

THE SCHISMATIC POPE

There is an irony in the expression beloved of those who embraced the ethos of Vatican II of 'being on one's faith journey'. It provided an excuse for many to give away their Catholic faith and wander in the religious wilderness after the Council's effective abandonment of the teaching that the only certain way to heaven is as a member of the Catholic Church.

We, all of us who have survived the ravaging effects of that Council and the disruption of the Church's liturgy it led to, have found ourselves on 'a faith journey'. The Pseudo-Dionysius taught that God launches us into reality at the beginning of life and that we must return to Him at its end. When, with the corruption of the Sacred Liturgy in 1969, we were set awry from the course of truth, Almighty God saw to it that we should have an avenue of return.

This 'journey' began with our submission to the directives of Paul VI, consistent with what we regarded as our duty to heed the words of the successor of Peter, to accept the new liturgy he had published. We embraced enthusiastically his order of Mass. We welcomed the vernacular. If we were concerned with the lack of theological content in the new Eucharistic prayers, or with the way priests added their own input, we treated these as aberrations to be ignored. We were more concerned over sermons featuring language expressing a new and bizarre view of Catholic things. In time we came to recognise these as reflections of the heresy of modernism. Yet we resisted those who would reject the *novus ordo*; we thought them extreme. We were concerned then over the disobedience of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his followers to the wishes of Pope Paul and his successor, Pope John Paul II.

When in June 1988 the Archbishop and Bishop Antonio de Castro-Mayer consecrated four bishops without a papal mandate we approved John Paul's reaction in *Ecclesia Dei*, as we accepted without question his assertion that the Archbishop and his followers had committed a schismatic act. We were scandalised at what John Paul had done with his 'ecumenical' prayer meeting at Assisi in October 1986, as scandalised as members of the SSPX, but felt this could not justify Archbishop Lefebvre's refusal to acknowledge the validity of Vatican II.

But with the passage of time came the realisation that the Council, and Pope Paul's new rite of Mass, were much more problematic than had been thought. We listened to those who condemned the aberrations in the new liturgy and hoped our concerns might be met by remedies such as 'the reform of the reform', or Cardinal Ratzinger's 'hermeneutic of continuity'. In the meantime, there had occurred a great resurgence of the old rite assisted by the association Pope John Paul had fostered to circumvent the attractions of the SSPX, the *Priestly Fraternity of St Peter*.

Competent philosophers and theologians appeared who exposed the shortcomings of the Council and condemned the *novus ordo* as in breach of a specific prohibition by Pope Pius V of any alteration to the Roman rite of Mass he had canonised in the Bull *Quo primum* of July

1570 as directed by the Council of Trent. Theologian and canon lawyer, the late Fr Gregory Hesse, went so far as to condemn the *novus ordo* as schismatic as he exposed the heresies taught by Vatican II, in particular the Council's misstatement of what is meant by tradition, and detailed the theological flaws underlying the condemnation in *Ecclesia Dei*.

Meanwhile, John Paul's successor, Pope Benedict XVI, removed the declaration of excommunication from the four SSPX bishops effectively abandoning his predecessor's judgement. Fr Hesse exposed the truth that refusing to obey *one directive* of a pope does not amount to rejection of his authority *generally*. One might be entirely justified in refusing a papal direction. Accordingly, the claim that Archbishop Lefebvre and Bishop de Castro Mayer and the bishops they had consecrated were 'in schism' was false. What was implied in *Quo primum* entitled them to refuse obedience to Pope John Paul.

Pope Benedict seemed to endorse this view in July 2007 with his *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum* when he asserted that the Mass published by Pope John XXIII in 1962, the Mass of Pius V, had never been abrogated. He was not introducing new teaching; simply reiterating the teaching in *Quo primum*. Yet he was selective in the task; he omitted to endorse Pius V's condemnation there of anyone who should presume to alter the rite of Mass he had ordained.

Enter Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, former Apostolic Nuncio to the United States. In a letter he penned in June 2020, he plotted the course of our 'faith journey':

"I confess it with serenity and without controversy: I was one of the many people who, despite many perplexities and fears which today have proven to be absolutely legitimate, trusted the authority of the Hierarchy with unconditional obedience. In reality, I think that many people, including myself, did not initially consider the possibility that there could be a conflict between obedience to an order of the Hierarchy and fidelity to the Church herself...¹

He went on to argue that the defects in the Council and in the teaching conveyed by the unruly liturgy of Pope Paul's new Mass could be ignored no longer.

"There comes a moment in our life when, through the disposition of Providence, we are faced with a decisive choice for the future of the Church and for our eternal salvation. I speak of the choice between understanding the error into which practically all of us have fallen, almost always without evil intentions, and wanting to continue to look the other way or justify ourselves...

This operation of intellectual honesty requires great humility, first of all in recognising that for decades we have been led into error in good faith by people who, established in authority, have not known how to watch over and guard the flock of Christ: some for the sake of living quietly, some because of having too many commitments, some out of convenience, and finally some in bad faith or even malicious intent."

The Archbishop expressed what great numbers of the faithful had come to realise:

"It is no accident—it is undeniable—that what these men affirm with impunity... [is] that despite all the efforts of the *hermeneutic of continuity* (which suffered miserable shipwreck at its first

¹ *Vatican II marked the beginning of a false parallel church* at <https://insidethevatican.com/news/newsflash/letter-11-june-10-2020-the-root-of-the-problem/>

confrontation with the reality of the present crisis), from Vatican II onwards a *parallel church* has been built, superimposed over and diametrically opposed to the true Church of Christ.”

The reality of this ‘parallel church’ had become clear through the conduct of Benedict’s successor, Pope Francis, who claimed with justification that he was simply teasing out the consequences of the Council. To the members of this parallel church the sticking point, as the Archbishop averred, was *Summorum Pontificum*:

“[T]he greatest affront of [Benedict’s] Pontificate had been the liberal permission of the celebration of the venerated Tridentine Liturgy, the legitimacy of which was finally recognised, disproving the illegitimacy of its ostracisation over fifty years. It is no accident that Bergoglio’s supporters are the same people who saw the Council as the first event of a *new church*, prior to which there was an *old* religion with an *old* liturgy.”

In turning their backs on the rite of Mass imposed by Paul VI, those who offered (and those who attended) the Mass of Pius V not only cast doubts on the *novus ordo*, but on the Council which had given birth to it. It was inevitable, then, that Pope Francis would endeavour to suppress it.

As we have argued elsewhere, the ‘traditio’ to which Pope Francis appeals in *Traditionis Custodes* is not the sacred tradition of the Catholic Church delineated by the Council of Trent and confirmed by the First Vatican Council, but the ersatz, heretical, version vaunted by Vatican II.² Pope John Paul had committed the same error in *Ecclesia Dei*. When he had condemned Archbishop Lefebvre’s action of consecrating bishops without a papal mandate he appealed not to *the Church’s understanding* of tradition, but to Vatican II’s understanding. Accordingly, when he asserted that the Archbishop’s act was “an act of disobedience to the Roman Pontiff in a very grave matter and of supreme importance for the unity of the church” it was not the unity of the Catholic Church to which he was referring, but that of the parallel church identified by Archbishop Viganò—‘the church of Vatican II’.³

This issue, the unity of the Church founded by God, is what is at stake in *Traditionis Custodes*.

St Thomas Aquinas teaches:

“Schism takes its name, as Isidore says (*Etym.* viii, 3), from being a scission of minds, and scission is opposed to unity. Wherefore the sin of schism is one that is directly and essentially opposed to unity... the schismatic intends to sever himself from that unity which is the effect of charity: because charity unites not only one person to another with the bond of spiritual love, but also the whole Church in unity of spirit...” (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 39, a. 1)... [T]he sin of unbelief is generically more grievous than the sin of schism, although it may happen that a particular schismatic sins more grievously than a particular unbeliever, either because his contempt is greater, or because his sin is a source of greater danger...” (II-II, q. 39, a. 2)

What greater danger to the unity of the Church could there be than an attack mounted by the Pope himself?

² *Traditionis Custodes; the Key is in the Title* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/traditionis-custodes-key-in-title.pdf

³ *The Status of the Novus Ordo Missae* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/status-novus-ordo.pdf

In all the 2,000 year history of the Catholic Church, no papal document has told so fundamentally against the unity of the Church as this *motu proprio*; no papal document has failed so abysmally in charity. In his memorable comment of August 2nd following its publication, Archbishop Viganò cited the words of Our Lord:

*“What father among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent...? (Lk 11:11-12). Now we can understand the meaning of these words, considering with pain and torment of heart the cynicism of a father who gives us the stones of a soulless liturgy, the serpents of a corrupted doctrine, and the scorpions of an adulterated morality. And who reaches the point of dividing the flock of the Lord between those who accept the *Novus Ordo* and those who want to remain faithful to the Mass of our fathers...”*

Nothing could be plainer. *Traditionis Custodes* is a schismatic document and its author is a schismatic.

Michael Baker

August 15th, 2021 — *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*