activists.

by mere act of will and ignore the requirements of law. What underlies it is, of course, the subjectivist principle that truth is determined by mere assertion.

In contrast to such irregularity, the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* was promulgated—by Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Constitution of 25th January 1983 *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*.

[By] the supreme authority which is Ours, and by means of this Our Constitution, which is to have effect for the future, We promulgate this present Code as it has been compiled and reviewed. We command that henceforth it is to have the force of law for the whole Latin Church...

It has applied since the first day of Advent 1983. However much it may be regretted that the new *Code* lacks the rigour of the 1917 *Code* it replaced, its promulgation in proper form renders it certain that it is the present Code of laws governing the Church.

(iv) *The Novus Ordo*

The *novus ordo missae* is not a rite of the Catholic Church. Fr Hesse argues that because it was imposed in disobedience to the lawful statute of His holy Church, the Bull *Quo primum*, it is displeasing to Almighty God, and schismatic; and, as Catholics are precluded from attending the rites of Greek and Russian Orthodox churches, because they are schismatic, so are Catholics precluded from attending the *novus ordo*. The church which celebrates the *novus ordo* is, he argues, a schismatic church—‘the church of Vatican II’; ‘the church of the New Advent’—a church which conducts itself in the robes, and with the paraphernalia, of the Catholic Church and whose authority it assumes *ad libitum*.

Notwithstanding that the vast majority of the Catholic faithful (those who bother to fulfil the Sunday obligation) attend the *novus ordo*, the rite is languishing. Statistics obtained by the *Foederatio Internationalis Una Voce* reveal the make-up of its attendees as predominantly elderly and female, hardly a ‘catholic’ representation of the Catholic faithful.¹¹ The occurrence of the Corona virus in China late in 2018, since spread throughout the world and aggravated by various mutations, has impacted upon the celebration of the rite severely, with many *novus ordo* bishops and priests leading the faithful to the view that personal attendance at Sunday Mass is no longer obligatory—watching it on television or via internet link is sufficient.¹²

In this attitude the *novus ordo* clergy have demonstrated the rite’s infection with the ethos of the Protestant and the secular which marked the thinking of the bishops of the Second Vatican Council, and have manifested, unwittingly, the force of the principle of Prosper of Aquitaine referred to above. The rite’s ineffectual paraphrase of the true rite of Mass has led to ineffectual belief, first on the part of the pastors, then of their faithful. The pastors disregard the spiritual welfare of their charges out of deference to the State, whose concern for the physical (*material*) well-being of the members of society excludes any concern for their *immaterial*, and eternal, welfare. *Novus ordo* bishops have, almost to a man, given themselves

¹¹ Cf. Dr Joseph Shaw in the *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* entitled ‘The Demographics of the Extraordinary Form’ at <https://www.hprweb.com/2021/01/the-demographics-of-the-extraordinary-form/#respond> and *Nemesis & the Novus Ordo* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/nemesis-&-the-novus-ordo.pdf

¹² It is not difficult to see in this phenomenon the influence of Divine Providence moving to suppress the rite.

excuses to subvert the laws of God's Church to the demands of the secular State. The practical effect of this abandonment is a substantial loss of revenue. There is every prospect it will operate, increasingly, to empty the churches where the rite is practised.

The Governance of God's Church

The situation in which God's Holy Church finds herself is truly bizarre. It is as if there are two churches operating in parallel, one the Church of Jesus Christ (the Catholic Church), the other, the church of those who follow rules mandated by that false council, the church of Vatican II. This second church began *in potency* when John XXIII called a council without adequate reason; it achieved existence—the new church *in act*—with the proclamation, on the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1965, of the last of the documents of Vatican II, the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*. Since then 'the church of Vatican II' has used the authority of the Catholic Church to broadcast its erroneous teachings to the faithful as if they were Catholic and true; and in due course, to celebrate a false liturgy as if it was the Catholic Church's liturgy and true. This church is the cockle among the wheat of Christ. Archbishop Viganò's comments about the mix of good and evil in *Summorum Pontificum* are to the point.

If this thesis reflects the truth, we are entitled to ask in what capacity Pope John Paul II was acting when, in July 1988, he issued *Ecclesia Dei*. The "full communion" of the *Society of St Pius X* founded by Monsignor Lefebvre, for which the Pope and his Vatican officials were striving (n. 1 of the Letter), was not communion with the Catholic Church—the Monsignor and his Society were already in communion with her. The communion to which he was referring was with 'the church of Vatican II'. Likewise, the "disobedience to the Roman Pontiff in a very grave matter and of supreme importance to the unity of the church", of which he spoke (in n. 3 of the Letter), was not a reference to him as the head of the Catholic Church, but to him as head of 'the church of Vatican II'. And "the unity of the church" to which he was referring was *the unity* of 'the church of Vatican II'. He was saying it was reprehensible of the Monsignor and the other bishops involved not to be united with the Pope *in that church*.

To the Catholic Church Monsignor Lefebvre had ever been obedient, and it was his obedience that moved him to resist the Pope's endeavours to compromise his request for permission to consecrate bishops who would ordain candidates, properly prepared, for the Church's only approved rite. The theological defects in the Apostolic Letter *Ecclesia Dei* referred to above preclude the possibility that the Pope was acting as Vicar of Christ when he wrote it, because the authorities on which he relied were not those of the Catholic Church.

Consistent with this analysis, "the church" in which his successor, Benedict XVI in his *Letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church* of March 10th, 2009 (concerning the remission of excommunications on January 21st previous), denied that the *Society of St Pius X* possessed canonical status, was 'the church of Vatican II', not the Catholic Church. He says this:

"There needs to be a distinction... between the disciplinary level, which deals with individuals as such, and the doctrinal level, at which ministry and institution are involved... [U]ntil the doctrinal questions are clarified, the Society has no canonical status in the Church, and its

ministers – even though they have been freed of the ecclesiastical penalty – do not legitimately exercise any ministry in the Church...”

There were no doctrinal questions of the Catholic Church that needed “[to be] clarified” to permit a declaration of the *Society’s* canonical regularity. The only “doctrinal questions” were those raised by the false understanding of Catholic teaching propounded by Vatican II. Accordingly, in his Letter Benedict XVI must, as did John Paul II in *Ecclesia Dei*, be taken to have spoken, not as head of the Catholic Church but as head of ‘the church of Vatican II’.

Pope Paul VI

Where does all this leave the soul of Pope Paul VI? Pope Francis assures us that he is a saint in heaven, but the condemnation of the Council of Trent in Session 7 n. 13 in respect of anyone who shall say that the received and approved rites of the Church customarily used in the solemn administration of the sacraments may be disparaged, or that are able to be changed into other new rites, is clear: let him be anathema! And, if it be objected that this injunction could not apply to a pope, let us observe that its ambit is uncircumscribed. The canon reads *per quemcumque pastorem*—“by any pastor whatsoever”. Moreover, Pope Paul has also incurred the condemnation uttered by St Pius V:

No one, whosoever he be (*nulli omnino hominum*), is permitted to infringe or rashly contravene this notice of Our permission... nor is he allowed to act against it temerarily. 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.

What an irony that among those invoked for his condemnation is the saint whose name he chose as Pope!

The *Head* of the Catholic Church is Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, God the Son; the *End* of the Catholic Church is the union of its members with God the Father; the *Soul* of the Church is God the Holy Spirit. It is only a matter of time before Almighty God shows that Satan has had the period of time he sought in which to endeavour to destroy the Catholic Church¹³ and sets about restoring her rights and her title.

In the meantime, we members of Christ’s faithful should follow the advice of St Teresa:

*Patience gains all;
He who has God lacks nothing;
Alone God suffices.*

Michael Baker

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¹³ See https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/thirteenth-may.pdf