

# Sedevacantism

## *Material or Formal Schism*

By the Editors of Quanta Cura Press

This book is lovingly dedicated to St. Augustine, great Doctor of the Catholic Church, who warns that people derive no benefit from their religious opinions or even their valid sacraments, if they are in schism:

So, in the points in which schismatics and heretics neither entertain different opinions nor observe different practice from ourselves, we do not correct them when they join us, but ... ***these things do them no good so long as they are schismatics*** or heretics, on account of other points in which they differ from us, not to mention the most grievous sin that is involved in separation itself.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *De Baptismo contra donatistas*, St. Augustine, Bk.1, ch.13, §21 (emphasis added).

“A schismatic flatters himself falsely if he asserts that he, too, has been washed in the waters of regeneration. Indeed, Augustine would reply to such a man: “The *branch* has the same form when it has been *cut off* from the vine; but of what profit for it is the form, if it does not live from the root?”

Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos*, ¶13 (emphasis added).

“[Schismatics are] no longer members of the Body of Christ which is the Church, as they [are] no longer linked with Her visible head, the Sovereign Pontiff of Rome”.

Pope Clement VIII, *Magnus Dominus*, 12-23-1595.

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# Chapter 1

## The Catholic Church Will Always Have a Pope

Because the conciliar popes regularly commit shocking scandals, a Catholic might be tempted to the visceral reaction that there is no pope. However, that reaction is an error. The Catholic Church teaches that She will always have a pope, until the very end of the world:

Vatican I infallibly teaches us:

If anyone says that it is not by the institution of Christ the Lord Himself (that is to say, by Divine Law) that Blessed Peter should have *perpetual* successors in the primacy over the whole Church; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of Blessed Peter in this primacy, let him be **anathema**.<sup>2</sup>

The great Doctor of the Church, Saint Francis de Sales, teaches the same thing:

St. Peter has had successors, has them in these days, and will have them even to the end of the

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<sup>2</sup> Vatican I, Session 4, Ch. 2 (bold emphasis and parenthetical words are in the original, italic emphasis added).

ages.<sup>3</sup>

Pope Pius XII teaches us:

If ever one day ... material Rome were to crumble,  
... even then the Church would not crumble or  
crack, Christ's promise to Peter would always  
remain true, **the Papacy, the one and  
indestructible Church founded on the Pope  
alive at the moment, would always endure.**<sup>4</sup>

## Chapter 2

### The Catholic Church is not in an Interregnum

Sedevacantists generally hold that Pope Pius XII has had no successors during the last 62 years. In an attempt to avoid the contradiction between Vatican I's infallible teaching and their own (false) theory, the sedevacantists simply *label* the last 62 years as a "papal interregnum".

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<sup>3</sup> *Catholic Controversy*, by Saint Francis de Sales, part 2, art. 6, Ch. 9.

<sup>4</sup> January 30, 1949, *Address to the Students of Rome*, Quoted from *The Pope Speaks*, Pope Pius XII, Pantheon Books, New York, 1957 (emphasis added), p.215.

But if a sedevacantist would examine his position objectively, he would see that the supposed “facts” he asserts would not constitute a real interregnum but rather would be in an **interruption** in papal succession. The sedevacantists assert that there will be a pope in some future time. But their theory (*viz.*, no pope now, but there will be a future pope) really supposes there would be (what historians call) a **restoration** of the (papal) monarchy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See, the history of monarchy in various countries, *e.g.*, England and France, where historians describe the monarchy (which had been cut off) as having been “restored”. One example of this description of a monarchy interrupted by revolution and then later restored, is the Bourbon Restoration in France after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic years. Here is how one historian described this restoration of a king in the Bourbon line:

The Bourbon Restoration was the period of French history following the first fall of Napoleon in 1814 and his final defeat in the Hundred Days in 1815, until the July Revolution of 1830. The brothers of the executed Louis XVI came to power and reigned in highly conservative fashion. Exiled supporters of the monarchy returned to France.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourbon\\_Restoration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourbon_Restoration)

## **The difference between papal interregnums and the sedevacantist theory.**

Throughout Church history, no pope was ever elected until the previous pope died (or abdicated). Thus, there was always a short interregnum, during which the electors promptly began the process of choosing a new pope and they continued their task until a new pope was chosen.

Choosing a new pope has often taken only days. But the sedevacantists try to liken the 62-year (supposed) papal interregnum which they assert, to the very extreme and unusual interregnum which ended in Pope Gregory X's election. This interregnum was  $2\frac{3}{4}$  years and is the longest in Church history.<sup>6</sup>

The election of Pope Gregory X took  $2\frac{3}{4}$  years because the Cardinal electors had a profound disagreement which caused those Cardinals to labor that long electing a new pope. But they kept trying until they succeeded in electing a new pope.

This interregnum (before Pope Gregory X's election) is very different from the supposed interregnum asserted by the sedevacantists, for five reasons:

1. The sedevacantists assert an interregnum which is **over 22 times longer** than the Church's longest

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<sup>6</sup> *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated*, Bishop Francis Kenrick, 3rd ed., Dunigan & Bro., New York, 1848, p.288.



interregnum (ending in the election of Pope Gregory X).

2. Taking into account the speed of communication of particular times throughout history, never in Church history did virtually **every** Catholic think we had a pope when we had no pope. By contrast, the tiny sedevacantist “elite” thinks that the Chair of St. Peter is vacant and only this “elite” “knows” it.
3. In the case of any anti-pope in history, it has **never** happened that *virtually every Catholic throughout the world* has been deceived into believing that an anti-pope was the true pope. In fact, it would be impossible for this to happen, as shown in Chapter 4 below. But the tiny sedevacantist “elite” wrongly thinks this has occurred today and that only their tiny “elite” “knows” the truth.
4. In every interregnum beginning with St. Peter’s death, the papal electors **promptly** set about the task of choosing a new pope. Even in the most extreme case of laboring  $2\frac{3}{4}$  years to choose a new pope, the **electors began promptly and did not stop trying until they succeeded.**

By contrast, the sedevacantists assert there has been **no attempt to even begin** electing a new pope during this 62-year (supposed) interregnum, because the sedevacantists assert that no Cardinal electors remain to elect a new pope because they

are all disqualified by (supposedly) ceasing to be members of the Catholic Church.

5. During papal interregnums, the Church's Unified Government continues operating without interruption. But that is not true under the sedevacantist interregnum theory, which results in a concrete denial of Catholic teaching that Unity of Government is an element of the Church's Mark of Unity. See the discussion below.

**The sedevacantist interregnum theory contradicts Catholic Teaching that the Church's Unity of Government, is part of the Church's Mark of Unity.**

It is basic catechism that the Catholic Church has a unified, monarchic government.<sup>7</sup> This unity of government makes the Church one throughout the world.<sup>8</sup> This central government is an element of the Church's Mark of Unity.<sup>9</sup>

One large Catholic Dictionary explained the need for the Church's unity of government, by setting forth the

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<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., *Summa Suppl.*, Q.26, a.3, *Respondeo*.

<sup>8</sup> *Summa Suppl.*, Q.40, a.6, *Respondeo*.

<sup>9</sup> See, *Council of Trent Catechism*, article: *Marks of the Church*, section: *Unity*, subsection: *Unity in Government*.

contrast to the disunited German States of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which were united under a common language, beliefs, and practices, but were not one country:

The Catholic Roman Church ... is one because all her members are united under one visible head .... Some years ago, a great deal was said about the unity of Germany, which was eagerly desired by many. Germans had many points in common: they all spoke the same language; the same blood flowed in their veins; they were proud of the same literature; they were bound together by many ennobling recollections, and, in some measure, by common aspirations. But the German States were not one because they were not under one government.<sup>10</sup>

For the Catholic Church to lose Her unity of government, even temporarily, would be to lose an element of the Mark of Unity, at least temporarily. *Id.* If there were times when the Church did not have this element of the Mark of Unity, then this element would never be part of the Mark, because the Marks of the Church are **inseparable** from the Church and are signs by which we can **always** discern the true Church.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Catholic Dictionary*, Addis & Arnold, Catholic Publication Society, 3rd ed., New York, 1884, article: Church of Christ, page 174.

<sup>11</sup> 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, article: *Unity (as a Mark of the Church)*; See also, *Catechism of St. Pius X*, section: *Ninth Article of the Creed*, Q.13.

Just as the Church is always unified in Faith, She is always unified in Government. Thus, when a pope dies, if the Church's central Government ceased to function, the Church's unity of government would also cease. That does not happen.

Even during papal interregnums, the Church's central government continues to function, although under somewhat different rules. Important Pontifical matters which are not urgent are deferred until the election of the new pope.<sup>12</sup> Urgent Pontifical matters are handled by majority decisions of the cardinals.<sup>13</sup> Sacred Congregations continue to handle routine matters.<sup>14</sup> We could give a lot more details about the continued functioning of the Church's central Government.<sup>15</sup> But in summary, the Church's central Government **always**

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<sup>12</sup> This rule is set out, *e.g.*, in St. Pius X's Constitution *Vacante Apostolica Sede*, December 25, 1904, title 1, Ch.1, §1.

<sup>13</sup> See, *e.g.*, St. Pius X's Constitution *Vacante Apostolica Sede*, December 25, 1904, title 1, Ch. 1, §5.

<sup>14</sup> St. Pius X's Constitution *Vacante Apostolica Sede*, December 25, 1904, title 1, Ch.4.

<sup>15</sup> See, *e.g.*, St. Pius X's Constitution *Vacante Apostolica Sede*, December 25, 1904, title 1, Ch.3, §12, regarding the continued functioning of the offices of Camerlengo and the Grand Penitentiary.

continues functioning and the Church maintains Her Mark of Unity in Her Government even during a papal interregnum.

Above, we use as an example, Pope St. Pius X's 1904 revision of the rules for the operation of the Church's central Government during a papal interregnum. But this revision is only one of the various versions of the rules over the centuries. The rules have also been tweaked by Pope Pius IV, Pope Gregory XV, Pope Clement XII and other popes. But regardless of the details, the **Church's central Government always continues to function** even during an interregnum (although, as said above, under somewhat different rules than when a pope is alive).

Because sedevacantists (falsely) assert that not only the pope but everyone else in the Church's government (Cardinals, Chamberlains, *etc.*) is outside the Catholic Church, the sedevacantists' interregnum theory results in the (supposed) destruction of the unity and the continuity of the Church's central government for 62 years now. This results in a concrete denial of Catholic teaching that unity of government is an element of the Church's Mark of Unity, since the Church's Marks are never lost, even temporarily.

### **Conclusion of this chapter**

The past 62 years are much different than a papal interregnum. The sedevacantist theory destroys the

unity and continuity of the Church's government, which is an element of the Mark of Unity.

The truth is that the Catholic Church will always have unity and continuity in Her central government even during a papal interregnum, but this does not mean that She will always be governed well.

*Whoever* the pope is (which is a different question), we must have a pope because St. Peter will have “perpetual successors”, he “has them in these days” and there is a pope who is “alive at the moment”.<sup>16</sup>

### **Chapter 3**

## **The Catholic Church Will Always be Visible, and Will Always have a Pope Who is Visible to All**

Knowing that we must have a pope, there are a few tiny dispersed groups who so despise the pope in the Vatican, that they concoct theories that there is a hidden pope, whom only their tiny “elite” “knows” about.

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<sup>16</sup> Words of Pope Pius XII from the January 30, 1949, *Address to the Students of Rome*, Quoted from *The Pope Speaks*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1957 (emphasis added), p.215.

These tiny “elite” groups are disunited in their views about *who* the hidden “pope” is. Some hold that he lives in a farmhouse in Kansas; others that the “pope” is in Montana, Croatia, Argentina, Kenya, Spain or elsewhere. Each of these “popes” is “known” and recognized only by his own tiny group.

**The Catholic Church is visible and will always be visible.**

But we know from our catechism that the Catholic Church will always be visible. This is why Pope Pius XI declared that “the one true Church of Christ is visible to all.” *Mortalium Animos*, January 6, 1928. ¶10.

Pope Leo XIII identified the cause of this visibility: “the Church is visible because she is a body”. *Satis Cognitum*, ¶3.

Pope Pius XII affirmed this same truth, quoting these words of Pope Leo XIII. *Mystici Corporis Christi*, §14. St. Francis de Sales replied to his adversaries who “would maintain that the Church is invisible and unperceivable” that he “consider[ed] that this is the extreme of absurdity, and that immediately beyond this abide frenzy and madness.” He then proceeds to discuss at length eight clear proofs that the Church is always visible. *Catholic Controversy*, Part 1, Ch. 5.

Thus, because the Catholic Church will always be a body, she will always be visible.

**This visible Church will always have a visible government with a visible head.**

Because the Church will always be visible, and because unity of government is an element of the Mark of Unity by which the Church can *always* be known, the Church will always have a visible government, so that the true Church can be recognized by this Mark of Unity of government. *See*, Chapter 2 above.

Because the Church's government is visible and monarchical, "the Church, being a visible body, must have a visible head and centre of unity."<sup>17</sup> This is obviously true. For the Church is not one, with a visible government, if it is unknown "who is in charge". In fact, governing authority is the efficient cause giving unity as one body, to any society of men.<sup>18</sup> For there is not one visible society if it consists of men united only by ideas and not by one, visible government. That is why even basic catechisms teach us that the Catholic Church is "under one visible head."<sup>19</sup>

Such a **visible** head has always been necessary but even more evidently so, as the Catholic Church spread

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<sup>17</sup> *Catholic Dictionary*, Addis & Arnold, Catholic Publication Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., New York, 1884, article: *Church of Christ*, page 176.

<sup>18</sup> *Summa Supp.*, Q.40, a.6, *Respondeo*.

<sup>19</sup> *See, e.g., Baltimore Catechism #4*, Q.115.



throughout the world.<sup>20</sup> That is why Pope Pius XII sums up Catholic teaching by declaring that “it is absolutely necessary that the Supreme Head, that is, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, be visible to the eyes of all”.<sup>21</sup>

### **Conclusion of this chapter**

We have no assurance that the pope will be holy or will govern well. However, we do know that the Catholic Church is a visible body and that her head, the pope, is visible to all. Thus, the pope is not living unknown and hidden from the attention of the world, in some Kansas farmhouse or similar place.

Further, it is clear that the pope is also not someone such as Cardinal Siri (who a tiny group had supposed to have been a secret pope). Such supposed “pontificate” was not visible. In other words, he was not the pope who is “visible to the eyes of all”. *Mystici Corporis*, ¶69.

Thus, we must have a pope who, as pope, is visible to all.

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<sup>20</sup> *A Full Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Joseph Deharbe, S.J., Catholic Publication Society, New York, 1889, p.132.

<sup>21</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, ¶69.

## Chapter 4

# The Man Whom the Whole Church Accepts as Pope, *Is* the Pope

Because the pope must be visible, a necessary corollary of this truth is that whoever is accepted as the pope by virtually all Catholics, we know must **be** the pope by that very fact, since the pope must be visible to the Church *as the pope*. This is true because, if virtually all Catholics accepted the legitimacy of an anti-pope, then the true pope would be “invisible”, *i.e.*, unknown to the Church. Thus, because the pope must be visible to all, whoever is accepted as pope by virtually all Catholics, we know must **be** the pope.

St. Alphonsus de Liguori, Doctor of the Church, explained this truth as follows:

It is of no importance that in past centuries some Pontiff was illegitimately elected or took possession of the Pontificate by fraud. **It is enough that he was accepted afterwards by the whole Church as Pope, since *by such an acceptance* he would *become* the True Pontiff.**<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Verità della Fede*, Part 3, Ch.8, §9, emphasis added.

This entire work of St. Alphonsus is available in an online library, for free, in Italian:  
[http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITASA0000/\\_P3BD.HTM](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITASA0000/_P3BD.HTM)

When teaching this same truth, Louis Cardinal Billot identified the cause of this truth, *viz.*, the indefectibility of the Church:

Beyond all doubt, it ought to be firmly held, that the adhesion of the universal Church would, in itself, always be an *infallible* sign of the legitimacy of a particular pope, and even for the existence of all conditions which are required for his legitimacy as pope. Nor does it take long to identify the reason for this fact. For the reason is taken directly from the infallible promise of Christ and from Providence: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against Her [the Church]”. And again:

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Here is the original Italian version, of the sentences quoted above:

Niente ancora importa che ne' secoli passati alcun pontefice sia stato illegittimamente eletto, o fraudolentemente siasi intruso nel pontificato; basta che poi sia stato accettato da tutta la chiesa come papa, attesoche per tale accettazione già si è renduto legittimo e vero pontefice.

This work is also contained in *Opera de S. Alfonso Maria de Liguori*, vol. VIII, p.720, n.9, Marietti, Turin, 1887.

“Behold, I am with you all days”, which is equivalent.<sup>23</sup>

When discussing the idea that bribes (simony) can invalidate the election of a pope, *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated*, teaches that the Church’s acceptance of a pope cures any defect in his election but that the pope nonetheless has a moral duty to resign:

Should the contemplated case unfortunately occur, the guilty individual must know that he cannot conscientiously exercise the papal power. ... [T]he acquiescence of the Church heals the defect as far as the faithful are concerned, although it does not relieve the delinquent from the necessity of abdicating the high office which he sacrilegiously assumed.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology* declares this same principle:

[W]henver the Church at large recognizes any man whatever as being Pope, that man *is* Pope,

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<sup>23</sup> Cardinal Billot, *Tractus De Ecclesia Christi*, Book 1, Q.14, *De Romano Pontifice*, Thesis 29, §3; emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> Bishop Francis Kenrick, *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., 1848, Dunigan & Bro., New York, pp. 287-8.

whatever many have been the circumstances that led to his being recognized. ... [A]cceptance by the Church is a proof that such or such a person is lawful Pope.<sup>25</sup>

**There are Five Consequences of the Fact that Whoever the Whole Church Accepts as Pope, *is* the Pope.**

1. Pope Francis is the pope now (in 2020).

More than 1.2 billion people worldwide, profess to be Catholic.<sup>26</sup>

Virtually all 1.2 billion Catholics accept Pope Francis as pope. Thus, we know that Pope Francis *is* the pope currently, *i.e.*, in 2020.

2. Pope Benedict XVI is no longer pope.

The fact that Catholics universally accept Pope Francis as pope, is one of many

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<sup>25</sup> *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, Sylvester J. Hunter, S.J., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1, pp. 394 & 395, Benziger Brothers, N.Y. 1894 (emphasis added).

<sup>26</sup> Find that 2014 statistic here:  
<http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2014/05/05/vatican-statistics-church-growth-remains-steady-worldwide/>

reasons why it is wrong to suppose that Pope Benedict XVI did not “really” resign, and is still pope (instead of Pope Francis). Virtually the whole Church accepts Pope Francis as pope, and the whole Church could never accept an anti-pope (as shown above).

3. Each of the other post-conciliar popes was pope, in his turn.

Over the last 62 years, virtually the whole Church accepted each of the other post-conciliar popes, as pope in his turn. Thus, we know each *was* the pope.

4. This is a further reason we know Cardinal Siri was not pope.

It is clear that Cardinal Siri was not pope (as a tiny group supposes). Not only was his supposed “pontificate” invisible, but it would have opposed the pontificate of the pope universally accepted by Catholics.

5. This further shows the impossibility of the Church being now in a papal interregnum.

The Church accepts Pope Francis as pope and accepted each of his post-conciliar predecessors. This is one of many compelling reasons why we know the Church is not in a papal interregnum

because, when the Church accepted each post-conciliar pope in his turn, each one **became the true pope** (even if we were to suppose that, somehow, his election were irregular and that he wasn't pope already).<sup>27</sup>

## Chapter 5

### Rash Judgment: concluding the Pope is a Formal Heretic

Because St. Peter will have perpetual successors, we know that there will always be a pope and that we have one now. *See*, Chapter 1 above.

The fact that we have a pope, is not changed by simply **labeling** the last 62 years as a papal interregnum, because that “solution” is unreasonable, unhistorical, and contradicts Church teaching that the Church will *always* have Her Mark of Unity of government. *See*, Chapter 2 above.

Not only do we have a pope, but he is visible to all. *See*, Chapter 3 above. Further, whatever man is accepted as pope by virtually all Catholics, we know to **be** the pope by that very fact. *See*, Chapter 4 above.

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<sup>27</sup> St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *Verità della Fede*, Part 3, Ch.8, §9.

Trying to escape the fact that the pope in the Vatican is visible to all and is accepted as pope by virtually all Catholics, a tiny group holds that no “real” Catholics exist besides the members of their own tiny group. Thus, they assert that the pope in the Vatican is not the “real” pope because he is not accepted as pope by the “real” Catholics (who are exclusively members of their own tiny group). Or alternatively, they assert that their own “pope” (accepted only by their own tiny group) is visible to “all” Catholics and accepted by “all” Catholics, because their tiny group is the only group of “true” Catholics.

Therefore, in order to reach the conclusion they seek, this tiny group judges the 1.2 billion people who profess to be Catholic. This tiny group decides that the Faith and morals of those 1.2 billion people show they are not “*real*” Catholics. Similarly, this tiny group also judges the pope in the Vatican and decides that his Faith (and morals) show he is not “really” the pope.

**The distinction between *material heresy* and *formal heresy*.**

It is true that many people who profess to be Catholics, hold grave objective errors against the Catholic Faith. This problem occurred in past centuries also, even if it is more common today than in (at least some) past centuries. For example, a child might believe that God has a body. Or an adult might profess the Pelagian heresy (about grace and free will).



But we would not be forced to conclude that such a person (who professed himself Catholic but has always held the Pelagian heresy), has never really been Catholic. For a person ceases to be Catholic when he holds a position against the Catholic Faith *which he knows to be incompatible with what he must believe in order to be Catholic.*

If a man held the Pelagian heresy, but wrongly believed that he held the Catholic Faith (concerning matters of grace and free will), then that man would be a *material heretic*. That is, the man would hold the “material” of heresy (*i.e.*, a heretical opinion) *not knowing* it was heresy. But this man would not be a *formal heretic* because he would not know his position was against the teaching of the Catholic Church (and God).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> A formal heretic denies the *formal aspect* of Faith, which is the authority of God. A material heretic denies only the *material aspect* of Faith. Here is how St. Thomas explains this distinction between the Faith’s formal and material aspects:

If we consider, in the Faith, the ***formal aspect of the object***, it is nothing else than the First Truth. For the Faith of which we are speaking, does not ***assent*** to anything, except ***because it is revealed by God***. Hence, the mean [*i.e.*, the middle term of the syllogism] on which Faith is based is the Divine Truth [*i.e.*, God’s authority].

If, however, we consider ***materially the things***

**Definitions** – In summary:

- A person is a ***formal heretic*** if he denies any part of the Catholic Faith in its formal aspect, *i.e.*, if he denies any statement which *he knows* is revealed by the infallible teaching authority of the Church (God). Such denial involves rejecting the Church's (God's) infallible authority itself.
  
- A person is a ***material heretic*** only, if he denies a part of the Catholic Faith in its material aspect only. In other words, a *material heretic* is a person who denies a statement of the Catholic Faith ***without knowing*** the Church (God) teaches that this statement is infallibly true. Such material heretic's denial does not involve rejection of the Church's (God's) infallible authority, because he errs about *what* the Church (God) teaches.

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***to which Faith assents, they include not only God, but also many other things ....***

*Summa*, III, Q.1, a.1, *Respondeo* (emphasis and bracketed words added).

In other words, the formal aspect of the Faith is God alone, because God is the infallible authority of revealed Faith. The material aspect includes many other things, *e.g.*, our Lady's Assumption into heaven, because the material aspect of the Faith includes all the various revealed truths of our Faith.

Thus, a material heretic can be a Catholic. However, a formal heretic cannot be Catholic, because he rejects the Church's (God's) authority by denying part of the Faith, *knowing* that the Church (God) teaches it.

Holding formal heresy always places a person into the state of mortal sin and outside the Church, even if no one else knows about the formal heresy. By contrast, *holding material heresy only*, neither places a person in mortal sin nor outside the Church because the person holds the error against the Faith blamelessly, *i.e., without knowing* his opinion is against the Faith.

Material heresy does not exclude someone from the Church, *no matter how public the heresy is*, no matter how much harm the heresy causes, and no matter how unshakably he professes it. Thus, the very fact that a person professes a heretical opinion does not, in itself, tell us if he is interiorly culpable for a sin against the Faith. In other words, professing heresy does not, in itself, tell us if the person is a formal heretic or whether he is Catholic.

This distinction between *formal heresy* and *material heresy*, is a matter of common sense and is the same type of distinction we make in everyday life, between an objectively sinful act and interior culpability for the sinful act.

When leaving a restaurant, suppose a man takes an umbrella which does not belong to him but which he innocently believes to be his own. He has committed an objectively sinful act of theft (*i.e., wrongfully taking*

someone else's property), but interiorly he has not sinned.<sup>29</sup> There is no sin of theft on the man's soul (*i.e.*, no interior culpability) because taking the umbrella was an innocent mistake.

This man is like the material heretic, who innocently believes a statement which is objectively false (*i.e.*, heresy). Thus, the material heretic is objectively wrong but interiorly blameless for the sin of heresy. By contrast, the formal heretic *knows* he believes something contrary to the Church's (God's) teaching, like a person who takes someone else's umbrella *knowing it is not his own*. The formal heretic is interiorly culpable for his heretical opinion.

Thus, people who profess heresy could be material heretics only, or they could be formal heretics. If they

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<sup>29</sup> Here is how the *Summa Theologica* explains that ignorance can excuse a person from culpability for an act which is objectively sinful:

An act is said to be excused ... on the part of the agent, so that **although the act be evil**, it is not imputed as sin to the agent, or [in the case of an agent who had some culpable negligence] at least not as so grave a sin. Thus, **ignorance is said to excuse** [interior culpability for] **a sin** wholly or partly.

*Summa Supp.*, Q.49, a.4, *Respondeo* (emphasis and bracketed words added).

profess themselves to be Catholics and are material heretics only, their clinging (however tightly and publicly) to objective heresy does not put them outside the Church, since they do not deny the Church's teaching **knowing** the Church (God) teaches the statement infallibly. Such material heretics are merely Catholics who are mistaken about some aspect of the Faith.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Rather than using this traditional Thomistic distinction (as they should), some writers speak of knowing the pope has lost his papal office when his heresy is "manifest".

The word "manifest" means "readily perceived by the senses and especially by the sense of sight".  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manifest>

Taking those writers' statement to mean that we know a pope has lost his office when his formal heresy is manifest, the statement is true. So, *e.g.*, we would know that a pope is not Catholic (and so he is not the head of the Church) if he tells us that he no longer believes what a Catholic must believe presently in order to be Catholic.

But taking those writers' statement to mean that we know a pope has lost his office when his material heresy is manifest, that statement is false, since a pope has not lost his office by ignorantly holding a material heresy which he believes to be part of the Catholic Faith, ***regardless of how public the pope's false opinion (material heresy) is and how widely it has spread.***

By contrast, a person is outside the Church (and is a formal heretic) who rejects a statement of the Faith in its formal aspect, *i.e.*, **knowing** the Church (God) teaches the statement infallibly. This rejection is a rejection of the Church's (God's) authority.

If we were to judge someone to be a formal heretic, we would be judging him to have mortal sin on his soul, since formal heresy always brings interior culpability for mortal sin. Judging someone to be a formal heretic is to conclude that such a person really knows he denies what the Church (God) teaches us that we must believe, but he won't admit that he denies what Catholics must believe.<sup>31</sup>

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Thus, *e.g.*, Pope John XXII ignorantly denied part of the Deposit of the Catholic Faith and caused an international uproar by his widely spread, manifest teaching of material heresy. Pope John XXII was a manifest material heretic but remained pope because he was not a formal heretic. See Chapter 9 below.

<sup>31</sup> In this book, we are not discussing the situation of a non-Catholic (*e.g.*, a Lutheran) who denies a truth of the Catholic Faith and tells us (by his very adherence to Lutheranism) that he is not Catholic and does not believe everything the Catholic Church teaches. When we judge that a Lutheran is not Catholic, we are simply accepting what he tells us about himself. In this book, we are treating the situation of a man who **professes** to be a Catholic but denies part of the Catholic Faith,

## It is Rash Judgment to Judge a Person's Interior Culpability

God wills men to know the unchanging truth especially of the Faith, and this knowledge perfects our intellects. In other words, truth makes our intellects good. In seeking the truth, we should strive to be completely objective in knowing *things* exactly as they are.<sup>32</sup> For this reason, when determining whether a particular statement is against the Catholic Faith, we should judge the statement with complete objectivity.

By contrast, when we judge the motives or culpability of persons, we must judge in the best possible light, not with complete “even-handed objectivity”. ***This is true even if we were usually wrong about such a person's***

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*knowing* it is part of the Catholic Faith.

<sup>32</sup> Here is how St. Thomas explains this principle:

[W]hen we judge of *things* ... there is question of the good of the person who judges [*viz.*, the good of his intellect], if he judges truly, and of his evil [*viz.*, of his intellect] if he judges falsely, because “the true is the good of the intellect, and the false is its evil”, as stated in [Aristotle's] *Ethics*, bk.6, ch.2. Wherefore, everyone should strive to make his judgment accord with *things* as they are.

*Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2 (emphasis and bracketed words added).

*culpability*. Judgments about the culpability of our neighbor are singular, contingent facts (in contrast to eternal, universal truth) and such singular facts do not perfect our intellect. ***It is better to be usually wrong making too-favorable a judgment about a person's culpability than to be wrong even occasionally, making too negative a judgment.***<sup>33</sup> Such an

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<sup>33</sup> Here is how St. Thomas explains this important point:

It is one thing to judge of things and another to judge of men. ... [W]hen we judge of men, the good and evil in our judgment is considered chiefly on the part of the person about whom judgment is being formed. For he is deemed worthy of honor from the very fact that he is judged to be good, and deserving of contempt if he is judged to be evil. For this reason, we ought, in this kind of judgment, to aim at judging a man good, unless the contrary is *proven*. ... **[We] may happen to be deceived more often than not. Yet it is better to err frequently through thinking well of a wicked man, than to err less frequently through having an evil opinion of a good man**, because in the latter case an injury is inflicted, but not in the former. ... **And though we may judge falsely, our judgment in thinking well of another pertains to our goodwill toward him and not to the evil of the intellect, even as neither does it pertain to the intellect's perfection to**



unproven, negative judgment about a person's culpability is called "rash judgment". *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.2, *Respondeo*.

For this reason, when determining whether a person is blamable for holding a heretical opinion, we should *not* judge his interior culpability with complete objectivity but rather, in the best possible light (if we judge at all).<sup>34</sup> For, as St. Thomas explains, following St. Augustine:

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**know the truth of contingent, singular facts in themselves.**

*Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1-2 (emphasis added).

<sup>34</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas teaches the same thing in his *Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel*. He explains that, when Our Lord says "Judge not", this applies:

insofar as regard those things which are not committed to our judgement. Judgement is the Lord's; **He has committed to us the judgement about exterior things, but He has retained to Himself judgement about interior things.** Do not therefore judge concerning these; .... For **no one ought to judge about another that he is a bad man: for doubtful things are to be interpreted according to the better part.**

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel*, lectures on chapter 7, §1.

“Our Lord forbids rash judgment, which is about the inward intention or other uncertain things”.<sup>35</sup>

If a man says he is a Catholic and that he believes that a Catholic is permitted to hold the opinions he does, we should judge him in the best possible light and not assume he “knows” his position is contrary to the Catholic Faith, but won’t admit the “fact”. Nor should we assume that, just because we are unsuccessful in changing his opinion, that this means the man “knows” his position is contrary to what he must believe in order to be Catholic.

Thus, it is good to judge objectively the errors themselves, taught by Pope Francis (or others), because the truth of statements should be judged objectively. But it is rash to judge Pope Francis’s culpability with objective “even-handedness” and assume he certainly “knows” that he holds heresy and thus, is not “really” Catholic (and pope).

To the extent we judge Pope Francis’s interior culpability at all, we must judge in the best possible light. Thus, we would judge him to be a material heretic (not a formal heretic) and judge him to still be Catholic (as he

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<sup>35</sup> *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.2, ad 1.

Further, Our Lord forbids this judging of the interior, subjective culpability of a person, where He warns us: “Judge not, that you may not be judged”. *St. Matthew’s Gospel*, 7:1.

professes to be) and to still be the pope (as he professes to be).

Similarly, whatever objective heresies are held by the 1.2 billion people who profess to be Catholic, we should judge their interior culpability in the best possible light (if we judge at all). We should not conclude they are formal heretics and are not “real” Catholics (as the sedevacantists do). Thus, the virtually unanimous acceptance of Pope Francis by the world’s Catholics, is an alternate way to prove he is the pope. *See*, Chapter 4 above.

### **When can We Conclude Someone is a Formal Heretic?**

We would conclude Pope Francis were a formal heretic if he ***told*** us that he did not believe what the Church (God) teaches that a Catholic must believe *now*. We would not be judging him rashly because we would merely believe what he tells us about himself.

However, it is rash to judge the interior culpability of Pope Francis (or anyone else) and conclude he is a formal heretic simply because he is a material heretic, *i.e.*, has heretical opinions and refuses to be corrected by traditional Catholics.

## Protecting Ourselves from Evil without Judging Interior Culpability

Of course, even when we judge someone is *not* a formal heretic (if we judge him at all), this does not mean we should accept him as our child's catechism teacher. For our child would be harmed by his errors, however interiorly blameless the man might be for professing his heresy.

Without judging someone's interior culpability, we should take into account the person's wrong-doing (which we must judge objectively). For, when a man is prone to take other people's umbrellas, we should keep a close eye on our own umbrella (when he is present) even if he innocently took the other umbrellas in the past.

Likewise, we should warn people not to attend sermons of a particular priest who professes errors against the Faith, even if he teaches these errors innocently. We should be wary and warn others, simply based on the priest's proneness to teach error, whether he is interiorly culpable or not.

Judging any person to be interiorly culpable for his sinful act only results in concluding his soul is lower with regards to our own soul, than would be true if he were not culpable.<sup>36</sup> But our rashly judging his interior culpability *does not allow us to protect ourselves any better than if we didn't judge him.*

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<sup>36</sup> *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2.

## **But isn't it "Obvious" that Pope Francis is a Formal Heretic?**

But "rash judges" will exclaim that it is "obvious" that the man (in the example above) knows he is taking someone else's umbrella (and is interiorly culpable), because his own umbrella is a different color or because he did not bring his own umbrella with him today, *etc.* Notice the hidden assumptions in the "rash judge's" conclusion. He assumes that the "umbrella thief" remembers which umbrella he brought today, *etc.* St. Thomas replies about such rash judgment:

It is better to err frequently through thinking well of a wicked man, than to err less frequently through having an evil opinion of a good man.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, "rash judges" say the pope is "obviously" a formal heretic. They say he "must" know he denies Church teaching because he was trained in the Catholic Faith before Vatican II or that his errors have been pointed out to him, *etc.* Notice the hidden assumptions in the "rash judge's" conclusion. He assumes that the "heretic" had a good (or at least an average) Catholic education, *etc.* St. Thomas replies to these "rash judges" that we must not judge based on such probabilities and assumptions. *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1.

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<sup>37</sup> *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1.

We are not obliged to search for an explanation of how the pope (or anyone else) might not be blamable for whatever objective heresy he holds. The members of the post-Vatican II hierarchy are not stupid, but they received an extremely bad *philosophical* formation, including the principle (which is at the root of modernism) that all truth evolves. By contrast, all correct reasoning (and the Catholic Faith) rely on the *philosophical* principle that there is eternal, unchanging truth.

In his masterful treatment of modernism, Pope St. Pius X explained that modernists profess that all truth changes:

[T]hey have reached that pitch of folly at which they pervert the eternal concept of truth ... [They say] dogma is not only able, but ought to evolve and to be changed. ... Thus far, Venerable Brethren, We have considered the Modernist as a philosopher.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, because of bad *philosophy*, modernists think a dogma used to be true (and used to be taught by the Church) but is no longer true or taught by the Church. This explains why the present hierarchy treats the Church's past teaching, *not as false at the previous time*, but as "obsolete" or no longer binding. For example, former Pope Benedict XVI treated the (truly infallible)

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<sup>38</sup> *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Pope St. Pius X, September 8, 1907, §§ 13-14.

teachings in the syllabi of Pope Pius IX and Pope St. Pius X as if they were now-outdated and no longer true. He says that:

[T]here are decisions of the Magisterium that cannot be a last word on the matter as such, but are, in a substantial fixation of the problem, above all an expression of pastoral prudence, a kind of provisional disposition. Its nucleus remains valid, but the particulars, which the circumstances of the times have influenced, may need further ramifications. In this regard, **one may think of the declarations of popes in the last century about religious liberty, as well as the anti-Modernist decisions at the beginning of this century**, above all, the decisions of the Biblical Commission of the time. **As a cry of alarm in the face of hasty and superficial adaptations, they will remain fully justified.** A personage such as Johann Baptist Metz said, for example, that the Church's anti-Modernist decisions render the great service of preserving her from immersion in the liberal-bourgeois world. **But in the details of the determinations they contain, they become obsolete after having fulfilled their pastoral mission at the proper moment.**<sup>39</sup>

Again, we are not obliged to search for an explanation of how post-Vatican II Catholics (including the pope) avoid

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<sup>39</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger, June 27 1990 *L'Osservatore Romano*, p.6 (emphasis added).

being formal heretics. It suffices that we judge them (if at all) in the most favorable light. Even if a **modernist were absolutely clear in denying a dogma (such as our Lady's Assumption), it would not necessarily mean he was a formal heretic and he ceased to be Catholic.** This is true even assuming that he knows the Church defined the Assumption as a dogma. For a modernist could think the particular dogma *had previously been* true and Catholics *used to* be required to believe it, but that this particular truth has changed.

Such changeability of truth is a *philosophical* error underlying modernism. However, the unchangeability of truth is not itself a dogma of the Faith although this *philosophical* principle underlies Church dogma as well as all natural truth. A person who holds a (materially) heretical position does not become a formal heretic unless he knows that the Catholic Church ***not only used to*** teach a particular dogma, but ***still teaches it and that we must believe it now, in order to be Catholic now.***

A modernist could think that Catholics of a past age would have been required to be martyred rather than deny a particular dogma even though that “former” dogma is now no longer even true. The *false philosophy* underlying modernism corrodes the mind but can be one of many reasons why various modernists are material heretics but not formal heretics. For us, though, “it is better to err frequently through thinking well of a wicked man, than to err less frequently through having an evil opinion of a good man”. *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1.



**A Superior who Punishes his Subordinate in the External Forum, for the Good of the Community, is not thereby Judging Rashly**

Civil and ecclesiastical authorities cannot read the interior souls of their subordinates any more than parents can read the souls of their children. But because these authorities have a special duty to care for the community over which they have charge, they have a duty to punish the wrong-doing of their subordinates, for the good of the whole community.<sup>40</sup> They must use their best efforts to administer justice, although they could be wrong in their particular judgments. God will judge them according to their efforts.

Thus, a civil judge has a duty to punish murderers (and other criminals), although it is possible for him to be

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<sup>40</sup> Here is how St. Thomas explains this principle:

[J]ust as a law cannot be made save by public authority, so neither can a judgment be pronounced except by public authority, which extends over those who are subject to the community [*i.e.*, subject to the particular public authority]. Wherefore, even as it would be unjust for one man to force another to observe a law that was not approved by public authority, so too it is unjust, if a man compels another to submit to a judgment that is pronounced by anyone other than the public authority.

*Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.6, *respondeo*.

mistaken in his judgment. The judge is judging outwardly, *i.e.*, in the external forum. He must do the best he can, and he judges based on the evidence in front of him.

Similarly, Church authorities have a duty to protect the community over which they have been placed, although they could be mistaken in their judgments. These authorities must punish persons who spread heresy even though these authorities could be mistaken, just as a civil judge could be mistaken. Among other punishments, a superior can separate from the flock (excommunicate) the person who spreads heresy. Of course, the easiest way for a superior to protect his flock, is often to try to convince the material heretic that he is wrong, rather than inflict punishment.

Here is how St. Pius X explains the duty of ecclesiastical superiors to judge in the external forum and punish their subordinates' evil deeds, even though the subordinate might not be *interiorly culpable* for any sin:

Although they [the Modernists] express their astonishment that We should number them amongst the enemies of the Church, no one will be reasonably surprised that We should do so, if, ***leaving out of account the internal disposition of the soul, of which God alone is the Judge***, he considers their doctrines, their manner of speech, and their action [which are the

outward, objective criteria upon which a man judges in the external forum].<sup>41</sup>

Thus, as St. Pius X explains, a superior might be mistaken about “*the internal disposition of the soul, of which God alone is the Judge*” but nonetheless, the superior must protect the community over which he has authority, by judging the outward conduct of wrong-doers under him (and punishing, where necessary).

Of course, subordinates do not have this right or duty to judge others. As St. Thomas Aquinas teaches: “[Judgment] is not prohibited to superiors but to subjects; hence they [*viz.*, the superiors] ought to judge only their subjects.” *Lectures on St. Matthew’s Gospel*, ch.7, §1.

### **Sedevacantism is Schism**

Schismatics are “those who refuse to submit to the Sovereign Pontiff, and to hold communion with those members of the Church who acknowledge his supremacy.” *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, *respondeo*. **That** is exactly what sedevacantists do, *viz.*, they refuse to submit to the current pope, asserting that he has no authority over them because he is not “really” the pope.

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<sup>41</sup> *Pascendi*, Pope St. Pius X, §3 (emphasis and bracketed words added).

We should not confuse the sin of schism (which is refusing submission to the authority of the *current* pope), with the sin of heresy, in which a person rejects as a matter of principle the authority possessed by the papal office (*e.g.*, that a pope is infallible when speaking *ex cathedra*).<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to the course taken by sedevacantists, traditional Catholics have a duty to recognize that the current pope has authority over us. Even though we frequently cannot do what the pope commands us, we must “acknowledge his supremacy”, as St. Thomas

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<sup>42</sup> Here is how St. Thomas explains this distinction:

Heresy and schism are distinguished in respect of those things to which each is opposed essentially and directly. For heresy is essentially opposed to faith, while schism is essentially opposed to the unity of ecclesiastical charity. Wherefore, just as faith and charity are different virtues, although whoever lacks faith lacks charity, so too schism and heresy are different vices, although whoever is a heretic is also a schismatic, but not conversely. This is what Jerome says in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians: “I consider the difference between schism and heresy to be that heresy holds false doctrine while schism severs a man from the Church.”

*Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, ad 3.

teaches we must.<sup>43</sup> We do what the pope commands us to do, if we can do so in good conscience. Thus, for example, if Pope Francis commanded Catholics to recite at least five decades of the rosary each day, under pain of sin, we would be bound in conscience to do this, under pain of sin.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, “schism severs a man from the Church.”<sup>45</sup> But when a man holds this false position that we have no pope, he does so either culpably (*i.e.*, he “knows better”) or it is an innocent error. If the sedevacantist is blameless for his error, then he has no interior culpability (no sin on his soul), like the man who commits the objective act of theft by innocently (although wrongfully) taking someone else’s umbrella.

So sedevacantism is *always* an act of schism. But it is material schism only, if the particular sedevacantist is not interiorly culpable for his false opinion that we have no pope. By contrast, the sedevacantist is a formal schismatic, if he has interior culpability because he truly “knows better”. This distinction (between material and

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<sup>43</sup> *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, *Respondeo*.

<sup>44</sup> Incidentally, Pope Francis professes to recite 15 decades per day.  
<http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=17311&repos=4&subrepos=2&searchid=998115>

<sup>45</sup> *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, ad 3 (St. Thomas Aquinas, quoting St. Jerome).

formal schism) is analogous to the distinction between material and formal heresy.

For the reasons set forth above (concerning the sin of rash judgment), we must not judge particular sedevacantists to be formal schismatics, unless they tell us they are schismatics (in which case, we would merely be believing them). But, if we judge individual sedevacantists at all, we must judge them in the best possible light, even if we would “err frequently through thinking well of” them. *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1.

### **The Common Root of Schism and Rash Judgment, is not an Accident**

As St. Thomas teaches, the sin of “schism is essentially opposed to the unity of ecclesiastical charity.” *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, ad 3.

Rash judgment also, is a sin against charity. One way to see this is true, is that we would want our neighbor to judge us (if at all) in the best possible light. If we do not judge our neighbor this same way, we fail to “do unto others”, as we would have them “do unto” us. *St. Matthew’s Gospel*, 7:12. Thus, we are not loving and treating our neighbor, as ourselves, as required by the Second Great Commandment. *St. Matthew’s Gospel*, 22:39.

Further, our judgments should always be made with a “habit of charity”. *Summa*, Q.60, a.4, *respondeo* & a.2, ad 1. We must judge our neighbor (if at all) according to

“our goodwill toward him”, ready to believe the best of him. *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2. For charity “believeth all things”. 1 *Corinthians*, 13: 7. Our Lord “forbids judgment which proceeds not from benevolence but from bitterness of heart.” *Summa*, Q.60, a.2, ad 1.

Although we do not judge the interior culpability of particular sedevacantists, it is not by chance that schism and rash judgment are both, at their root, sins against charity. This connection is no more by chance than the fact that gluttons tend to commit other kinds of sins connected to gluttony, such as pampering their flesh through inordinate attachment to bodily comfort. (These connections between sins are objectively true, regardless of a particular person’s culpability.)

### **Summary of this chapter**

A person could profess heresy but still be Catholic, if he were a material heretic only. We must not judge a man’s interior culpability. Therefore, we must not judge a man to be a formal heretic if he professes to be Catholic and says he believes what a Catholic must believe now, in order to be Catholic now. We must judge in the most favorable light (if at all) the interior culpability of the pope and the 1.2 billion people who profess to be Catholic. We must not judge they are not “real” Catholics.

Thus, we must judge Pope Francis to be a material heretic, not a formal heretic, and that he is the pope. We must judge (if at all) that the 1.2 billion people who

profess to be Catholic, are (most of them) material heretics. Thus, their acceptance of Pope Francis is a further proof he is pope. See, chapter 4 above

Finally, all sedevacantists are in schism – material or formal – depending on whether they are culpable for their error.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Sedevacantism is Un-Catholic Because it is Revolutionary**

Resistance is different from revolt. When someone in authority commands something evil, it is one thing to resist that command, but it is a further step to use that evil command as a basis for rejecting the ruler's authority *as such*. This further step is to revolt.

For example, the American revolutionaries considered it evil that King George III imposed taxes on them without their consent, and did many other things to which they objected. But the American revolutionaries not only resisted such commands of King George but also used the commands as a (purported) “justification” for their revolution.

In their *Declaration of Independence*, the revolutionaries objected to many things such as their king “quartering large bodies of armed troops among us”; “imposing taxes on us without our consent”; and “depriving us in many



cases, of the benefits of trial by jury”.

After listing their grievances, the American revolutionaries then did what all revolutionaries do: they said that their ruler was to blame for their own revolution because his conduct caused him to lose his status as their king. The American revolutionaries declared that King George III “whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.”

The American revolutionaries did what revolutionaries always do: they declared that their ruler had lost all authority over them. Here are their words:

[T]hese United Colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved.

Finally, the American revolutionaries then did something else which revolutionaries always do: they declared that it was their right (or duty) to revolt:

[W]hen a long train of abuses and usurpations ... evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is [the colonies'] right, it is their duty, to throw off such government.

This is what it is to be a revolutionary: to reject and resist not just particular (perhaps evil) commands but to also reject the very authority of his ruler.

The American revolutionaries followed the same pattern as countless other revolutionaries, *e.g.*, in France, Russia, Latin America, and the Protestant revolutionaries. In all human history – civil as well as religious – there is ***not even one*** revolution<sup>46</sup> which the Catholic Church recognizes to have been praiseworthy and not sinful.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Generally, political revolt is called by the name “sedition”, and revolt against the Church, by the name “schism”. But at the root of all such revolts, there is the same “*non serviam!*” which echoes that of Satan, the father of all revolutionaries.

<sup>47</sup> If there could have ever been a place and circumstances where revolution could have appeared justified, it would have been a civil revolution by Catholics in newly-apostate England, where the English government inflicted horrors and injustices of every type upon the Catholics. The torture, imprisonment, extreme suffering, and martyrdom inflicted on Catholics and the outrageous confiscation of Catholic property seemed unbearable to many. *See, e.g.*, Chapters 1-3 of *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, by Fr. John Gerard, S.J., *Quanta Cura Press*. This book is a fascinating contemporaneous account of the Anglican and Puritan persecutions of Catholics during the reign of King James I, as the context of the Gunpowder Plot.

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Because of the Anglicans' and Puritans' shocking treatment of Catholics, Guy Fawkes and a few other Catholics devised the Gunpowder Plot to blow-up the parliament building when King James I was there with the rest of England's leaders. However, the two consecutive popes of the time, as well as all of the Jesuit superiors and priests in England all strongly forbade Catholics to take part in such plots or otherwise to revolt against their rightful King, James I.

In his contemporaneous account of the Gunpowder Plot and the savage persecutions leading up to this plot, Fr. John Gerard explains:

All Catholics received strict commandment from the See Apostolic, that in no case they should stir or attempt anything against His Majesty [*viz.*, King James I of England] or the State [*viz.*, England], and this both from Pope Clement VIII, of pious memory, and from Paulus Vtus [*viz.*, Pope Paul V] that now sitteth in the Chair, who both before and since his assumption to that supreme dignity of governing the Church of Christ, hath showed [*sic*] himself most earnest to procure the quiet, safety, and security of our Sovereign [*viz.*, King James I], ... [and by ordering] that no Catholic people should go about to interrupt or trouble the same [*viz.*, King James I of England] by their impatient proceedings ....

*Id.*, page 120.

In summary, revolutionaries (including the sedevacantists) follow a common pattern:

1. they assert that their ruler committed wrongs (whether actual wrongs or merely imagined); and then
2. they use such wrongs as a basis to declare that their ruler's own conduct has resulted in his losing his authority to rule them.

### **The Cristeros were Not Revolutionaries**

On a superficial level, a person might have the false impression that the Mexican Cristeros were revolutionaries because they took up arms against their anti-Catholic ruler in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. But the Cristeros' goal was to defend their priests, their churches, and the Catholicism of their families. The Cristeros resisted the many wrongs committed by their anti-Catholic government. By successfully taking up arms, the Cristeros prevented the anti-Catholic government from unjustly harming them (arresting them, killing them, *etc.*).

But unlike persons who *are* revolutionaries, the Cristeros never used their government's wrongs as a basis to declare that their government had lost all

authority over them.<sup>48</sup> Instead, by taking up arms, the Cristeros merely prevented their lawful but anti-Catholic government from doing the harm it intended.

### **Sedevacantists are Revolutionaries**

Unlike the Cristeros, sedevacantists *are* revolutionaries. Sedevacantists correctly recognize that the pope has committed many wrongs. Instead of resisting only the pope's wrongs, the sedevacantists follow the pattern of other revolutionaries by using these wrongs as a basis for denying that the pope has his authority and office. Like other revolutionaries, they blame the pope for their own revolt, saying that his words and actions have caused him to lose his authority over them.

Some sedevacantists vainly attempt to avoid their status as revolutionaries, by saying they are not revolting against their ruler (the pope) because his conduct caused him to lose his status as their ruler (pope). But they fail to see how they *beg the question*. This would be like the American revolutionaries saying they are not revolting against their ruler (King George III) because his conduct makes him not their real ruler. Such circular "reasoning" merely assumes their conclusion as a premise for their "argument" that they are not revolutionaries. In other words, they claim that they do

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<sup>48</sup> To read more on the Cristeros, read *Latin America: A Sketch of its Glorious Catholic Roots and a Snapshot of its Present*, by the Editors of *Quanta Cura Press*, pp. 40-42, ©2016.

not deny the authority of the ruler over them because they deny he has the authority of the ruler over them.

Of course, the Church is several rulers (popes) past the beginning of the sedevacantist revolution. Having revolted against Pope John XXIII, sedevacantists take as a “matter of course” the rejection of the subsequent popes’ authority, just as the American Revolutionaries took as a “matter of course” that King George III’s successors had no authority over them.

A person might wrongly believe that sedevacantists are not revolutionaries, based on the superficial supposition that revolution must involve physical fighting. But what is essential to revolution is for persons to declare that their ruler has lost his *authority* to rule them. A revolution need not involve physical fighting. For example, the Hawaiian Revolution of 1893 did not involve any physical fighting. Likewise, any physical fighting was not essential to the Protestant Revolution against the Catholic Church.

Also, a person might wrongly believe sedevacantism is not revolutionary, based on the superficial supposition that revolution must involve deposing a ruler from his throne or office. However, what is essential to revolution is the *rejection of a ruler’s authority*, but this might pertain to only certain persons or places. For example, in the American Revolution, the colonists did not cause King George III to lose his throne entirely. They succeeded merely in revolting against his authority in the thirteen American colonies. Similarly, the Protestant Revolution did not depose the pope from his throne but

the Protestant revolutionaries merely rejected his authority among certain persons or places.

### **Revolution is Always Wrong**

It is un-Catholic to be a revolutionary. All authority comes from God, regardless of the method by which a ruler is chosen to wield civil or religious power. Here is how St. Paul teaches this truth:

[T]here is no power but from God: and those [powers] that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation. ... For [the ruler] is God's minister. ... Wherefore, **be subject of necessity**, not only for [the ruler's] wrath, but also **for conscience's sake**.

Romans, ch.13, vv. 1-2 & 4-5 (emphasis added).<sup>49</sup>

Pope Pius IX faithfully echoed St. Paul:

[A]ll authority comes from God. Whoever resists authority resists the ordering made by God Himself, consequently achieving his own condemnation; ***disobeying authority is always***

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<sup>49</sup> God also declares: "By Me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things; by Me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice." *Proverbs*, 8:15-16.

*sinful except when an order is given which is opposed to the laws of God and the Church.*

*Qui Pluribus*, November 9, 1846, §22.

Pope Pius IX taught this same doctrine in his infallible **condemnation** of the following proposition:

**It is permissible** to refuse obedience to legitimate rulers, and even **to revolt** against them.

*Quanta Cura*, proposition #63 (emphasis added).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Pope Pius IX used his *ex cathedra* (infallible) authority to condemn this error as part of a list of errors contained in the syllabus of *Quanta Cura*. Regarding these condemnations, the pope said:

We, truly mindful of Our Apostolic duty, and especially solicitous about our most holy religion, about sound doctrine and the salvation of souls divinely entrusted to Us, and about the good of human society itself, have decided to lift our voice again. And so all and each evil opinion and doctrine individually mentioned in this letter, by Our Apostolic authority We reject, proscribe and condemn; and We wish and command that they be considered as absolutely rejected, proscribed and condemned by all the sons of the Catholic Church.

Thus, Pope Pius IX's condemnation fulfills the conditions for infallibility set out in Vatican I's



Pope Leo XIII taught the same doctrine as St. Paul and Pope Pius IX:

If, however, it should ever happen that public power is exercised by rulers rashly and beyond measure, **the doctrine of the Catholic Church does not permit rising up against them** on one's own terms, lest quiet and order be more and more disturbed, or lest society receive greater harm therefrom.<sup>51</sup>

Because it is sinful to even willfully desire to sin, Pope Leo XIII taught that even the “desire for revolution” is a “vice”. *Auspicato Concessu*, §24.

Although revolution is forbidden, Pope Leo XIII gave us the remedies of patience, prayer, and **resistance to the particular evil commands** of a bad ruler:

Whenever matters have come to such a pass that no other hope of a solution is evident, [the doctrine of the Catholic Church] teaches that a remedy is to

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document, *Pastor Aeternus*, because the pope was:  
1) carrying out his duty as pastor and teacher of all Christians; 2) in accordance with his supreme apostolic authority; 3) on a matter of faith or morals; 4) to be held by the universal Church.

<sup>51</sup> Encyclical, *Quod Apostolici muneris*, December 28, 1878, §7 (emphasis added).

be hastened through the merits of Christian patience, and by urgent prayers to God.

But if the decisions of legislators and rulers should sanction or order something that is contrary to divine and natural law, the dignity and duty of the Christian name and the opinion of the apostles urge that “we ought to obey God, rather than men” (Acts 5:29).<sup>52</sup>

St. Thomas offers the same remedy to persons who suffer the evil of a bad ruler:

[S]ometimes God permits evil rulers to afflict good men. This affliction is for the good of such good men, as St. Paul says above [ch.8, v.28]: “All things work for the good, for those who love God.”<sup>53</sup>

### **The Example of the Saints shows Revolution is Wrong**

Look at the example of Catholics, including great saints like St. Sebastian, who served bravely and faithfully even in the army of the pagan emperors of Rome. They did not revolt, *even when their emperor openly*

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<sup>52</sup> *Quod Apostolici muneris*, December 28, 1878, §7 (bracketed words added to show context).

<sup>53</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Romans*, ch.13, lect.1.

***sought to kill all Catholics*** (although, of course, those soldier-saints did not aid in the persecution of Catholics).

Here is Pope Gregory XVI's praise for those Roman soldier-saints, who were faithful to God first but also to their emperor (whenever the emperor's commands were not themselves evil):

[T]he early Christians ... deserved well of the emperors and of the safety of the state even while persecution raged. This they proved splendidly by their fidelity in *performing perfectly and promptly whatever they were commanded which was **not opposed to their religion***, and even more by their constancy and the shedding of their blood in battle. "Christian soldiers", says St. Augustine, "served an infidel emperor. When the issue of Christ was raised, they acknowledged no one but the One who is in heaven. They distinguished the eternal Lord from the temporal lord, but were *also subject to the temporal lord for the sake of the eternal Lord.*"

St. Mauritius, the unconquered martyr and leader of the Theban legion had this in mind when, as St. Eucharius reports, he answered the emperor in these words: "We are your soldiers, Emperor, but also servants of God, and this we confess freely . . . and now *this final necessity of life has **not driven us into rebellion.***" ...

Indeed, the faith of the early Christians shines more brightly, if we consider with Tertullian, that

since the Christians were not lacking in numbers and in troops, they could have acted as foreign enemies. “We are but of yesterday”, he says, “yet we have filled all your cities, islands, fortresses, municipalities, assembly places, the camps themselves, the tribes, the divisions, the palace, the senate, the forum. ... For what war should we not have been fit and ready even if unequal in forces – we who are so glad to be cut to pieces – were it not, of course, that *in our doctrine we would have been permitted more to be killed rather than to kill?* ... [Y]ou have fewer enemies because of the multitude of Christians.”

*These beautiful examples of the unchanging subjection to the rulers necessarily proceeded from the most holy precepts of the Christian religion.*<sup>54</sup>

### **Summary of this chapter so far**

As shown above, it is Catholic dogma that revolution is always wrong but that resisting the particular evil commands of our ruler **is** permitted and sometimes necessary. When resisting is just, such resistance might include taking up arms and fighting the government

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<sup>54</sup> Encyclical *Mirari Vos*, August 15, 1832, §§ 18-19 (emphasis added), quoting and relying on the teaching of St. Augustine (Doctor and Father of the Church), as well as St. Mauritius, and Tertullian (a Father of the Church).

soldiers who seek to enforce the ruler's evil orders. The Cristeros did this in Mexico.

If the evil is great enough, the resisters may even place themselves beyond the reach of the harm which the ruler seeks to unjustly inflict on them. The Cristeros did this, succeeding in defending three quarters of Mexico from the anti-Catholic harm attempted by Mexico's government.<sup>55</sup>

However, even when strong resistance is justified by the greatness of the evil attempted by the ruler, those persons resisting the evil are not permitted to revolt, *i.e.*, to declare that the ruler has ceased to be their ruler. The ruler does not lose his authority *in principle*, even when the resisters prevent him by force of arms from accomplishing *in practice* the evil he wishes to do. This is the meaning of *Quanta Cura's infallible condemnation* of the assertion that “**It is permissible ... to revolt**”. (See above.)

Regarding the early soldier-saints fighting in the Roman army (see above) even while the emperor martyred Catholics: those Catholic soldier-saints faithfully served their emperor in honorable activities and never aided the Roman persecution of Catholics. Those soldier-saints of Rome did not choose to do what the Cristeros did, *viz.*, defend themselves (without revolting). As quoted above, St. Augustine, Pope Gregory XVI and the other

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<sup>55</sup> *Latin America: A Sketch of its Glorious Catholic Roots and a Snapshot of its Present*, by the Editors of *Quanta Cura Press*, pp. 41, ©2016.

authorities do not address the option of armed resistance, while they praise those soldier-saints for not revolting.

**A note about a different but related issue:  
determining whether a ruler is the *legitimate* ruler**

Above, we see that Catholics must never revolt against their *legitimate* ruler (although they may resist his evil commands). However, a person can ask: “how do we know when a ruler is *legitimate*?”

This chapter does not lay out principles from which we can know in all cases if a ruler is legitimate. There are many ways a ruler might not be the legitimate ruler. Here is an easy case of a ruler being illegitimate:

When the head of a foreign, attacking army first lands on a country’s soil and immediately declares himself the legitimate ruler of the country simply because he is there and is strong, this seems like an easy case that he is a usurper and not a rightful, legitimate ruler of the country he is attacking. The people of that country can deny his authority over them and fight against him to try to expel him from the country.

In this chapter, we don’t treat the various possible ways in which a ruler might be illegitimate since we don’t *need* to do that because the sedevacantists begin their revolution against a pope whom they recognize as having begun his reign as a legitimate pope. The sedevacantists do not raise a doubt about Pope John XXIII’s coming to

be pope. For example, the sedevacantists do not claim that the papal conclave did not conduct a proper vote. The sedevacantists reject the pope's authority because of what he did and said, not because he had never been their ruler (pope) in the first place.

This is like the American revolutionaries, who did not say that King George III was never their king, *e.g.*, because he was not the proper heir to the throne of England. Instead, sedevacantists and the American revolutionaries declare that their ruler lost his legitimacy (his authority) because of what he said and did. For this reason, the sedevacantists are revolutionaries.

Thus, although there are many circumstances in which it would not be revolution to deny that a particular ruler was legitimate and had authority because of how he (supposedly) received his office, that is not an issue either with the American revolutionaries or with the sedevacantists who claim their ruler (the king and the pope respectively) *lost* his authority by his actions.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Of course, as noted above, having revolted against Pope John XXIII, sedevacantists now take as a “matter of course” the rejection of all subsequent popes’ authority, just as the American revolutionaries took as a “matter of course” that King George III’s successors had no authority over them.

## **Prohibition against *All Revolution* especially Forbids Rebellion against the Pope's Authority as such**

Since the Catholic Church's ruler, above all others, has authority from God, the sin of revolution most especially applies to revolt against the pope's authority, as such. Thus, St. Robert Bellarmine, Doctor of the Church, explains that:

[I]t is licit to resist the Pontiff who ... tries to destroy the Church. I say that it is licit to resist him by not doing what he orders and by impeding the execution of his will; it is *not licit*, however, to ***judge him, to punish him, or depose him***, for these are acts proper to a superior.<sup>57</sup>

## **Sedevacantism is an Over-simplification**

*A Catholic Dictionary* characterizes the traits of revolution in this way:

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<sup>57</sup> *De Summo pontifice* Book II, Ch. 29  
(emphasis added).

St. Robert Bellarmine is here pointing out that whereas the pope can depose the bishop of a diocese because the pope is that bishop's superior, we cannot depose the pope because no one, including us, is his superior.



The methods of the Gospel are *not revolutionary*; they do not deal in those *sweeping general assertions* which fuller experience always shows to be but *half-truths*.<sup>58</sup>

A sedevacantist exhibits such revolutionary traits. He “leaps” from the truth that the pope has taught and done much evil, to the declaration that we have no pope. Thus, the sedevacantist over-simplifies the truth through *sweeping general assertions* and *half-truths* about his ruler.

### Conclusion of this chapter

Without judging sedevacantists’ interior culpability, it is nonetheless plain that sedevacantists follow the objectively sinful pattern of revolutionaries. They assert that the wrongs committed by the pope – who is their ruler – are (purported) justification for declaring he has lost his authority to rule them and is not the pope.

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<sup>58</sup> *A Catholic Dictionary*, Addis & Arnold, Article: *Slavery*, The Catholic Publication Society, New York, 1884, pp.767-68 (emphasis added).

## Chapter 7

# Our Catholic Duty: Resist the Harm Done by a Bad Pope But (Of Course) Recognize His Authority

Two different mortal sins prevent an informed Catholic from being a sedevacantist:

1. If we rashly judge the pope to be a formal heretic because he is a material heretic, this is a mortal sin (because it is the sin of rash judgment on a grave matter). *See*, Chapter 5 above.
2. If we revolt against the pope's authority *as such*, this is a mortal sin of revolution. *See*, Chapter 6 above.

Therefore, because Catholics must neither be rash-judgers nor revolutionaries, we must recognize the authority of the pope who is in the Vatican.

### **Although Recognizing the Pope's Authority, We must also Recognize His Evil Conduct**

When judging a person's interior culpability, it must be done (if at all) in the most favorable light. By contrast, *we judge a person's statements and actions objectively and we must resist objective evil and error, however blameless its proponent might be. Summa, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2.*

Thus, we assume the best (if we assume anything) about the pope's interior, subjective culpability, but we also must recognize that the current pope's words and deeds are often objectively evil.

### **True Obedience is Subordinate to Faith and Must Conform to Faith**

The virtue of obedience is a subordinate virtue under the Cardinal Virtue of Justice.<sup>59</sup> Faith and Charity are superior.<sup>60</sup>

Because obedience is subordinate to Faith, the Apostles told the Jews that “we ought to obey God, rather than men.” *Acts*, 5:29.

Pope Leo XIII faithfully echoed the Apostles in teaching this truth:

[W]here a law is enacted contrary to reason, or to the eternal law, or to some ordinance of God, obedience is unlawful, lest, while obeying man, we become disobedient to God.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.104. a2.

<sup>60</sup> *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.4 a.7 *sed cont.* & ad 3; IIa IIae, Q.23 a.6.

<sup>61</sup> *Libertas Praestantissimum*, §§ 11 &13.

For this reason, “anyone who obeys the sinful command of his superior, commits the sin of disobedience to God’s law.”<sup>62</sup>

### **But What Should We Do, While the Pope Harms the Church (in Her Human Element)?**

When a superior (*e.g.*, the pope) commands that we do something wrong (including the instruction to believe something false), the Catholic response is: ***We resist!*** This is why Pope St. Gregory the Great, Doctor of the Church, taught:

Know that **evil ought never to be done** through obedience, though sometimes something good, which is being done, ought to be discontinued out of obedience.<sup>63</sup>

When we resist a superior’s sinful conduct (or command), we do not thereby reject the superior’s authority as such, but only his evil conduct (or command). St. Thomas made this crucial distinction when he discussed St. Paul resisting St. Peter, the first pope, to his face, in *Galatians*, 2:11. St. Thomas explained that “the Apostle

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<sup>62</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.33, a.7, ad.5 (Here is the Latin: “...*ipse peccaret praecipiens, et ei obediens, quasi contra praeceptum Domini agens...*”).

<sup>63</sup> Pope St. Gregory the Great, *De Moral.*, bk. XXXV, §29 (emphasis added).

opposed Peter in the *exercise* of authority, **not in his authority of ruling.**<sup>64</sup>

### **The Duty to Resist a Pope's Abuse of Authority, Pertains to Matters of Faith and Morals as well**

The principle of resisting any superior's evil command, applies to **any** evil command – whether to do something, to say something or to believe something.

Thus, a pope might command us to believe his errors on matters of Faith. The pope can make such errors whenever he is not speaking *ex cathedra*. The First Vatican Council carefully listed the conditions for papal infallibility, because only when the pope fulfills **all** of the conditions, is he infallibly prevented from erring on matters of Faith or morals. At any other time, the pope might err on those matters, triggering a Catholic's duty to resist the error.

*A Catholic Dictionary* explains that truth in this way:

Even when he [*viz.*, the pope] speaks with Apostolic Authority [which is only **one** of the conditions for papal infallibility], he may err. The Vatican Council only requires us to believe that God protects him from error in definitions on faith

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<sup>64</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistulas S. Pauli, Ad Galatas*, Ch.2, Lectio III (emphasis added).

or morals when he imposes a belief on the Universal Church.<sup>65</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that, when St. Paul resisted St. Peter to the face [Galatians, 2:11], the “impending danger of scandal” St. Peter caused, concerned something that was “with respect to the Faith.” *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.33, a.4, ad 2.

Pope Paul IV tells us we are right to resist the pope whenever he deviates from the Faith:

[T]he Roman Pontiff, who is the representative upon earth of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, who holds the fullness of power over peoples and kingdoms, who may judge all and be judged by none in this world, may nonetheless be **contradicted if he be found to have deviated from the Faith.**<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, St. Robert Bellarmine assures us that we are right to resist a pope who uses his office to attack souls (whether through false doctrine or bad morals):

Just as *it is licit to resist a Pontiff* who attacks the body, so also is it licit to resist him *who*

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<sup>65</sup> *A Catholic Dictionary*, under the topic “Pope”, Addis & Arnold, The Catholic Publication Society, New York, 1884, pp.767-68 (bracketed comments added).

<sup>66</sup> *Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio*, §1 (emphasis added).

*attacks souls or* destroys the civil order or above all, *tries to destroy the Church*. I say that it is licit to resist him by not doing what he orders and by impeding the execution of his will. It is not licit, however, to judge, to punish, or to depose him, for these are acts proper to a superior.<sup>67</sup>

St. Thomas explains the reason for this distinction St. Robert Bellarmine makes, *viz.*, that we are right to resist (*i.e.*, correct) the pope or other superior, but we cannot punish or depose him:

A subordinate is not competent to administer to his prelate the correction which is an act of justice through the coercive nature of punishment. But the fraternal correction which is an act of charity is within the competency of everyone in respect of any person towards whom he is bound by charity, provided there be something in that person which requires correction.<sup>68</sup>

Juan Cardinal de Torquemada (revered medieval theologian responsible for the formulation of the doctrines that were defined at the Council of Florence) teaches:

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<sup>67</sup> *De Romano Pontifice*, St. Robert Bellarmine, Bk.2, ch.29 (emphasis added).

<sup>68</sup> *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.33, a. 4, *respondeo*.

It is necessary to obey God rather than men. Therefore, where the Pope would command something contrary to Sacred Scripture, or to an article of Faith, or to the truth of the Sacraments, or to a command of the Natural Law or of the Divine Law, he ought not to be obeyed, but such command ought to be despised.<sup>69</sup>

### **Conclusion of this chapter**

Because Catholics must not be rash-judgers or revolutionaries, we recognize the authority of the pope. But because we must obey God rather than men when a pope abuses his authority, we must resist a bad pope when he does harm.

## **Chapter 8 Judging the Pope's Words & Deeds According to Catholic Tradition**

It is (objectively) a mortal sin of rash judgment for a person to decide that the pope is a formal heretic. *See* Chapter 5 above. It is (objectively) a mortal sin of

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<sup>69</sup> *Summa de Ecclesia*, bk.2, ch.49, p.163B.



revolution for a person to declare the pope has lost his authority *as such*. See Chapter 6 above.

On the other hand, it is also clear that we have a duty to resist the pope's errors and the harm he causes. See Chapter 7 above.

However, we are not Church Doctors or popes. How do we know what is true (and what to believe), unless we simply believe whatever the pope teaches us? But on the other hand, if we do not decide for ourselves what to believe, then how do we know when we have a duty to resist what the pope says or does?

One false argument many sedevacantists use, is to present the following false alternatives:

- **Either** you must deny the authority of the pope in the Vatican (as they do);
- **Or** you must accept *everything* he does and says. Because (these sedevacantists say), if he were pope and you pick and choose what you accept from him, then (they say) it shows you have a protestant mentality (of picking and choosing).

This sedevacantist "argument" relies on a false understanding of papal infallibility.

## The pope's *ex cathedra* infallibility

We know the pope's words are infallible (*viz., from the very fact that he utters them*), *only* when he:

speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when:

1. in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians,
2. in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority,
3. he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals,
4. to be held by the whole church.<sup>70</sup>

Here is an example of Pope Pius IX speaking *ex cathedra*, fulfilling these conditions, in *Quanta Cura* (with its syllabus of errors):

We, truly mindful of Our Apostolic duty, and especially solicitous about our most holy religion, about sound doctrine and the salvation of souls divinely entrusted to Us, and about the good of human society itself, have decided to lift our voice again. And so all and each evil opinion and doctrine individually mentioned in this letter, by Our Apostolic authority, We reject, proscribe and

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<sup>70</sup> Dogmatic definition quoted from Vatican I, Session 4, ch.4. (We will treat elsewhere concerning the teachings of a Church Council.)

condemn; and We wish and command that they be considered as absolutely rejected, proscribed and condemned by all the sons of the Catholic Church.

The post-conciliar popes have taught nothing false which fulfills these rigid conditions for *ex cathedra* infallibility.

### **Popes can err in all other teachings**

Popes can err in any other teachings, unless those teachings are themselves a faithful repetition of truth contained in infallible Catholic Tradition. No pope (or anyone else) can err when faithfully repeating the teachings of Catholic Tradition.

But popes cannot teach any new doctrine infallibly. As the First Vatican Council declared: “the Holy Ghost was promised to the successors of Peter **not** so that they might, by His revelation, make known some **new doctrine**”.<sup>71</sup>

### **We must measure all doctrine according to its fidelity to Catholic Tradition**

Catholic catechisms distinguish between the pope’s infallible and non-infallible teachings because infallible teachings cannot conflict with the Catholic Faith (but rather, are part of it), whereas non-infallible teachings

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<sup>71</sup> Vatican I, Session 4, ch.4 (emphasis added).

might conflict with the Catholic Faith. This distinction warns Catholics to accept all infallible teachings without possibility of error, but to accept the non-infallible teachings only provided that they do not conflict with the Catholic Faith, including infallible Catholic Tradition, *i.e.*, the consistent teachings of the Catholic Church through the ages.

This distinction (between the pope's infallible and non-infallible teachings) also shows that Catholics must both understand their Faith and measure other teachings against that standard (*viz.*, infallible Catholic Tradition).

This is why St. Paul instructed his flock to “hold fast to the traditions which you have learned, whether by word, or by our epistle.” *2 Thessalonians*, 2:14. St. Paul is telling Catholics to measure all doctrine according to Catholic Tradition.

St. Paul further warned his flock to reject all new or different doctrines, which do not fit with the Tradition he taught them: “If anyone preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema”. *Galatians*, 1:9.

In the year 434, St. Vincent Lerins, gave this same rule to all Catholics: *viz.*, to adhere to Catholic Tradition and reject what is contrary:

[I]n the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense “Catholic” ....

[I]f some new contagion were to try to poison no longer a small part of the Church, but all of the Church at the same time, then [a Catholic] **will take the greatest care to attach himself to antiquity which, obviously, can no longer be seduced by any lying novelty.**

*Commonitorium*, Chs. 2-3 (emphasis added).

St. Athanasius, Doctor of the Church and Patriarch of Alexandria, told his flock that faithful adherence to Tradition shows who is Catholic: “Even if **Catholics faithful to Tradition** are reduced to a handful, they are the ones who are the true Church of Jesus Christ.” St. Athanasius’ letter to his flock (emphasis added).

This Catholic duty to judge all doctrines according to Catholic Tradition, is described in *Liberalism is a Sin*:

[B]y use of their reason[,] the faithful are enabled to suspect and measure the orthodoxy of any new doctrine presented to them, by comparing it with a doctrine already defined. If it be not in accord, ... they can lawfully hold it as perverse and declare it such, warn others against it, raise the cry of alarm and strike the first blow against it. The faithful layman can do all this, and has done it at all times, with the applause of the Church.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Liberalism is a Sin*, by Fr. Felix Sarda y Salvany, 1886, ch.32.

Not only does the Church instruct us to measure new doctrines according to Catholic Tradition, but even the way God made the human mind *requires* this measurement. When we understand a truth of our Faith, we understand there is a connection between the particular subject and predicate which form that truth. For example, we understand that our Faith teaches us there is the link between “God” and “omnipotent”, so that we profess that “God is omnipotent”. For this reason, we know the opposite statement (*i.e.*, de-linking this subject and predicate) must be false, *viz.*, that “God is **not** omnipotent”.

If a person wrongly supposes that a Catholic is forbidden to compare current conciliar teachings, with Catholic Tradition, this position would forbid a Catholic from understanding what he is saying (and believing) when he is professing his Faith. (In the above example, it would forbid a Catholic from noting that “God is omnipotent” is the opposite of “God is **not** omnipotent”.) Similarly, by knowing what the Church has always taught and knowing the conciliar church’s teaching, a Catholic cannot help but notice these teachings are often opposites.

To say that a Catholic is forbidden to notice this opposition would be simply to say that Catholics are forbidden to understand, and must simply memorize the sounds of words without understanding their meaning. In other words, Catholic Tradition itself “measures” the conciliar church’s teachings. Faithful Catholics merely notice this fact.

In contrast to our duty to measure all doctrines according to Catholic Tradition, Protestants wrongly set their own private judgment as the measure and rule of all faith. So, a Protestant chooses what he wants to believe (*i.e.*, ***either*** the new ***or*** the old teaching). But God chooses what Catholics must believe (Catholic Tradition) and we must measure everything according to this standard.

**Catholics do not have a “cut off” date, after which they ignore papal teaching.**

Because sedevacantists deny the post-conciliar popes’ authority *as such*, they ignore all papal words and deeds after the “cut off” date they choose based on when they (wrongly) decide that the Church last had a pope. Beginning on that date, they ignore what the pope says, regardless of what he says. This sedevacantists’ attitude is what makes them schismatic (at least materially). *See Chapter 6 above.*

The post-conciliar popes – like all popes – have the duty to teach the Faith. If the present pope were to teach doctrine with all of the conditions of *ex cathedra* infallibility (as set forth in Vatican I), then this teaching would be infallible.

Further, if a post-conciliar pope teaches without fulfilling the conditions for *ex cathedra* infallibility, then what he teaches might be wrong. Traditional Catholics would have to carefully consider *what* the pope taught, to measure the pope’s teaching according to Catholic Tradition. So Traditional Catholics (unlike

sedevacantists) do not have a “cut off” date for papal teachings, after which they automatically ignore such teachings.

It is true that traditional Catholics approach a post-conciliar pope’s teaching with much greater wariness than they do the teaching of Pope St. Pius X. There is good reason for this wariness. It is not that a post-conciliar pope is not pope. But faithful Catholics approach his teachings warily, like a child would approach his own father who in the past has attempted to lead the child into sin. The father has not ceased to be the child’s father (with a father’s authority), but it is good and reasonable for the child to be more wary about his father who has attempted to lead the child into sin in the past, as compared to the lack of such reserve in the child who has a saintly father.

So, a true Catholic does not refuse submission to the pope’s authority but must refuse to “obey” the pope’s abuse of his authority. If the pope is bad enough, it might appear that there is hardly anything in which the pope should be obeyed. In this way, there might be the superficial appearance that faithful Catholics and sedevacantists have the same position. But this appearance is wrong. Faithful Catholics do not forget the pope is their superior, even when they cannot follow what he teaches or does. By contrast, sedevacantists revolt against the pope’s authority *as such*, judge his interior culpability and declare he is not Christ’s vicar. This contrast is the difference between Catholicism on the one hand, and revolution and (at least material) schism on the other hand.



We Catholics (and that child, in the above example) must hold ourselves ready to obey our superior whenever we can. So, *e.g.*, if the bad father told the child to add an extra *Hail Mary* to his night prayers, the child must obey. Likewise, if a post-conciliar pope told us to begin abstaining from meat on an additional day of the week (*e.g.*, Wednesday), we would have to obey.

### **Conclusion of this chapter**

Catholics must measure the pope's words and deeds against the standard of Catholic Tradition. We must accept what conforms to Tradition and reject what conflicts with Tradition. Thus, sedevacantists are wrong that, just because Catholics recognize the authority of the pope, we must accept everything he says and does.

## **Chapter 9**

### **An Example of a Pope Teaching Heresy Before His Election and During His Reign**

We know that it is (objectively) a mortal sin of rash judgment for a person to decide that the pope is a formal heretic (and thus is no longer the pope). *See*, Chapter 5 above. But although we recognize the pope's authority, we know that we have a duty to resist his errors and the harm he causes. *See*, Chapter 7 above.

We know it is possible for a pope to teach heresy if he is not speaking *ex cathedra*. (This is the whole reason Vatican I listed the conditions for the pope's *ex cathedra* infallibility because, by fulfillment of those conditions, Catholics know that a particular papal teaching must be true and cannot be heresy.)

But a person could wonder if any pope before Vatican II ever *really* denied a doctrine of the Catholic Faith and publicly taught heresy – or is such possibility merely theoretical? If such a pre-Vatican II pope did publicly teach heresy, then did that pope remain pope or did he somehow lose his papal office by teaching heresy?

The answer is that prior popes *have* publicly taught heresy and *did* retain their papal office. The case of Pope John XXII is a useful example.

### **Pope John XXII (1316-1334)**

It is a **dogma of the Catholic Faith that the saints see the Beatific Vision *immediately* after they die** (and after they have been purged in Purgatory, if necessary).<sup>73</sup>

Pope John XXII lived before this dogma was defined by the Church's Extraordinary Magisterium. He publicly

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<sup>73</sup> Council of Florence, Pope Eugene IV, Bull *Laetentur coeli*, 1439; Pope Benedict XII *Benedictus Deus*, 1336, *Denz.* #530-531.

denied that the saints immediately see the Beatific Vision after they die, *i.e.*, before the General Judgment.<sup>74</sup>

**Before** Pope John XXII became pope, he wrote a book **publicly denying** this doctrine of the Catholic Faith (*viz.*, that the saints see the Beatific Vision **immediately after they die** (and after they have been purged in Purgatory, if necessary). *Id.* Instead, he taught the opposite heresy. *Id.* Yet both before and after this doctrine was defined, the Church has always recognized the validity of Pope John XXII's election as pope.<sup>75</sup> In other words, his public teaching of this heresy did not prevent his election as pope.

During Pope John XXII's papal reign, he caused a "great commotion" by again denying this same doctrine of the Catholic Faith on several occasions and **again publicly**

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<sup>74</sup> 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, entry: *Pope John XXII*.

<sup>75</sup> 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, entry: *Pope John XXII*; *see also*, the *Annuario Pontificio* editions 1939, 1942 & 1959. The *Annuario Pontificio* is the Church's list of popes and the years of their reign.

*teaching the opposite heresy.*<sup>76</sup> Yet he reigned as pope until his death.<sup>77</sup>

We know that any dogma which was defined by the Church's Extraordinary Magisterium was *already true* and was *always a doctrine of the Faith*, even before the dogma was defined. In other words, the Church's extraordinary definition of a dogma does not "make" a doctrine true (and make it part of the Faith).

An extraordinary definition of a doctrine of Faith merely gives certitude to anyone in doubt concerning a truth which was already a doctrine of the Catholic Faith. This is why the First Vatican Council declared: "the Holy Ghost was promised to the successors of Peter *not* so that they might, by His revelation, make known some **new doctrine**".<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, entry: *Pope John XXII*. The phrase in quotes is the description in the Catholic Encyclopedia.

<sup>77</sup> 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, entry: *Pope John XXII*. See also, the *Annuario Pontificio* editions 1939, 1942 & 1959. The *Annuario Pontificio* is the Church's list of popes and the years of their reign. These lists not only include Pope John XXII as a pope but list his reign as ending when he died, rather some earlier date as if he lost the pontificate because of his (material) heresy.

<sup>78</sup> Vatican I, Session 4, ch.4 (emphasis added).

Thus, we know that the dogma Pope John XXII denied was always true and was a doctrine of the Faith *at the time he denied this doctrine*.

When the Church gives an extraordinary definition of a truth of Faith, the doctrine is not thereby made “more true” than it was before then. However, it is ***less likely*** that Catholics (including the pope) could deny the doctrine without ***knowing*** they are denying something they are required to believe in order to be Catholic.

The Church’s extraordinary definition of a dogma gives Catholic teachers a strong tool to convince doubters and gives ecclesiastical superiors a powerful tool to judge *in the external forum* and correct a subordinate who denies the particular doctrine of the Faith. See, Chapter 5 above.

However, a Catholic might possibly deny a dogma (defined by the Church) without becoming a formal heretic. For example, suppose this Catholic denies the doctrine because he has the *philosophical* confusion causing him to believe that truth changes and that the dogma ***had been*** true but is ***no longer true***. **This is the error Pope St. Pius X ascribes to modernists.** *Id.*

As shown in Chapter 5 above, we must judge things and statements objectively without giving any “benefit of the doubt”. *Id.* Thus, in the case of Pope John XXII, we judge his error objectively and know he taught heresy and denied a doctrine which has always been part of the Catholic Faith.

But we would commit the sin of rash judgment if we judge that Pope John XXII is subjectively (*i.e.*, interiorly) culpable for teaching this heresy and conclude that Pope John XXII “knew better” and had the sin of heresy on his soul. *Id.* To avoid rash judgment, we must judge his subjective (*i.e.*, interior) culpability for teaching heresy in the best possible light (if we judge his culpability at all) and so we do **not** conclude that he was a formal heretic and that he ceased to be Catholic and ceased to be pope. *Id.* In fact, despite publicly promoting heresy, the Church identifies him as the pope reigning from 1316 till his death in 1334.<sup>79</sup>

In other words, we should say about Pope John XXII what the Catholic Encyclopedia says about Pope Honorius (a different pope who committed serious doctrinal error): “He was a heretic, not in intention [*i.e.*, knowingly, subjectively or formally], but in fact [*i.e.*, objectively and materially].”<sup>80</sup>

As scandalous as it was for Pope John XXII to publicly teach heresy, he was elected pope while professing this heresy and reigned as pope while continuing to profess this heresy. In contrast to what is really known about Pope John XXII, ***if*** (hypothetically) he had actually ***known*** that the doctrine he denied was one he was required to believe in order to be Catholic, then his

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<sup>79</sup> See, the *Annuario Pontificio* editions 1939, 1942 & 1959.

<sup>80</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia, article: *Pope Honorius* (bracketed comments added for clarity).

denial would have caused him to cease to be Catholic.  
*See, Chapter 5 above.*

But Pope John XXII never admitted that he denied a doctrine he knew he was required to believe in order to be Catholic. So, if we judge him at all, we judge he was pope and was a material heretic (and not a formal heretic). *Id.*

Likewise, the post-conciliar popes have never admitted that they denied any doctrine that they *knew* they were *required* to believe *at that time* in order to be Catholic. So, if we judge them at all, we judge that each was pope in his turn and was not a formal heretic.

## **Chapter 10**

# **A Man Need not be Consecrated a Bishop or Ordained a Priest to be a Valid Pope**

**An Explanation How the Catholic Church  
Continues to Possess A Full Hierarchy even in  
these Times of Great Apostasy**

**Against the Sedevacantist Argument that only a  
Valid Bishop Can Be Pope because He is Bishop of  
Rome**

From the above considerations, it is plain that sedevacantism is wrong. However, some sedevacantists indirectly attack our present pope's possession of his office. They assert that because one of the pope's titles is "Bishop of Rome",<sup>81</sup> he cannot be pope because he is not a valid bishop. These sedevacantists then declare that, because conciliar ordinations and consecrations are definitely invalid (so they assert), the more recent conciliar popes cannot be real popes because they are not valid bishops.

While those sedevacantists are rash<sup>82</sup> to the extent they claim *certitude* that conciliar consecrations are invalid, it is true that conciliar consecrations and ordinations are inherently doubtful, and that doubtful sacraments should be *treated* as invalid (because they might be invalid).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Traditionally, one of the pope's titles is "Bishop of Rome", because he is the Ordinary who exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction over that diocese, as other bishops exercise jurisdiction over other dioceses.

<sup>82</sup> We Catholics do not take upon ourselves the authority to "declare" conciliar ordinations and consecrations definitely invalid. We simply protect ourselves by staying away from them, because we see there is good reason to doubt the validity of conciliar consecrations and ordinations.

<sup>83</sup> That is the reason that *conditional* ordinations and consecrations are required for all conciliar consecrations and ordinations. For a thorough



However, as shown below, a more careful examination of this sedevacantist argument shows that even if the pope is a layman (*i.e.*, not a bishop or priest), this is not an obstacle to his valid papacy.

The papacy is a monarchy, giving the pope jurisdiction over the entire Catholic Church (*i.e.*, universal governing authority), as Vicar of Christ. But this jurisdiction which is the essence of the papal office, does not require the pope to be a bishop or even a priest, to validly hold the papal office. Certainly, the Catholic Church has good reason for Her custom that the pope be a bishop, because it is very fitting that the ruler over even the bishops, would himself be a bishop.

However, to hold the papal office and possess this universal jurisdiction which the pope has, does not require him to be a bishop as an essential condition which would otherwise prevent him from being pope.

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explanation of the doubts about their validity, see these *Catholic Candle* articles:

- <http://catholiccandle.neocities.org/faith/new-ordination-doubtful.html>
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B49oPuI54eEGd2RRcTFSY29EYzg/view>
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B49oPuI54eEGZVF5cmFvMGdZM0U/view>

A pope must be a male Catholic<sup>84</sup> who has use of his reason when elected.<sup>85</sup> To become pope, this male Catholic only needs to be elected and to consent.<sup>86</sup> By

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<sup>84</sup> Sedevacantists rashly judge that the pope is interiorly culpable for his material heresy (*i.e.*, his errors on matters of Faith) and that he is not “really” a Catholic, although he claims to be. We treat this sedevacantist error in Chapter 5 above.

But, when a male with the use of reason is elected pope and he says he is Catholic, none of his errors should cause people to rashly declare he is not a “real” Catholic. *Id.*

However, we are presently considering a different issue, *viz.*, whether a man can be pope without being a bishop.

<sup>85</sup> This is how Father John F. Sullivan explains this point, in his book *The Externals of the Catholic Church*:

Who may be chosen to fill the office of Pope?  
Strictly speaking, any male Catholic who has  
come to the age of reason – even a layman.  
Strange to say, it would be legally possible to elect  
even a married man.

*The Externals of the Catholic Church*, by Rev. John F. Sullivan, Kennedy & Sons, New York, 1918, p.6.

<sup>86</sup> In his book defending the papacy, Bishop Kenrick explains this truth as follows: “After the election of the Pope, his consent is demanded”. *The Primacy of the*

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*Apostolic See Vindicated*, by Bishop Francis Kenrick, 3rd Ed., 1848, Dunigan & Bro., New York, p.300.

Pope Pius XII explained that becoming pope did not require a man to be a bishop:

Even if a layman were elected pope, he could accept the election only if he were fit for ordination and willing to be ordained. But **the power to teach and govern, as well as the divine gift of infallibility, would be granted to him from the very moment of his acceptance**, even before his ordination.

Pope Pius XII, Speech to the participants in the 2nd World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity, October 5, 1957 (emphasis added).

In his book *The Externals of the Catholic Church*, Fr. Sullivan explains this point in more detail:

When a candidate is found to have the necessary number of votes and has manifested his willingness to accept the office, he is thereby Pope. He needs no ceremony of consecration to elevate him to the Papacy.

It would be possible, though far from probable [*Note: this book was written in 1918*], that a person might be elected Pope who is not already a Bishop. He would become Pope as soon as he was

being elected and consenting, this male would *immediately* become the pope but he would have the moral obligation to seek Episcopal consecration so he could fulfill the sacramental duties of a pope.<sup>87</sup>

But once a male Catholic is elected and consents to be pope, he *is* the pope without any need of ceremony, coronation, or confirmation in office.<sup>88</sup>

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lawfully chosen, and could then perform all the duties of the Papacy which pertain to jurisdiction [*i.e.*, governing]; but he could not ordain or consecrate until he himself had been raised to the episcopate by other Bishops.

*The Externals of the Catholic Church*, by Rev. John F. Sullivan, Kennedy & Sons, New York, 1918, pp. 7-8 (bracketed words added for clarity).

<sup>87</sup> *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology* explains this truth as follows: “[I]f the person elected [pope] has not already received episcopal consecration, it is his duty to seek it.” *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, Sylvester J. Hunter, S.J., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1, p. 394, Benziger Brothers, N.Y. 1894.

<sup>88</sup> In *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, Fr. Hunter explains:

[J]urisdiction vests immediately on the completion of the election, for the Pope has no superior to confirm him in his office.

Thus, because all conciliar popes have been Catholic males who had the use of reason, each of them, in his turn, was a valid pope with full papal jurisdiction (to govern), even if he were not a valid bishop (or even a priest) and did not have Episcopal powers to perform sacraments.

With full papal jurisdictional powers, he governs not only the universal Church but he also governs Rome as Bishop of Rome,<sup>89</sup> although, again, he could not ordain

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*Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, Sylvester J. Hunter, S.J., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1, p. 393, Benziger Brothers, N.Y. 1894.

As the *Summa* explains: “jurisdiction is not something sacramental”. *Summa Supp.*, Q.25, a.2, ad 1.

<sup>89</sup> When a man is appointed as bishop of a diocese, he has jurisdiction (*i.e.*, ruling power) over the diocese even before he is consecrated as a bishop. This applies to the pope, when elected, with respect to being Bishop of Rome (as well as being pope over the universal Church).

That new pope, even if a layman, could even be *called* a “bishop” in *some* respect, just as the Catholic Encyclopedia calls a layman a “bishop” when he possesses Episcopal jurisdiction even *before* he is consecrated. Here is the Catholic Encyclopedia’s explanation:

[F]or the exercise of external jurisdiction the power of orders is not necessary. A *bishop*, duly

priests or otherwise exercise Episcopal sacramental powers without himself being first consecrated a bishop.

**This same principle (which allows a layman to be pope) applies to local ordinaries throughout the world, exercising true jurisdictional power over their dioceses, even if they are laymen.**

For the same reason that the pope does not have to be consecrated a bishop or even ordained a priest, to wield universal jurisdiction to govern the Catholic Church as

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appointed to a see, but *not yet consecrated*, is invested with external jurisdiction over his diocese ...

Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 3, article: *Church*, §VIII (2), p.755.

In the same way, a pope who is a layman, could be truly called the *Bishop* of Rome, even without Episcopal consecration and without Episcopal powers to perform Sacraments. But obviously, calling a layman “bishop” (referring to possession of Episcopal jurisdiction) could mislead some people into believing he was validly consecrated as a bishop. For this reason, it seems better to generally use quotation marks around the title “bishop”, or in some other way distinguish such a layman with Episcopal jurisdiction, from a sacramentally-consecrated bishop.

pope, likewise the Ordinary of a diocese does not need to be a bishop or even a priest to govern his diocese.

Being the Ordinary of a diocese is an office of jurisdiction (*viz.*, of governing). The Ordinary receives jurisdiction from the pope by being appointed by the pope. He is like the “king” of the diocese (under the pope) and wields jurisdictional power (under the pope) in that particular diocese.<sup>90</sup> As is the custom of the Church, it is very

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<sup>90</sup> As the Catholic Encyclopedia’s explains:

Internal jurisdiction is that which is exercised in the tribunal of penance. It differs from the external jurisdiction of which we have been speaking, in that its object is the welfare of the individual penitent, while the object of external jurisdiction is the welfare of the Church as a corporate body. ...

[F]or the exercise of external jurisdiction the power of orders is not necessary. A bishop, duly appointed to a see [*i.e.*, a diocese], but ***not yet consecrated***, is invested with external ***jurisdiction*** over his diocese ...

1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 3, article: *Church*, §VIII (2), p.755 (bracketed words added).

Further, a man appointed as Ordinary of a diocese is mentioned in the Canon of the Mass even if he has not received sacramental consecration. As Fr. Adrian Fortescue explains:

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The bishop must be canonically appointed and confirmed, otherwise he is not mentioned [in the Canon of the Mass]. But he need not yet be consecrated.

Catholic Encyclopedia, article *Canon of the Mass*, author: Fr. Adrian Fortescue, vol. 3, article *Canon of the Mass*, p.262 (bracketed words added).

Here is how the *Summa* explains a “bishop elect” wielding Episcopal jurisdiction without having been sacramentally consecrated a bishop:

There are two kinds of key: One reaches to heaven itself directly, by remitting sin and thus removing the obstacles to the entrance into heaven; and this is called the key of “order” [*i.e.*, Holy Orders]. Priests alone have this key, because they alone are ordained for the people in the things which appertain to God directly.

The other key reaches to heaven, not directly but through the medium of the Church Militant. By this key a man goes to heaven, since, by its means, a man is shut out from or admitted to the fellowship of the Church Militant, by excommunication or absolution. This is called the **key of “jurisdiction”** in the external court, wherefore **even those who are not priests can have this key, e.g., archdeacons, bishops elect, and others who can excommunicate.**



fitting that the local Ordinary is a bishop, since the Ordinary will govern the Church in that diocese, including bishops there.

**Conclusion One of this chapter: *The Catholic Church has a full, worldwide hierarchy (not only a pope), even though that hierarchy is abusing its power and promoting error.***

The Catholic Church not only has a Pope but also a full worldwide hierarchy of diocese Ordinaries possessing true jurisdiction to govern the Catholic Church even if they are laymen (and even though they abuse their authority).

Each Ordinary around the world has been appointed by the pope to govern his diocese. Even if he is a layman, he has the jurisdiction to govern.

**Conclusion Two of this chapter: *The Catholic Church has in place the structure to elect future popes.***

When the pope dies, it is the cardinals' duty to elect another pope. A cardinal does not need to be a bishop (as

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But it is not properly called a key of heaven, but a disposition thereto.

*Summa Supp.* Q.19, a.3, *Respondeo* (bracketed words added for clarity).

Cardinal John Henry Newman was not). The recent popes have used their jurisdictional power to continue appointing cardinals (even supposing they are laymen) to elect future popes, leaving in place the structure for papal succession.

By contrast, sedevacantists speculate that God will somehow miraculously intervene to raise up a pope, although they deny the Church has had any pope, cardinals, or hierarchy for decades.

The sedevacantists' false, unfounded supposition that God will revive the Church by Divine intervention, would really be a new, second founding of the Church (or founding of a new church). This (false) sedevacantist theory is un-Traditional because God founded His Church once, with the Church perpetually handing down Her doctrine and Her hierarchical authority.

It is as baseless for the sedevacantists to assert that God will miraculously choose a new pope as it would be for God to miraculously establish a new doctrine.

***Conclusion Three of this chapter: Because a Man Elected Pope must Voluntarily accept his Election, this further Refutes the False Theory that Cardinal Siri Was the Real Pope in Place of one (or more) of the Conciliar Popes.***

One small, confused sedevacantist group denies the real pope because they believe that Cardinal Siri was validly elected in one or more of the conclaves after the death of

Pope Pius XII. This group variously speculates either that Cardinal Siri was pressured not to accept the office or to resign during the conclave, after he first (but very briefly) accepted his election as pope.

In fact, if it were true (hypothetically) that Cardinal Siri had been elected but had been pressured to not accept the office, then (as shown above) he would never have been pope, since a male does not become pope without *accepting* this office.

If (hypothetically) Siri accepted and then decided to resign almost immediately (*e.g.*, because he was threatened), then having resigned, the conclave could elect another pope (and so Siri would have been the real pope for only a few minutes).

Further, some members of this small, confused group of Siri advocates somehow suppose that Cardinal Siri continued to be pope but that the oath of secrecy prevented him from revealing that he was elected pope. However, this oath pertains to the secrecy of deliberations and to inconclusive votes.

There is obviously nothing to prevent a cardinal from disclosing his own election or any other person's election after it occurs. This is obvious because all the cardinals swear this oath of secrecy. If they could never reveal the successful election of a pope, then a successful election could never be disclosed and no one outside the conclave would ever know who the new pope is.

Thus, if (hypothetically) Siri were elected pope, had

accepted his election, and continued in office, he would have had a duty (as would everyone else in the conclave) to state this “fact”. Yet, in the decades after these conclaves, Siri never claimed to be pope nor did any other member of the conclave proclaim him as pope. Instead, Cardinal Siri recognized those same popes recognized by everyone else. Plainly, the Siri hypothesis is not worthy of belief.

## Chapter 11

# The Revelations to Sister Lucy of Fatima Show That the Catholic Church has a Pope

The Catholic Church infallibly teaches that there will always be a pope. For example, the First Vatican Council teaches us:

If anyone says that it is not by the institution of Christ the Lord Himself (that is to say, by Divine Law) that blessed Peter should have *perpetual* successors in the primacy over the whole Church; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of Blessed Peter in this primacy, let him be **anathema**.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Vatican I, Session 4, Ch. 2 (bold emphasis and parenthetical words are in the original, italic emphasis added). For a full examination of this dogma (that the

This dogma fits perfectly with the revelations given to Sister Lucy (one of the Fatima seers) in connection with Our Lady of Fatima's request for the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart.

Our Lady of Fatima came to Sister Lucy in 1929 and told her:

The moment has come when God asks the Holy Father to make, in union with all the bishops of the world, the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, promising to save it by this means. ...<sup>92</sup>

In 1929, Our Lord assured Sister Lucy that the pope and bishops would actually perform this consecration – but only after a long delay. Here are Sister Lucy's words describing Our Lord's revelation to her:

Later on, by means of an interior communication, Our Lord said to me, complaining: "They did not want to heed My request! ... Like the King of France, *they* [*viz.*, the pope and bishops of the

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Catholic Church will always have a pope), see Chapter 1 above.

<sup>92</sup> *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, translator John Collorafi, vol. II, Immaculate Heart Publications, Buffalo, NY, © 1989 for English translation, p.464 (emphasis added).

world] *will repent and do it, but it will be late*.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, from these revelations to Sister Lucy, we know that there will be a pope and bishops who will actually perform this consecration in obedience to Heaven's request (although "it will be late").

**The Catholic Church has a full hierarchy (a pope and bishops), although they might not possess Episcopal sacramental power because of their doubtful conciliar consecrations.**

The consecration of Russia does not require Episcopal sacramental powers. This consecration must be performed by the Catholic Church's rulers, who govern the Church. Thus, this consecration invokes their governing (jurisdictional) authority.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, translator John Collorafi, vol. II, Immaculate Heart Publications, Buffalo, NY, © 1989 for English translation, p.464 (emphasis added).

<sup>94</sup> We know that the conciliar rite of consecration is doubtful and so we might possibly have only a very few valid bishops (as far as their *sacramental* power), *viz.*, possibly only those bishops from Archbishop Lefebvre's line and any (extremely old) bishops consecrated before late 1968. For an explanation why the conciliar rite of consecration is inherently doubtful, read this article:

Previously, we saw that the Catholic Church continues to have a full hierarchy (a pope and the local ordinaries of the dioceses of the world) and that the Church leaders' jurisdictional power (authority to govern) remains.<sup>95</sup> It is these bishops (the local ordinaries), who must join the pope to consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

**This consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary has not yet occurred and so there must still be a pope and bishops to do this.**

The pope and bishops have not yet consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lord promised that this consecration would occur although He predicted "it will be late". Because this consecration requires a pope and bishops, this shows indirectly that a pope exists now, because otherwise there would not be means through which to elect a future pope (who appoints the future bishops).

**Sedevacantists deny we now have a pope, so they concoct false scenarios regarding how a future pope could take office more than 62 years after the last pope they recognize.**

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<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B49oPuI54eEGZVF5cmFvMGdZM0U/view>

<sup>95</sup> See, chapter 10 above.

We Catholics recognize the Catholic Church continues to be governed by a pope and bishops (however scandalous they are) and that these Church leaders (or their successors) are the ones who will consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The contrast could not be greater, between the Catholic truth (that we have a full Church government) and the empty, sedevacantist position (*viz.*, there is no one exercising the jurisdiction of the Church: no pope, no cardinals, no local ordinaries)!

Our Lord's prophesy is a problem for the sedevacantists. They have no reasonable answer to this question:

*From where will the pope and bishops come, who will consecrate Russia?*

The sedevacantists' fuzzy answer is that "somehow" there will be a pope and bishops in the future. Some sedevacantists (wrongly) suppose that perhaps God will choose a pope by some future, currently-unknown miraculous sign.

In any event, if the sedevacantists were correct (which they are not) that the Church has not had a pope in sixty-two years, there could be no future pope of the Catholic Church (who could perform the consecration of Russia in union with the bishops then in office).

If (as the sedevacantists claim) there has been no pope for sixty-two years, then any such future pope (who would "somehow" come into office to perform the



consecration of Russia) would not reign over the same Catholic Church which has existed continuously from the time of Our Lord. Instead, such future pope (imagined by the sedevacantists) would be part of a restored papal monarchy and a re-founded hierarchy which would be part of a different “church”.

As explained more fully below, there are two reasons the sedevacantists’ (supposed) future “church” would not be a continuation of the true Catholic Church founded by Christ:

1. There would be no continuity between the true Catholic Church founded by Christ, and a (supposed) future “church” with a re-established government; this gap (discontinuity) would mean that the second “church” would be a different “church”.
2. Christ founded a Church with a succession of human vicars chosen by men, not by miraculous Divine selection.

Each of these reasons will be discussed below.

- 1. There would be no continuity between the true Catholic Church founded by Christ, and a (supposed) future “church” with a re-established government; this gap (discontinuity) would mean that the second “church” would be a different “church”.**

The very essence and definition of the Catholic Church includes the concept of a continuous government by the Catholic Church's living authorities ruling over the Catholics then living. This definition of the Catholic Church does not require that those leaders are virtuous. However, the Church's very nature (definition) requires that there must be *continuous* Church government, *i.e.*, a continuous Church hierarchy.<sup>96</sup>

The very definition of the Church tells us that the Church will continuously have a hierarchy and

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<sup>96</sup> It is always true, of course, that we must resist *any* leaders, including all Church leaders, if they command evil. For example, St. Robert Bellarmine, Doctor of the Church, teaches us that we must resist a pope who uses his office to attack souls (whether through false doctrine or bad morals). Here are St. Robert Bellarmine's words:

Just as it is licit to resist a Pontiff who attacks the body, so also is it licit to resist him who attacks souls or destroys the civil order or above all, tries to destroy the Church. I say that it is licit to resist him by not doing what he orders and by impeding the execution of his will. It is not licit, however, to judge, to punish, or to depose him, for these are acts proper to a superior.

*De Romano Pontifice*, St. Robert Bellarmine, Bk.2, ch.29 (emphasis added). For a full explanation of this important Catholic principle, read Chapter 7 above.

government. For example, *The Catechism of St. Pius X* teaches:

Q. What is the Catholic Church?

A. The Catholic Church is the Union or Congregation of all the baptized who, still living on earth, profess the same Faith and the same Law of Jesus Christ, participate in the same Sacraments, and **obey their lawful Pastors, particularly the Roman Pontiff.**<sup>97</sup>

Again, this definition shows the Catholic Church will always have a living hierarchy which has authority over us. However, this continuity of Church government in no way implies that this hierarchy will be good or that we must blindly “obey” our superiors when they tell us to do evil.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Quoted from *The Catechism of St. Pius X*, Section: *Creed*, Subsection: *Article 9*, Q.8 (emphasis added).

<sup>98</sup> Pope and Doctor of the Church, St. Gregory the Great, taught this truth in the following words:

Know that evil ought never to be done through obedience, though sometimes something good, which is being done, ought to be discontinued out of obedience.

*De Moral.*, bk. XXXV, §29 (emphasis added).

*The Baltimore Catechism* similarly defines the Catholic Church as having a living human government:

Q. What is the Church?

A. The Church is the congregation of all those who profess the faith of Christ, partake of the same Sacraments, and **are governed by their lawful pastors under one visible Head.**

Quoted from *The Baltimore Catechism* #3, Q. 489 (emphasis added).

If (as the sedevacantists wrongly suppose) there has been no hierarchy for more than six decades, but they imagine that the hierarchy will “pop” into existence “miraculously” in the future, then this many-decades gap in Church government would result in a new or a re-founded “church”. This (supposed) future “church” would not be the same as the Catholic Church founded by Christ, because there would be many decades during which there was no Catholic Church that fit Her definition given above (which includes a *continuously-existing government* of living men who have authority over us).

This many-decades gap (imagined by the sedevacantists) between Pope Pius XII and the next pope would destroy the continuity of the Church, just as would a sixty-year

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Regarding the true, Catholic virtue of obedience, read a full explanation in chapter 7 above.

gap during which no one professed the Catholic Faith. Any gap in the Church's government or Faith would discontinue the Church because She would no longer fit Her definition during those decades.

Thus, the sedevacantists are wrong that, after many decades without a Church hierarchy and government, the supposed later revival of a hierarchy would be the same, true Catholic Church.

**2. The Church that Christ founded has a succession of human vicars chosen by men, not by miraculous Divine selection.**

Our Lord founded His Church with a perpetual government whose leaders are chosen by human means: election of a pope by men (not by miracle), and the pope ensures the appointment of bishops to govern the Church's dioceses.

The sedevacantists' error causes them to deny the continuation of those human means through which the Catholic Church's government is perpetuated.

**Conclusion of this chapter**

Our Lord prophesied that there will be a future pope who will consecrate Russia, together with the Church's bishops. This shows the pope and the rest of the hierarchy is not lacking now.

# Chapter 12

## All Catholics are in Communion with the Pope

*Answering a Sedevacantist Question*

### The sedevacantists' question:

Are you in communion with "Pope" Francis and his religion?

### The sedevacantists' question is deceptively-framed in two ways

1. We interpret the question's reference to *his religion*, as a reference to the new conciliar religion (not Catholicism). Through this reference, the question *sneaks in* the assumption that Pope Francis has a single religion and it is not Catholicism. This sedevacantist ploy tricks an unwary Catholic into conceding this falsehood and participating in the sedevacantists' rash judgment.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The sedevacantists' main error is rash judgment, *viz.*, confusing these two things:

- our duty to judge a pope's (or anyone's) *objective* error on a matter of Faith (*i.e.*, material heresy); and

2. The question is compound; that is, it is really two questions in one. Thus, it is deceptive (either intentionally or carelessly). The question seeks a single “yes or no” answer, but either answer would be false (see below our two-part, short answer).

Beware of sedevacantist traps for the unwary!

**Two-part, short answer to the sedevacantists’ question (above)**

All Catholics are in communion with Pope Francis. However, *no faithful and informed* Catholics are members of (*i.e.*, in communion with) the conciliar church (which is a false religion).

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- our duty *not* to judge that person’s subjective, interior culpability for his error (which would be rash judgment).

Sedevacantists rashly presume that the pope believes something (*viz.*, an error) which he *knows* is incompatible with being Catholic *now*. *See*, the full explanation in chapter 5 above.

## Summary of our full explanation below

1. Although Pope Francis does much evil, he is truly the pope and a member of the Catholic Church.
2. To save our souls, we must be members of the Catholic Church.
3. Because all Catholics are joint members of the Catholic Church with Pope Francis, all Catholics are in communion with him and with each other.
4. Although Catholics are joint members of the Catholic Church with Pope Francis, this does not make us members of whatever other groups he belongs to, including the conciliar church.

Below, we discuss each of these four points.

### **1. Although Pope Francis does much evil, he is truly the pope and a member of the Catholic Church.**

As we have seen above, the Catholic Church infallibly teaches that we will always have a pope<sup>100</sup> and we are *not* in a 62-year papal interregnum.<sup>101</sup> Presently (in 2020), our pope is Pope Francis because he is visible to

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<sup>100</sup> See, Chapter 1 above.

<sup>101</sup> See, Chapter 2 above.



all (as a pope must be)<sup>102</sup> and because all Catholics accept him as pope (as is true of every pope)<sup>103</sup>.

Pope Francis is a bad pope and a bad father. We must oppose the evil he does<sup>104</sup> but must avoid the sedevacantists' (objective) mortal sins of rashly judging his interior culpability and of denying that he is pope or even Catholic.<sup>105</sup>

## **2. To save our souls, we must belong to the Catholic Church.**

The Catholic Church infallibly teaches that *Outside the Church there is no Salvation*.<sup>106</sup> Thus, to save our souls,

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<sup>102</sup> See, Chapter 3 above.

<sup>103</sup> See, Chapter 4 above.

<sup>104</sup> See, Chapter 7 above.

<sup>105</sup> See, Chapter 5 above.

<sup>106</sup> Here is how Pope Boniface VIII infallibly declares this dogma:

With Faith urging us, we are forced to believe and to hold the one, holy, Catholic Church and that, apostolic, and we firmly believe and simply confess this (Church) outside which there is neither salvation, nor remission of sin.

it is absolutely necessary that we are members of the Catholic Church.

**3. Because all Catholics are joint members with Pope Francis of the Catholic Church, we are in communion with him.**

“Communion” is the *mutual connection between members* of the Catholic Church.<sup>107</sup>

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*Unam Sanctam*, 1302, Denz. 468.

For more information and more of the Church’s declarations of this dogma, read *Lumen Gentium Annotated*, by *Quanta Cura Press*, beginning at p.63, footnote #40, © 2013, available at:

- ❖ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B49cPuI54eEGbzRhdmQ3X0Z6RFE/view> (free) and
- ❖ <https://scribd.com/doc/158994906> (free)
- ❖ at Amazon.com  
<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1492107476?tag=duckgo-ffab-20&linkCode=osi&th=1&psc=1> (sold at cost).

<sup>107</sup> Here is how St. Thomas Aquinas admirably explains this truth:

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Accordingly, schismatics properly so called are those who, willfully and intentionally separate themselves from the unity of the Church; for this is the chief unity, and the particular unity of several individuals among themselves is subordinate to the unity of the Church, even as the mutual adaptation of each member of a natural body is subordinate to the unity of the whole body. **Now the unity of the Church consists in two things; namely, in the mutual connection or communion of the members of the Church, and again in the subordination of all the members of the Church to the one head**, according to Col. 2:18, 19: “Puffed up by the sense of his flesh, and not holding the Head, from which the whole body, by joints and bands, being supplied with nourishment and compacted, groweth unto the increase of God.” Now this Head is Christ Himself, Whose viceregent in the Church is the Sovereign Pontiff. Wherefore schismatics are those who refuse to submit to the Sovereign Pontiff, and to hold communion with those members of the Church who acknowledge his supremacy.

*Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, *respondeo* (emphasis added).

All Catholics are in communion with the pope and with each other because we are all mutually connected as members of the Church under one head, the pope. *Id.*<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> In other words, “communion” is the union which binds together the members of the Church. Here is how Addis & Arnold explain this meaning of “communion”, in their very large, 1884 edition of *A Catholic Dictionary*:

*Communion of Saints* is mentioned in the ninth article of the Apostle’s Creed, where it is added, according to the *Roman Catechism* [*i.e.*, the *Council of Trent Catechism*], as an explanation of the foregoing words, “I believe in the holy Catholic Church.” The **communion of saints consists in the union which binds together the members of the Church on earth**, and connects the Church on earth with the Church suffering in Purgatory and the triumphant in heaven.

(1) The **faithful on earth have communion with each other** because they partake of the same sacraments, are under one head, and assist each other by their prayers and good works.

*A Catholic Dictionary*, Addis & Arnold, The Catholic Publication Society, New York, 1884, under the entry, *Communion of Saints* (bracketed words and emphasis added).

One can only belong to the Catholic Church by being in communion with all Catholics, under one head, *viz.*, the reigning pope.<sup>109</sup> Without being in communion with the pope and all other Catholics, a man is in schism and is outside the Catholic Church.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Here is how Pope Boniface VIII declares this truth:

We declare, state, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.

Bull *Unam Sanctam*.

Here is how Pope Pius IX declares this truth:

There is only one true, holy, Catholic Church, which is the Apostolic Roman Church. **There is only one See founded in Peter by the word of the Lord, outside of which we cannot find either true faith or eternal salvation.** He who does not have the Church for a mother cannot have God for a father, and **whoever abandons the See of Peter on which the Church is established trusts falsely that he is in the Church.**

*Singulari Quidem*, §4 (emphasis added).

<sup>110</sup> Here is how St. Thomas Aquinas admirably explains this truth:

**4. Although Catholics are joint members of the Catholic Church with Pope Francis, this does not make us members of whatever other groups he belongs to, including the conciliar church.**

Everyone is a member of many groups. For example, at the same time, a person can be:

- a son in one group (a particular family);
- a father in another group (a different family);

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Schismatics are those who refuse to submit to the Sovereign Pontiff, and to hold communion with those members of the Church who acknowledge his supremacy.

*Summa, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, respondeo.*

All Catholics have a duty to recognize that the current pope has authority over us. Even though we frequently cannot do what the pope commands us or hold what he teaches, we must “acknowledge his supremacy”, as St. Thomas teaches we must (in the quote above).

We must do what the pope commands us to do and believe what he teaches, when we can do so in good conscience. Thus, for example, if Pope Francis commanded Catholics to recite at least five decades of the rosary each day, under pain of sin, we would be bound in conscience to do this, under pain of sin.

- an employee in another group (his corporate employer);
- a coach in another group (a sports team);
- a parishioner in another group (a parish);
- a member of a civic orchestra group;
- a member (*i.e.*, resident) of his state or province;
- a member (*i.e.*, citizen) of his country; and
- a member of the true Catholic Church or some false religion

Pope Francis, like everyone else, is a member of many groups. Because we are members of the Catholic Church with Pope Francis and acknowledge he is pope, this does not make us members of any other group to which he belongs. So, for example, we do not become Argentinians or Jesuits, merely because he is a member of those groups. Similarly, we are not members of (in communion with) the conciliar church<sup>111</sup> simply because he is.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> The conciliar church is not merely a mindset or a set of opinions, but is a real, organized group of persons. Read the full explanation here:  
<https://catholiccandle.neocities.org/priests/sspx-faithful-and-informed-catholics-reject-even-the-concept-of-recognition-by-modernist-rome.html>

## Conclusion of this chapter

All Catholics are in communion with Pope Francis because we are members of the Church which he governs as pope. Every Catholic is also in communion with all other Catholics, including mainstream “new mass” Catholics.

This joint membership in the Catholic Church does not make us joint members (with Pope Francis) of the conciliar church.

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<sup>112</sup> Of course, it would objectively be a mortal sin for a Catholic to join a false religion. However, suppose a very confused Catholic thinks the Catholic Church allows this dual membership (in the Catholic religion and also some other religion). Suppose also he believes he continues to fulfill all conditions for being Catholic. We should not rashly judge that we *know* he is not Catholic and that if he dies as he is, we would be *certain* he will go to hell (as would be true if we knew he were not Catholic). Giving him the *benefit of the doubt*, we suppose he could *possibly* be inculpably ignorant and God will judge this, not us.



**From the above explanation, we see that sedevacantism is schism.**

“Communion” means the *mutual connection* among all the members of the Catholic Church.<sup>113</sup> One becomes

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<sup>113</sup> Here is how St. Thomas Aquinas admirably explains this truth:

Accordingly, schismatics properly so called are those who, willfully and intentionally separate themselves from the unity of the Church; for this is the chief unity, and the particular unity of several individuals among themselves is subordinate to the unity of the Church, even as the mutual adaptation of each member of a natural body is subordinate to the unity of the whole body. **Now the unity of the Church consists in two things; namely, in the *mutual connection or communion of the members of the Church*, and again in the subordination of all the members of the Church to the one head**, according to Col. 2:18, 19: “Puffed up by the sense of his flesh, and not holding the Head, from which the whole body, by joints and bands, being supplied with nourishment and compacted, groweth unto the increase of God.” Now this Head is Christ Himself, Whose viceregent in the Church is the Sovereign Pontiff. Wherefore schismatics are those who refuse to submit to the Sovereign Pontiff, and to hold communion with those members of the Church who acknowledge his

objectively schismatic, and cuts oneself off from the Catholic Church, whenever one refuses communion with

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supremacy.

*Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, *respondeo* (emphasis added).

In other words, “communion” is the union which binds together the members of the Church. Here is how Addis & Arnold explain this meaning of “communion”, in their very large, 1884 *Catholic Dictionary*:

*Communion of Saints* is mentioned in the ninth article of the Apostle’s Creed, where it is added, according to the *Roman Catechism* [*i.e.*, the *Council of Trent Catechism*], as an explanation of the foregoing words, “I believe in the holy Catholic Church.” The **communion of saints consists in the union which binds together the members of the Church on earth**, and connects the Church on earth with the Church suffering in Purgatory and the triumphant in heaven.

(1) The **faithful on earth have communion with each other** because they partake of the same sacraments, are under one head, and assist each other by their prayers and good works.

*A Catholic Dictionary*, Addis & Arnold, The Catholic Publication Society, New York, 1884, under the entry, *Communion of Saints* (bracketed words added).

the pope and with Catholics who acknowledge his authority.<sup>114</sup>

Because sedevacantists deny that Pope Francis is pope, they refuse to submit to his authority and deny communion with him. That refusal is objective schism, even supposing their refusal is due to their inculpable ignorance.

Generally, also, sedevacantists rashly judge that mainstream “new mass” Catholics are not *real* Catholics, (instead of giving mainstream Catholics the *benefit of the doubt* and supposing they could be sincere Catholics although very confused).<sup>115</sup>

These sedevacantists therefore deny that they have this *mutual connection* with mainstream “new mass”

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<sup>114</sup> Here is how St. Thomas Aquinas admirably explains this truth:

Schismatics are those who refuse to submit to the Sovereign Pontiff, and to hold communion with those members of the Church who acknowledge his supremacy.

*Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, *respondeo* (emphasis added).

<sup>115</sup> See, the full explanation in Chapter 5 above.

Catholics. This is schism, *i.e.*, *denying they are in communion* with these Catholics, as fellow Catholics.<sup>116</sup>

Although all sedevacantists are in objective schism from the Catholic Church, we suppose that they might somehow be *inculpably* ignorant. We do not make the rash judgment that they are not Catholic since they tell us they are, just like we don't judge the mainstream "new mass" Catholics not to be Catholic, since they tell us they are Catholic.

Members of both groups might be inculpably ignorant. We don't judge members of either group that, if they die as they are, it would be impossible for them to go to heaven (as would be true if they were not Catholic). This is like our not making the rash judgment that Pope Francis is not pope (and that he is outside the Catholic Church) despite his teaching objective heresy.

God judges a person's interior, subjective culpability which determines whether salvation is possible for him.

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<sup>116</sup> Here is how St. Thomas Aquinas admirably explains this truth:

**Schismatics are those who refuse ... to hold communion with those members of the Church who acknowledge his [*i.e.*, the pope's] supremacy.**

*Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.39, a.1, *respondeo* (emphasis and bracketed words added).

We don't judge the *person* of the mainstream Catholics, of Pope Francis, or of the sedevacantists. We judge only their objective words and deeds.<sup>117</sup>

## **Chapter 13**

### **Since Pope John Paul II was a real pope, does that mean that Archbishop Lefebvre was really excluded from the Catholic Church by the pope excommunicating him?**

#### **Short answer to the Sedevacantist Question**

The pope has the power to decide who to excommunicate. However, those excommunications have no effect if they are imposed unjustly.

#### **Discussion and explanation**

This question directly pertains to the pope's power to excommunicate a wayward subordinate. But let us examine this power in its proper context of the more

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<sup>117</sup> See, the full explanation in chapter 5 above.

general powers a superior (including the pope) possesses, to govern the community over which he is superior.

A pope must use his authority to keep order in the Church he governs, and therefore must punish wayward subordinates.

This duty is analogous to that of the father of a family, who must govern for the good of his family. This duty is also analogous to the duty of a civil ruler, who must govern for the good of civil society.

Civil and ecclesiastical superiors cannot read the interior souls of their subordinates any more than parents can read the souls of their children. Thus, the superior cannot infallibly determine his subordinates' subjective culpability for their words and deeds.

But because superiors must care for the communities they govern (as a father governs his family), they must punish their evil subordinates.<sup>118</sup> They must do their

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<sup>118</sup> Here is how St. Thomas explains this principle that we are obliged to obey (and can be justly judged) only by those superiors who are *our* superiors at the time we are acting:

Judgment ought to be congruous as far as concerns the person of the one judging. ... It is not prohibited to superiors but to subjects; hence they [*viz.*, the superiors] ought to judge only their subjects." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Lectures on St.*

best to administer justice, although they might judge mistakenly.<sup>119</sup> God will judge how diligently those superiors sought justice.

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*Matthew's Gospel*, ch.7, §1.

St. Thomas elaborates on this truth:

[J]ust as a law cannot be made save by public authority, so neither can a judgment be pronounced except by public authority, which extends over those who are subject to the community [*i.e.*, subject to that particular public authority]. Wherefore, even as it would be unjust for one man to force another to observe a law that was not approved by public authority, so too it is unjust, if a man compels another to submit to a judgment that is pronounced by anyone other than the public authority.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.6, *respondeo* (bracketed words added for clarity).

<sup>119</sup> Here is how St. Pius X explains the duty of ecclesiastical superiors to judge in the external forum and punish their subordinates' evil deeds, even though the subordinate might not be *interiorly culpable* for any sin:

Although they [the Modernists] express their astonishment that We should number them amongst the enemies of the Church, no one will be reasonably surprised that

A civil judge can possibly misjudge an accused person's inner guilt, but must judge the best available outward evidence and punish criminals as justly as possible. Likewise, because Church officials protect the Church community that they govern (*e.g.*, the whole Church, in the case of the pope, or a diocese, in the case of a bishop, *etc.*), they must punish wrongdoers as justly as possible despite the risk of misjudgment.

When a heretic (or other evildoer) refuses to repent despite his ecclesiastical superior's efforts to convince him, that superior must punish him. Among other

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We should do so, if, ***leaving out of account the internal disposition of the soul, of which God alone is the Judge,*** he considers their doctrines, their manner of speech, and their action [which are the outward, objective criteria upon which a man judges in the external forum].

*Pascendi*, St. Pope Pius X, §3 (emphasis and bracketed words added).

Thus, as St. Pius X explains, a superior might be mistaken about “*the internal disposition of the soul, of which God alone is the Judge*” but nonetheless, the superior must protect the community over which he has authority, by judging the outward conduct of wrongdoers under him (and punishing, where necessary).



punishments, that superior can excommunicate him, *i.e.*, exile him from the community.<sup>120</sup>

From all the above, we see that excommunication is a necessary ecclesiastical power and part of good governing. But in a given case, fallible Church superiors might excommunicate unjustly<sup>121</sup> (without adequate cause or judicial process), and therefore invalidly. *Id.*<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> The *Summa* explains that “excommunication is the most severe punishment”. *Summa Supp.*, Q.21, a.3, *respondeo*.

<sup>121</sup> The *Summa* explains this truth as follows:

An excommunication may be unjust ... on the part of the excommunication, through there being no proper cause, or through the sentence being passed without the forms of law being observed. In this case, if the error, on the part of the sentence, be such as to render the sentence void, this has no effect, for there is no excommunication.

*Summa Supp.*, Q.21, a.4, *respondeo* (emphasis added).

<sup>122</sup> Emphasizing the ineffectiveness of a void excommunication on a man’s charity, the *Summa* adds:

No man can be justly excommunicated except for a mortal sin, whereby a man is already separated from charity, even without being excommunicated. An unjust excommunication

For example, Pope John Paul II invalidly excommunicated Archbishop Lefebvre and the bishops he consecrated; Pope Liberius invalidly excommunicated St. Athanasius for his orthodoxy.<sup>123</sup>

### **Summary of this chapter**

The pope must use his authority to govern the Church wisely. By his own authority, the pope can and must excommunicate seriously wayward subordinates. The pope has the power to decide who to excommunicate. However, those excommunications have no effect if they are imposed unjustly.

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cannot deprive a man of charity, since this is one of the greatest of all goods, of which a man cannot be deprived against his will.

*Summa Supp.*, Q.21, a.1, ad 2.

<sup>123</sup> See, *The Voice of Tradition*, By Michael Davies, *The Remnant*, April 30, 1978, page 13-4, citing various authorities confirming the excommunication of St. Athanasius.

# Conclusion of this book

Habemus Papam!<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> This is the traditional exclamation (in Latin) when a new pope is elected. It translates to “We have a pope”.