

# Eclipse of the Church: The Case for Sedevacantism

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*This script has been slightly revised by the author and optimized for print publication. All scriptural quotations are from the Douay-Rheims translation, unless otherwise noted.*

When our Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ founded the Roman Catholic Church, He did so not merely as an institution that would teach His doctrine throughout the world and confer His grace through the sacraments. Neither did He found her simply as an organized community of all who believe in and follow Him. Much more than that, Christ founded the Church as an indefectible supernatural society that would in truth constitute His very own Mystical Body, a body of which He is the Head and the faithful are the members, so that he who is attached to the Body is also attached to the Head.

Just as He Himself is the unfailing Way, the Truth, and the Life (see Jn 14:6), so would His Church be an inerrant and indefectible supernatural instrument *by* and *in* which souls would be taught, ruled, and sanctified with His very own authority (cf. Mt 16:19; 18:18) and thus be brought safely to heavenly glory (cf. Jn 17:12).

In a radio message for Christmas Eve, 1951, Pope Pius XII teaches that “the Divine Redeemer founded the Church in order to communicate to humanity by its means his truth and his grace to the very end of time. The Church is his ‘Mystical Body.’ She is entirely Christ’s, and Christ is God’s [cf. 1 Cor 3:23].”<sup>1</sup> It is our Blessed Savior Himself who guarantees that His Church does not merely have the *charge* of teaching the truth and sanctifying souls in every age but *will* actually do so. At no time will she teach anything that does not conform to the Gospel of her Lord; at no point will she be a danger to souls.

In his 1943 encyclical letter on the Mystical Body, the same Pius XII teaches that “Jesus Christ, hanging on the Cross, opened up to His Church the fountain of those divine gifts, which prevent her from ever teaching false doctrine and enable her to rule them for the salvation of their souls through divinely enlightened pastors and to bestow on them an abundance of heavenly graces.”<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of the Church, then, is clear: She exists in order to “perpetuate on earth the saving work of Redemption”<sup>3</sup> and thus lead as many souls as attach themselves to her, to Heaven. That is why our Blessed Lord became incarnate; that is why He established a church. Everything in the Catholic Church exists for that ultimate end: the salvation of souls and, through it, the glory of Almighty God, “who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4).

These truths are part and parcel of the Holy Catholic Faith, without which it is impossible to please God (see Heb 11:6). This Faith we hold and profess, even, by the grace of God, unto the shedding of our blood.

And yet, we are all here tonight because we recognize that the institution that *today* calls itself the Roman Catholic Church is substantially different from the supernatural society founded by Jesus Christ and visibly shepherded by His Vicars throughout the ages until the death of Pope Pius XII on October 9, 1958. This “New Church” that has since been established in the Vatican, whose main revolutionary event was the so-called Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, does

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<sup>1</sup> In Benedictine Monks of Solesmes, eds., *Papal Teachings: The Church*, trans. by Mother E. O’Gorman (Boston, MA: St. Paul Editions, 1962), n. 1316.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis*, n. 31. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12mysti.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 65.

not teach the same apostolic doctrine, does not glorify God, does not enact holy legislation, and does not sanctify souls. In place of the Holy Sacrifice, it offers what is little more than a Protestant communion service. And so with the sower in the Gospel we observe: “An enemy hath done this” (Mt 13:28).

On February 4, 2019, the false pope Francis (Jorge Bergoglio) publicly signed a declaration, together with a leading Muslim cleric, Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The so-called *Document on Human Fraternity* states: “The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives.”<sup>4</sup>

That is a blasphemy! And it is worse than heresy; it is *apostasy*. Whereas heresy denies a single article of Faith, apostasy means a complete falling away from the Faith. Heresy and apostasy differ only in degree, not in kind. Neither the heretic nor the apostate has the Faith; neither of them is a Catholic.

The idea that God wills there to be a diversity of religions destroys the very foundations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It does away with all of Catholicism; even more so, it does away with the very notion of revealed religion in general. It wipes out *any* religion’s claim to being the objective truth revealed by God, as it grounds all religious belief in the sphere of the subjective and relative. It is a bold declaration of Modernism, which Pope St. Pius X rightly called “the synthesis of all heresies.”<sup>5</sup> It is also the fertile ground upon which the one-world religion of the Antichrist can be built, because if God wills *all* religions, then *none* of them are actually true.<sup>6</sup>

The divine teaching of our Blessed Lord, of course, is entirely incompatible with such a blasphemous and apostatical idea as that expressed in the Abu Dhabi declaration. At the Last Supper, Christ said to St. Thomas: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6). And earlier He had told the Pharisees: “...if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sin” (Jn 8:24).

Christ tolerates no indifference (see Mt 12:30; Apoc 3:15-16), and He will not share His Glory with a false god (see Ex 20:2-5), nor put His Truth on a par with the fables of diabolical or man-made religions (see 2 Cor 6:14-16; cf. Rom 3:4). He is the Sign of Contradiction (see Lk 2:34) that sets men at variance with one another (see Mt 10:35), that “came not to send peace, but the sword” (Mt 10:34). He is the corner stone rejected by the builders (see Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11), and “on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder” (Mt 21:44). “Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

So Francis makes Christ into a liar! He destroys the Gospel at its very root and effectively declares every heathen religion under the sun not only to be willed by God but to be the expression of His wisdom!

Surely it is no exaggeration to say that this New Church has ushered in the Great Apostasy foretold by St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3: “The apostasy must come first; the champion of wickedness must appear first, destined to inherit perdition” (Mgr. Ronald Knox translation; cf. Lk 18:8; Mt 24:11). In fact, if this isn’t *the* Great Apostasy, it is hard to fathom what would remain for the *real* Great Apostasy to accomplish. What will be left for the world to apostatize *from*?

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<sup>4</sup> *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*. Available online at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190204\\_documento-fratellanza-umana.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html).

<sup>5</sup> Pope St. Pius X, Encyclical Letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, n. 39. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius10/p10pasce.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Mortalium Animos*, n. 2. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius11/p11morta.htm>

This incongruous state of affairs obviously calls for an explanation; but it calls for one that, while doing sufficient justice to what is evident to our senses, is also theologically sound. That is, it must be in accord with the observed facts but also with the Faith. We need not fear any contradiction between the two, because, although our feeble minds may not be able to resolve everything adequately, “...the Faith will in no way oppose the most certain data of experience and reason,”<sup>7</sup> as Dom Prosper Guéranger writes in his magnificent book *The Papal Monarchy*, which bears the explicit endorsement of Pope Pius IX.

In order to understand what has happened to the Mystical Body of Christ, I propose that it will be helpful, first of all, to hearken to the warnings the Supreme Pontiffs had repeatedly given in the roughly 200 years prior to the Modernist revolution of Vatican II.

In the prologue to his Apostolic Constitution *Auctorem Fidei*, released in 1794, Pope Pius VI speaks of a “dreadful and never-ending conspiracy against the very body of Christ, which is the Church...”<sup>8</sup> To understand what this conspiracy is, who its protagonists are, and why it should be directed against the Mystical Body of Christ, we must briefly review the reason why our Blessed Lord founded the Catholic Church to begin with.

From the beginning, it had been God’s plan that mankind would possess not only a common natural life of the body by sharing a common human nature, but also a common supernatural life of the soul by sharing in sanctifying grace. Just as in the natural order, all of mankind forms one natural family inasmuch as all human beings are the progeny of the first parents, Adam and Eve,<sup>9</sup> and share in their nature, so in the supernatural order, mankind was constituted by God to be knitted in one spiritual union. As the saintly Father Edward Leen writes in his 1938 book *Why the Cross?*:

Men were meant to form not merely one family, they were planned to function as members of one Mystical Body, all sharing in the same supernatural life. The whole human species was to work its way to its final goal as one man... As the life blood flows through all the members of the living body, supplying its suitable nourishment to each part and enabling it to fulfil its appropriate function, so the life blood of the soul, that is, sanctifying grace and divine charity, was to stream through all the members of the vast, mystic, human body, impacting to each a divine vigour and empowering it to exercise its due role in relation to the other members and to the body as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

With the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, original sin entered into the world and with it the known consequences, which are chiefly, but not exclusively, spiritual. Man, created in the image and likeness of God, fell from grace. His likeness to God was lost, and the divine image in him was wounded and darkened.

But before God even told Adam and Eve what their punishment would be, He promised, however obscurely, a Redeemer: “I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel” (Gen 3:15). For God, being all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful, would not permit the devil to triumph over His creation and to snatch from Him, as it were, the entire human race, which was created for no other reason than the glory of God and its own eternal Beatitude.

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<sup>7</sup> Dom Prosper Guéranger, *The Papal Monarchy* (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2007), p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> An English translation of this prologue is available online at <https://novusordowatch.org/wp-content/uploads/piusvi-auctorem-fidei.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> See Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*, n. 37. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12human.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Rev. Edward Leen, *Why the Cross?* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1938), pp. 136-137; cf. pp. 152-153. This is based on the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas.

In order to restore to man what he had lost, and to re-enable him to attain the eternal goal that constitutes the very reason for his existence, while at the same time rendering full satisfaction to the Divine Honor that had been outraged, violating neither mercy nor justice, God chose to take on human nature and make Himself reparation for the sins of mankind. “God will provide himself a victim for an holocaust...” (Gen 22:8), Abraham said to his son Isaac, as he was carrying wood on his back up the hill to the place of sacrifice. “God himself will come and will save you”, Isaias prophesied (Is 35:4).

Being true man, Christ’s Sacrifice would most fittingly be rendered on behalf of the human race; being true God, His Sacrifice would truly provide super-abundant atonement for the sins of men and be infinitely pleasing to the Father. So when the fullness of time had come and the Virgin foretold by Isaias was with Child (see Mt 1:23; Is 7:14) and gave birth to the Promised Redeemer, immediately we find the Incarnate God persecuted by King Herod (see Mt 2:16). The slaughter of the Holy Innocents was surely a foreshadowing of the persecution of our Lord by His very own Jewish people during His public Life and especially His Sacred Passion, as had been prophesied (see Jer 31:15; Wis 2:12-24; Is 53).

It is there – in our Lord’s public Ministry and holy Passion – that we find the origin of this “dreadful and never-ending conspiracy against the very body of Christ” of which Pope Pius VI speaks. “The spirit of Antichrist was at work as soon as Christ was manifested to the world,”<sup>11</sup> writes Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, the celebrated 19<sup>th</sup>-century convert from Anglicanism. The same author notes that this movement to counter, to oppose, to do away with the true Messiah “has accumulated its results from age to age,”<sup>12</sup> and so we can say that “all the heresies from the beginning are no more than the continuous development and expansion of ‘the mystery of iniquity’, which was already at work”<sup>13</sup> at the time of the Apostles – St. Paul speaks of it in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. It will continue to progress and expand until it reaches the full measure of its iniquity, culminating in the appearance of the Antichrist, who, Cardinal Manning writes, “will not be simply the antagonist, but the substitute or supplanter of the true Messiah.”<sup>14</sup> That is a point of exceptional importance, and we’ll return to it later.

When our Blessed Lord rendered on the Cross the Supreme Sacrifice to His heavenly Father on our behalf, He did so in order to restore the sanctifying grace lost by Adam for all humanity. But Christ did not merely wish to restore grace to individuals with no connection to one another – just as before the Fall this sanctifying grace was to unite all of humanity in a single spiritual body, so grace restored was to bring all repentant sinners into one mystical body, the Mystical Body of Christ, who is the Second and True Adam, the head of humanity regenerated and restored.

This Mystical Body, Pope Leo XIII instructs us, “came forth from the side of the second Adam in His sleep on the Cross” and first manifested itself “before the eyes of men on the great day of Pentecost.”<sup>15</sup> Our Blessed Lord, in His mercy and goodness, so identifies Himself with that Mystical Body of His that, as Pope Pius XII teaches, “the Divine Redeemer and the Society which is His Body form but one mystical person, that is to say, to quote Augustine, the whole Christ.”<sup>16</sup> Our Blessed Lord Himself is the Head; the faithful are the members.

We encounter this complete identification of Christ the Lord with His Mystical Body in the Acts of the Apostles. On the road to Damascus, our holy Redeemer confronts Saul, who is fiercely persecuting the Church. And He says to him: “Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?” (Acts 9:4; Knox).

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<sup>11</sup> Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, *The Pope & the Antichrist* (Sainte-Croix du Mont: Tradibooks, 2007), p. 12. This book is a reprint of the original *The Present Crisis of the Holy See Tested by Prophecy* (London: Burns & Lambert, 1861).

<sup>12</sup> Manning, *The Pope & the Antichrist*, p. 22; cf. p. 35.

<sup>13</sup> Manning, *The Pope & the Antichrist*, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Manning, *The Pope & the Antichrist*, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Divinum Illud*, n. 5. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/113divin.htm>. This is repeated by Pope Pius XII in *Mystici Corporis*, n. 26.

<sup>16</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 67.

So Christ, who in His physical Body ascended into Heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father (see Mk 16:19; cf. Mt 22:44; 26:64; Ps 109:1), perpetuates His earthly existence in His Mystical Body. Do we have any cause for surprise, then, if we discover that, as Cardinal Manning writes, “[t]he history of the Church, and the history of our Lord on earth, run as it were in parallel”?<sup>17</sup> Pope Pius XII teaches that “the society established by the Redeemer of the human race resembles its divine Founder who was persecuted, calumniated and tortured by those very men whom He had undertaken to save.”<sup>18</sup>

The way of salvation is the way of the Cross, and that is true not only for our Lord’s Physical Body but also for His Mystical Body, the Church. As Christ Himself commanded: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24; see also Rom 6:5; 2 Tim 2:11). In this way, we do what St. Paul described in his Letter to the Colossians. Referring to himself, he said: “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church” (Col 1:24).<sup>19</sup>

In a book recommended by St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life*, author Fr. Charles Arminjon explains this a bit more. He writes:

Now, the mystical and collective body of Jesus Christ is modeled upon His individual body. ...

What was accomplished in Jesus Christ individually must be continued in His collective, or mystical, body. Such is the law of indestructible solidarity, established between the head and the members. It would scarcely be fitting if the latter were to soar up into glory without passing through the transformations endured by the head. It cannot be granted that Jesus Christ wanted to open up two differing paths leading to heaven, one for Himself, rough and excruciating, the other for His followers, comfortable and strewn with roses and pleasures.<sup>20</sup>

And so Christ desires to suffer in His Mystical Body as He suffered in His Physical Body.

We have already seen that the driving force behind this “mystery of iniquity” is Satan, who, having failed to prevent the Redemption itself, now seeks to frustrate its generous application to souls. One way he does that is by inspiring unbelief and moral corruption in souls. A particularly tragic role belongs to the apostate Jews, who, having definitively rejected the true supernatural Messiah on Good Friday, now seek to supplant Him with a false worldly messiah who is agreeable to their Naturalist aims.<sup>21</sup>

St. Robert Bellarmine notes that it is certain that “Antichrist will come especially because of the Jews, and ... he is to be received by them as the Messiah....”<sup>22</sup> Our Blessed Lord Himself had prophesied this when He told the Jews: “I am come in the name of my Father, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive” (Jn 5:43). At the same time, we look forward with joyful expectation to the time when the Jews will embrace their true Messiah and Redeemer, for this too has been prophesied to occur before the end of the world.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Manning, *The Pope & the Antichrist*, p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 3.

<sup>19</sup> See also Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 106.

<sup>20</sup> Rev. Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life*, trans. by Susan Conroy and Peter McEnery (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2008), pp. 288-289.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Rev. Denis Fahey, *The Kingship of Christ and Conversion of Jewish Nation* (Palmdale, CA: Christian Book Club of America, 1993), p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> St. Robert Bellarmine, *On the Roman Pontiff*, Book III, Chapter 12. In *Controversies of the Christian Faith*, trans. by Rev. Kenneth Baker (Saddle River, NJ: Keep the Faith, Inc., 2016), p. 890.

<sup>23</sup> See Osee 3:4-5; Rom 11:23-32; Fahey, *The Kingship of Christ and Conversion of Jewish Nation*, pp. 101-105.

Just as with our Lord's earthly life, the Persecution of the Mystical Body will likewise culminate in a Mystical Passion. Since the devil could not defeat Christ on the Cross, He now tries to defeat Christ in His Mystical Body on earth, the Church. And who in this Mystical Body represents Christ more than His Vicar, the visible head of the Church, the Pope! As Pius XII teaches, "Christ and His Vicar constitute one only Head."<sup>24</sup> It only makes sense, therefore, that the devil's persecution of the Mystical Body would, especially in the more mature stages of its manifestation, center on the Pope.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, the Popes in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially, speak again and again about a struggle, a war, a plot against the Catholic Church and particularly against the Apostolic See, the Chair of St. Peter. Let me share with you just a few quotations to illustrate that.

In 1851, in the encyclical letter *Exultavit Cor Nostrum*, Pope Pius IX speaks of "the fierce war against everything Catholic and this Apostolic See..."<sup>26</sup> In his encyclical *Quanta Cura* in 1864, he deplores "so great a conspiracy against Catholic interests and this Apostolic See..."<sup>27</sup> His successor, Pope Leo XIII, writes in his 1884 encyclical against Freemasonry, *Humanum Genus*: "They are planning the destruction of holy Church publicly and openly, and this with the set purpose of utterly despoiling the nations of Christendom, if it were possible, of the blessings obtained for us through Jesus Christ our Savior."<sup>28</sup> In the same document he explains further:

...[A]gainst the apostolic see and the Roman Pontiff the contention of these enemies has been for a long time directed. ...[N]ow the time has come when the partisans of the sects openly declare, what in secret among themselves they have for a long time plotted, that the sacred power of the Pontiffs must be abolished, and that the papacy itself, founded by divine right, must be utterly destroyed. If other proofs were wanting, this fact would be sufficiently disclosed by the testimony of men well informed, of whom some at other times, and others again recently, have declared it to be true of the Freemasons that they especially desire to assail the Church with irreconcilable hostility, and that they will never rest until they have destroyed whatever the supreme Pontiffs have established for the sake of religion.<sup>29</sup>

Concerning such attempts by the enemies of God and the Church, the words of Pope Pius IX in his 1853 encyclical letter *Inter Multiplices* are most instructive. Addressing the bishops of France, the Pope says:

Now you know well that the most deadly foes of the Catholic religion have always waged a fierce war, but without success, against this Chair; they are by no means ignorant of the fact that religion itself can never totter and fall while this Chair remains intact, the Chair which rests on the rock which the proud gates of hell cannot overthrow and in which there is the whole and perfect solidity of the Christian religion.<sup>30</sup>

Did you notice it? He says, "while this Chair remains intact"! Now, per Catholic doctrine, the Chair of St. Peter can be *vacant* (*sede vacante*), meaning there is no Pope reigning; and it can be *impeded* (*sede impedita*), meaning there *is* a true Pope but he is not able to exercise his office, for example, because he is being held prisoner somewhere. But the Chair of St. Peter cannot *defect* – it cannot cease to be what it was divinely established to be!

<sup>24</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 40.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Manning, *The Pope & the Antichrist*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Pope Pius IX, Encyclical Letter *Exultavit Cor Nostrum*, n. 2. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9exulta.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Pope Pius IX, Encyclical Letter *Quanta Cura*, n. 9. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9quanta.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Humanum Genus*, n. 2. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13human.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus*, n. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Pope Pius IX, Encyclical Letter *Inter Multiplices*, n. 7. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9interm.htm>. In the live presentation of this talk, this encyclical was misidentified as *Nostis et Nobiscum*.

In his 1859 encyclical *Qui Nuper*, Pius IX calls the Apostolic See “the citadel and bulwark of the Catholic faith.”<sup>31</sup> This fortress of Faith cannot turn itself into an infernal dungeon, teaching the doctrines of hell in place of the salutary doctrine of Christ. It cannot all of a sudden contradict the Faith, teach heresy, or give to the Church invalid sacraments, fake saints, or impious, blasphemous laws. The Chair of Truth cannot become the Chair of Lies, for Christ our Lord promised that it would not (see Mt 16:18; Lk 22:31-32).

Therefore, the First Vatican Council in 1870 teaches:

...[T]his see of St. Peter always remains unblemished by any error, in accordance with the divine promise of our Lord and Saviour to the prince of his disciples: I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren [Lk 22:32].

This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter and his successors in this see so that they might discharge their exalted office for the salvation of all, and so that the whole flock of Christ might be kept away by them from the poisonous food of error and be nourished with the sustenance of heavenly doctrine. Thus the tendency to schism is removed and the whole church is preserved in unity, and, resting on its foundation, can stand firm against the gates of hell.<sup>32</sup>

Surely it stands to reason that the Ark of Salvation cannot become the Ark of Damnation. The Vicar of Christ cannot become the Vicar of Antichrist.

And yet, it appears as if after the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, the Apostolic See has defected. For, under the ostensible Popes John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, the institution which falsely claims to be – but is recognized throughout the world as – the Roman Catholic Church, has been preaching a different gospel, with the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s marking the definitive “ground zero” for this “great reset” in Catholicism that promised to “build back better.”

We are surely all familiar with the many doctrinal and liturgical aberrations this New Church has brought. To mention just a few: The clear teaching that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of Christ and all other so-called Christian confessions are heretical sects that have no part with Christ, was replaced by an indifferentist ecumenism, according to which all the baptized are somehow part of the true Church, just not “fully”. Christian unity, we are now told, is no longer found exclusively in the Catholic Church (so that we would have to bring back all those who are separated from her) but by Catholics and Protestants “seeking the truth in common,” attempting to find a way to synthesize their respective theological positions into an as-of-yet unspecified “reconciled diversity.” It’s telling, but really not surprising, that the Vatican’s chief ecumenist, “Cardinal” Kurt Koch, lamented in early 2017 that after five decades of ecumenism, the different parties at the great ecumenical table can’t even agree on what concrete ultimate goal they’re pursuing.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly enough, though, all of them agree on what they *don’t* want, namely, the conversion of the non-Catholics to Catholicism. And that confirms the thesis of the Great Apostasy.

At Vatican II, the Catholic teaching on Church and state was replaced by the great error of religious liberty; the dogma of papal primacy was undermined by the notion of collegiality; false religions were commended for whatever “good elements” they supposedly contain; heretical sects were praised for allegedly being used by the Holy Ghost as means of salvation; and the faithless Jews were presented as not having been rejected by God.

<sup>31</sup> Pope Pius IX, Encyclical Letter *Qui Nuper*, n. 3. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quinup.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus*, Chapter 4. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum20.htm>.

<sup>33</sup> See <https://novusordowatch.org/2017/01/vatican-no-consensus-goal-of-ecumenism>.

After the council, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was turned into a Protestant Last Supper service, and, in general, dogmatic truths revealed by God gradually became sincerely-held personal convictions about which we *can* and *should* dialogue because “no one owns the truth.”

In terms of sexual morality these “post-Catholics” were most clever: While upholding many of the *conclusions* of the old morality, the true premises from which those conclusions flowed were replaced by false ones, thus secretly undermining their foundation, an incongruence to be exploited later. In addition, while the indissolubility of marriage, for example, continued to be upheld *on paper*, annulments (declarations of nullity) began to be handed out like candy so that the indissolubility of the marriage bond began to be clearly denied *in practice*. The Pharisees would be proud!

For those who still can’t manage to get their marriage declared null, the man who calls himself “Pope Francis” has since gotten quite creative. In 2016, he issued the exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, in which he basically downgrades adultery from being a mortal sin to being merely an imperfect participation in the “ideal” of Holy Matrimony, one that – I am not kidding – is sometimes “what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal.”<sup>34</sup>

True to that blasphemous and truly infernal theology, in an interview with French sociologist Dominique Wolton in 2017, Francis stated: “The least serious sins are the sins of the flesh.”<sup>35</sup>

Nothing illustrates the post-Vatican II understanding of sin better than what we find in many Novus Ordo parishes: Confession times are by appointment only – or *maybe* 30 minutes on Saturdays –, and if your church still happens to have one of those old wooden confessionals, well, upon opening the door you find it’s been turned into a holy broom closet. Hey, if not souls, you’ve got to at least keep the church clean!

In order not to be completely devoid of sins, however, the post-Catholic Vatican has begun to invent new ones: Rigidity, clericalism, proselytism, triumphalism, the death penalty, not being attentive to the “cry of the earth,” and advocating for the enforcement of border protection and immigration laws suddenly became sinful, while *real* sins became less serious, mere *faux pas*, or, in general, simply irrelevant. After all, God is merciful – right?

Now look, I could go on and on with more examples, but I think Father wants me to finish before midnight, so these will have to be enough.

To all appearances, then, after Pope Pius XII, the Catholic Church began to defect – to doubt itself, contradict itself, and gradually dissolve itself. What we see there in Rome today is the sorry result of more than six decades of Vatican II, a fateful descent into apostasy.

However, we have infallible certitude, given by our Blessed Lord Himself, that His Church cannot defect, cannot betray her Lord, cannot substantially alter her doctrine, cannot lead souls to hell, cannot fail. For that reason alone we have infallible certitude that the New Church of Vatican II is *not* His Church.

Consequently, what has been going on since the death of Pope Pius XII and the election of John XXIII is starting to become clear: The avowed enemies of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of His holy Catholic religion, the protagonists of the “mystery of iniquity”, have reached the next milestone of their nefarious plans: They have secretly ascended to positions of power in the Church and, unable to actually capture and destroy the Papacy, have installed a succession of *false* Popes in the

<sup>34</sup> Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 303. Available online at [https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia\\_en.pdf](https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> The quote is found in the interview book *A Future of Faith: The Path of Change in Politics and Society* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2018), p. 173. See <https://novusordowatch.org/2019/02/francis-least-serious-sins-flesh>.



See of Peter. Not protected by the Holy Ghost, these antipopes have been able to spread blasphemy, heresy, apostasy, and all kinds of spiritual filth – a whole new pseudo-Catholic religion, in fact – with the *apparent* approval of the Pope and the Church.

Interestingly enough, that Vatican II Church does not even *claim* to be the institution founded by Christ, it only claims that Christ's Church exists *in* it.<sup>36</sup> And as far as the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ is concerned, well, on January 17, 2020, Francis himself told an ecumenical delegation of the Lutheran Church of Finland that Catholics and Lutherans are “members of one and the same mystical body of Christ....”<sup>37</sup>

It truly is a New Church! If anyone still doubts it, an easy and practical way to verify that there is a new religion afoot, both in teaching and in practice, is to go to the average Novus Ordo parish and attempt to teach there the religion of Pope Pius XII. Good luck with that! You'll find yourself kicked to the curb faster than you can say “existential phenomenology.”

The purpose of this New Church is obviously to snuff out Catholicism in the world by perverting it, under the guise of teaching a more profound understanding of it. It is to destroy Faith, hope, and charity in souls, thus depriving them of sanctifying grace and even the *opportunity* of salvation. We must unfortunately acknowledge that these enemies of Christ have been extremely successful in that. No wonder our Blessed Lord asked, “But ah, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith left on the earth?” (Lk 18:8; Knox).

Surely this Great Apostasy, this great falling away from the Faith, constitutes a substantial part of the Church's Mystical Passion. And although, like the disciples of our Lord so many centuries ago, we find ourselves dumbfounded and bewildered now at what seems to us a rather unexpected turn of events, nevertheless this Passion of the Church was prophesied just as our Lord's Physical Passion had been, wherefore Christ after His Resurrection mildly rebuked the blind disciples, saying: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:26).

I think it is safe to say that, just as the persecution of the Physical Body of Christ reached its climax in our Lord's Crucifixion and Death, so the persecution of His Mystical Body has reached its preliminary high point at the present time.

The same Fr. Edward Leen I quoted earlier says the following about the Passion of the Church:

Christ ended His earthly career but to resume it in another form. What seemed to men an ending was but a beginning. ‘God would not give his holy one to see corruption’ [Acts 2:31; cf. Acts 2:27; Acts 13:37 and Psalm 15:10]. In the living Church, the living Mystical Body which Christ formed to Himself, as a result of His sacrifice He continues on earth a real though Mystical life. Christ lives in and through the Church and that life of His, in His Mystical Body, reproduces the characteristic traits of His life in the flesh. There is one striking difference. The mortal body of Christ tasted death. The Mystical Body is indestructible.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, the Church cannot die. She cannot disappear, she cannot fail, she cannot defect. However, if God does not prevent it, then a similar result as the death or defection of the Church *can* be achieved by other means, namely, by substituting for the true Church a counterfeit and for the true Pope a false one.

Earlier we quoted Cardinal Manning saying that the Antichrist “will not be simply the antagonist, but the substitute or supplanter of the true Messiah.”<sup>39</sup> It would be reasonable to infer, therefore, that, as the Antichrist will try to supplant the

<sup>36</sup> See Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 8.

<sup>37</sup> See [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2020/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200117\\_chiesa-luterana-finlandia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2020/january/documents/papa-francesco_20200117_chiesa-luterana-finlandia.html)

<sup>38</sup> Leen, *Why the Cross?*, pp. 365-366.

<sup>39</sup> Manning, *The Pope & the Antichrist*, p. 29.

true Christ, so the Mystical Body of the Antichrist will try to supplant the Mystical Body of the true Christ, the Church. And what more apt figure of speech could be given to describe such a supplanting, which is necessarily also an obscuring, of the indestructible true Body of Christ, than to call it an “eclipse of the Church”?

Many of you will recognize this metaphor of a Church in eclipse as one having been used, at least allegedly, by Our Lady of La Salette in 1846. Since it is not certain, however, whether these words were truly from Our Lady, and since the Holy Office in a decree of Dec. 21, 1915,<sup>40</sup> forbade discussion of the secret of La Salette, I will refrain from commenting on it.

Long *before* Vatican II, the idea of an eclipse of the Church, which is a kind of substitution in outward appearance, was contemplated by theologians, however rudimentarily, as a possibility – for instance, in Fr. Sylvester Berry’s interpretation of the Apocalypse. In 1921 Fr. Berry writes that “the [false] prophet will probably set himself up in Rome as a sort of anti-pope during the vacancy of the papal throne...”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Mgr. Fulton Sheen, writing in 1948, speaks of a “counter-church” that “will have all the notes and characteristics of the [Catholic] Church, but in reverse and emptied of its divine content. It will be a mystical body of the Antichrist that will in all externals resemble the mystical body of Christ.”<sup>42</sup>

The New Testament itself speaks about the signs and events that must precede our Lord’s Second Coming that can help shed light on our current situation. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10, St. Paul warns of the “operation of error” that will come to deceive souls, in punishment for mankind’s indifference to truth; and our Blessed Lord Himself puts us on notice that “there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, [who] shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect. ...And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light...” (Mt 24:24,29).

St. Augustine of Hippo, Doctor of the Church, has some incredibly important commentary on that passage. In his Letter to Hesychius, he writes:

For when the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be shaken, as is recalled by the other two Evangelists in this place, the Church will not appear. Then the wicked persecutors will rage beyond measure, unafraid, enjoying worldly happiness, saying “peace and security.” Then the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be moved; because many who were seen shining with grace, will yield to their persecutors and will fall, and some of the strongest of the faithful will be shaken.<sup>43</sup>

In any case, in order to understand better the nature of our situation today, it will be useful to meditate on the Passion of Christ on Good Friday. Since the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, we can legitimately infer that what God allowed to happen to Christ in His *Physical* Passion, He will also allow to happen to the Church in her *Mystical* Passion, death excepted. Conversely, what was impossible to happen to Christ, will likewise be impossible to happen to His Church.

For example: Christ withdrew in agony; He was assisted by an angel; He was betrayed by one of His own; He was abandoned and denied; He was unjustly accused and condemned; He suffered intensely; He was humiliated, beaten, and scourged; He carried the Cross; He was crucified; He died; He lay in the tomb; He was hidden from the world for a short while; and He rose again. All of these things were possible – all of these things God permitted to happen to Christ during His Passion on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. One may infer, therefore, that, by and large, all of them can happen in some form or another to His Church – death being, again, the only exception.

<sup>40</sup> See *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* VII (1915), p. 594.

<sup>41</sup> Rev. E. Sylvester Berry, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Columbus, OH: John W. Winterich, 1921), p. 135.

<sup>42</sup> Very Rev. Fulton J. Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948), p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> St. Augustine, Epistola CXCIX, in *Collectio Selecta Ss. Ecclesiae Patrum*, vol. CXLVIII (Paris: Parent-Desbarres, 1835), pp. 127-128. I thank the two individuals who translated this passage for me from the original Latin.

But notice what was *not* possible for Christ to do: He could not cease being God; He could not lie; He could not mislead His disciples; He could not lead anyone to hell; He could not sin; He could not stop being the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He could not become the devil or make peace with him; He could not change or disavow the Gospel He had preached; He could not cease being the means of salvation and turn into the means of damnation instead.

This is very significant because we all know that the great and extremely popular alternative to Sedevacantism in our day is what is often called “recognize-and-resist traditionalism”, which tries to practice traditional Catholicism *inside* the New Church, that is, while being attached, to a greater or lesser extent, to the Modernist hierarchy. The idea is to *recognize* these alleged Catholic authorities as valid and legitimate, but to *resist* them in whatever one deems does not sufficiently conform to Catholicism as it was known until Vatican II.

The position is extremely attractive to a lot of people because it promises the best of both worlds: all the traditional doctrine – or at least so they think – plus the traditional forms of worship, without any of those pesky problems that stem from having no known hierarchy to rule the Church with ordinary authority.

Of course, just how much resistance is necessary or lawful is ultimately going to be determined by each individual resister or by the cleric each individual believer has chosen to outsource the matter to – and in times of Pachamama, COVID-19, and *Traditionis Custodes*,<sup>44</sup> that is becoming an increasingly difficult task.

Meanwhile, such “resistance traditionalists” are tearing the Church’s doctrines on the Papacy, the Church, and the Magisterium to shreds. In his 1928 encyclical *Mortalium Animos* against ecumenism, Pope Pius XI points out that “in this one Church of Christ no man can be, or remain, who does not accept, recognize and obey the authority and supremacy of Peter and his legitimate successors.”<sup>45</sup> The First Vatican Council and the Fourth Council of Constantinople proclaim that “[t]he first condition of salvation is to maintain the rule of the true faith. And since that saying of our Lord Jesus Christ, You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church [Mt 16:18], cannot fail of its effect, the words spoken are confirmed by their consequences.”<sup>46</sup>

For that reason, the true Popes always demand not just lip service but *actual submission* to their official magisterium. Pope Pius IX, for example, in the same text we looked at earlier in which he denounces the anti-Catholic forces persecuting the Church, says that the faithful should “grow in love for this Holy See, venerate it, and accept it with complete obedience; they should execute whatever the See itself teaches, determines, and decrees.”<sup>47</sup>

When Leo XIII was Pope and was celebrating 50 years of being a priest in 1887, Bishop Giuseppe Sarto of Mantua in Italy said to his flock:

The moment has come to prove to the great Vicar of Christ our unchanging affection and fidelity. For us Leo XIII is the guardian of the Holy Scriptures, the interpreter of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the supreme dispenser of the treasures of the Church, the head of the Catholic religion, the chief shepherd of souls, the infallible teacher, the secure guide, who directs us on our way through a world wrapped in darkness and the shadow of death. All the strength of the Church is in the Pope; all the foundations of our Faith are based on the successor of Peter. Those who wish her ill assault the papacy in every possible way; they cut themselves adrift from the Church, and try their best to make the Pope an object of hatred and contempt.

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<sup>44</sup> This is the Apostolic Letter issued *motu proprio* by Francis on July 16, 2021, that severely restricts the use of the Roman Missal of 1962 (“Traditional Latin Mass”) in the New Church.

<sup>45</sup> Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*, n. 11.

<sup>46</sup> First Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus*, Chapter 4.

<sup>47</sup> Pius IX, *Inter Multiplices*, n. 7.

The more they endeavor to weaken our faith and our attachment to the head of the Church, the more closely let us draw to him through the public testimony of our Faith, our obedience and our veneration.<sup>48</sup>

Now, you might wonder why we should care about the words of the bishop of Mantua. Well, 16 years later that bishop of Mantua became Pope himself, and we know him today as St. Pius X, the great scourge of Modernism. As Pope, St. Pius X taught that “the first and greatest criterion of the faith, the ultimate and unassailable test of orthodoxy is obedience to the teaching authority of the Church, which is ever living and infallible, since she was established by Christ to be ... ‘the pillar and support of truth’ (1 Tim 3:15).”<sup>49</sup>

Ladies and gentlemen, I think it’s pretty evident that this whole recognize-and-resist program, where each individual Catholic decides what to accept from the Pope and what to reject, isn’t exactly compatible with the pre-Vatican II, traditional Catholic doctrine.

This becomes even more apparent when we recall that the Church is truly Christ’s own Mystical Body and that the Pope, *as Pope*, is so intimately united to our Lord as to constitute, together with Him, “one only Head.”<sup>50</sup> And then it suddenly becomes shockingly evident that the recognize-and-resist traditionalism is actually a frightful blasphemy. No doubt they do not realize it, but those who promote this resistance position, by undermining and denying the true doctrine on the Papacy, are actually unwitting participants in that very destruction of the Papacy that Pope Leo XIII had warned us was the goal of the Freemasons, namely, “that the sacred power of the Pontiffs must be abolished, and that the papacy itself, founded by divine right, must be utterly destroyed.”<sup>51</sup>

*But, they say, surely the Church cannot be without a Pope for over six decades without defecting!* And while we must grant that the long-term absence of a Pope certainly presents a huge difficulty in all its consequences, it nevertheless remains true that accepting the Vatican II “Popes”, so called, and the entire Novus Ordo Church as the lawful ecclesiastical authorities, does absolutely nothing to remedy the situation in which we find ourselves. On the contrary!

For, what good is it to have a church with a perfectly functioning hierarchy if that hierarchy contradicts and vitiates the very reason for which Christ founded His Church to begin with? The Catholic Church’s purpose, we must recall, is entirely supernatural. She leads souls to Heaven by attaching them to Christ the Head as members of His Mystical Body.

As Pope Pius XII teaches clearly in his encyclical on the Church: “There can ... be no real opposition or conflict between the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit and the juridical commission of Ruler and Teacher received from Christ...”<sup>52</sup> At the same time, there can be no “hidden and invisible Church”<sup>53</sup> either, as if Christ had founded a church without a hierarchy, a church that is merely spiritual and has no discernible body, as the Protestants believe.

We must be very careful, therefore, not to affirm anything contrary to Catholic doctrine. However, what we *can* and, in my opinion, *ought* to do for the time being, in addition to professing all the truths of our Faith without restriction or reservation, is also to point out that we simply do not know or understand everything that has transpired since the death of Pope Pius XII. In a way we find ourselves in a situation similar to the confusion experienced by St. Mary Magdalen: “...they have taken away my Lord; and I know not where they have laid him” (Jn 20:13).

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<sup>48</sup> F.A. Forbes, *Pope St. Pius X* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1987), pp. 34-35.

<sup>49</sup> Pope St. Pius X, Allocution *Con Vera Soddisfazione* (May 10, 1909). Available online at <https://novusordowatch.org/pius10-con-vera-soddisfazione>.

<sup>50</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 40.

<sup>51</sup> Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus*, n. 15.

<sup>52</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 65.

<sup>53</sup> Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Satis Cognitum*, n. 3. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13satis.htm>. Pope Pius XII echoes this in *Mystici Corporis*, n. 64.

Surely we cannot be faulted for not having all the answers to a conundrum that, it should be safe to assume, would have perplexed the Church's most erudite theologians, had they lived long enough to see the mature rotten fruit of the Vatican II religion. The simple fact is that we are finding ourselves confronted with a situation we did not create and do not want. What else could be asked of us but to analyze it in light of Catholic teaching to the best of our ability and to draw the conclusions that follow with necessity?

There is no doubt that our Faith is being put to the test, as was the Faith of the disciples on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The First Vatican Council explains that "this faith, which 'is the beginning of human salvation' [Council of Trent, Session VI, Chapter 8], is a supernatural virtue by which we, with the aid and inspiration of the grace of God, believe that the things revealed by Him are true, not because the intrinsic truth of the revealed things has been perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived."<sup>54</sup>

This is an absolutely crucial point that I believe is not understood very well in our dark days. We believe in the holy Catholic Faith because God Himself has revealed it, not because we have seen or understood its truth by our natural reason. That is what supernatural Faith is, and not only is it very virtuous, it is absolutely necessary for salvation. As St. Paul told the Hebrews: "...without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb 11:6); and as our Blessed Lord exhorted St. Thomas: "...blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (Jn 20:29).

If, therefore, we have Faith, we are not troubled if we do not have all the answers, if we cannot understand or explain everything, if we are faced with mystery. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "...we walk by faith, and not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). That is not to say that theological answers are not important or not needed. It is certainly true that the Catholic Faith is in harmony with reason; and even our strange times *must* – and therefore *do* – have a theological explanation. All I mean to convey is that our own failure to make sense of it all should not discourage us; much less should we let it become an obstacle to our Faith.

What is the alternative, anyway? Should we cling to the Novus Ordo Church and let it slowly lead us to eternal ruin? Should we embrace its ecumenical indifferentism and affirm that basically the followers of *all* religions go to Heaven? And if that is so, what harm is there in remaining Sedevacantists? Or should we go further still and align ourselves with the Abu Dhabi heresy and profess that *all* religions are willed by God? And if that is so, again, wouldn't that include *our* religion, too?

Should we recognize a blaspheming apostate as the Vicar of Christ and then treat him like the Vicar of Antichrist? To what purpose? Should we accept him as the head of the true religion and then refuse him submission so we're not actually exposed to the risk of eternal damnation by his magisterium? To what end?

Are we going to affirm all kinds of blasphemous absurdities on the specious grounds that otherwise we would have to conclude that the gates of hell have prevailed (cf. Mt 16:18)? Would we not have to conclude, much rather, that the gates of hell have prevailed precisely if this manifestly apostate church *is* the Church of Jesus Christ and its blaspheming head His Vicar?

What good is a church that can be *seen* and *known*, if it teaches false doctrine, misleads you about the purpose of life, presents scandalous sinners as saints for veneration and imitation, makes you attend a sacrilegious liturgy, declares your valid marriage null, deprives you of untold graces, and, at the end of your life, offers you, as the Radecki Fathers have called it, "the spiritual equivalent of a get well card"<sup>55</sup> instead of Extreme Unction? How would such a church's visibility, unity, apostolicity, and universality be of any help to souls? To the contrary, such qualities, *if* it had them, would make it all the more dangerous.

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<sup>54</sup> First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, Chapter 3. Available online at <https://inters.org/Vatican-Council-I-Dei-Filius>.

<sup>55</sup> Rev. Francisco Radecki and Rev. Dominic Radecki, *Tumultuous Times* (Wayne, MI: St. Joseph's Media, 2004), p. 478.

It belongs to the Church's nature, we must recall, to have unchanging doctrine. Pope Pius IX affirms that clearly in his Apostolic Letter *Iam Vos Omnes* of 1868. In it, he contrasts the nature of the true Church with that of heretical sects, which have continually changing teachings. He states:

Everyone must perfectly understand, and clearly and evidently see, that such a state of things is directly opposed to the nature of the Church instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ; for in that Church truth must always continue firm and ever inaccessible to all change, as a deposit given to that Church to be guarded in its integrity, for the guardianship of which the presence and aid of the Holy Ghost have been promised to the Church forever.<sup>56</sup>

It does no good, therefore, to say, as so many do, that we should accept the Vatican II Church as the true Church and simply reject its heresies and other errors. In fact, the whole point of having a true Church – the true Church founded by the Son of God – and lawful shepherds, is so that one will *not* be faced with a situation of having to sift salutary doctrine from harmful error. For that is what one finds in Protestantism: There, too, each individual believer *rejects* from his pastor what he considers to be bad and *accepts* from his pastor what he judges to be in conformity with the Gospel.

That is not how it is in the Catholic Church. Pope Leo XIII teaches that “Christ instituted in the Church a living, authoritative and permanent Magisterium, which by His own power He strengthened, by the Spirit of truth He taught, and by miracles confirmed. He willed and ordered, under the gravest penalties, that its teachings should be received as if they were His own.”<sup>57</sup> That is the point of having a Church that can be identified as the true Church of Jesus Christ.

That is what the First Vatican Council teaches in its dogmatic constitution on the Catholic Faith when it says: “Moreover, in order that we may satisfactorily perform the duty of embracing the true faith and of continuously persevering in it, God, through His only-begotten Son, has instituted the Church, and provided it with clear signs of His institution, so that it can be recognized by all as the guardian and teacher of the revealed word.”<sup>58</sup>

That is the point of the Church having all her properties, attributes, and marks in the first place. That is the point of a perpetual succession of Popes and bishops; it is the point of having certitude regarding the identity of the Pope. As Bishop Donald Sanborn writes in his June 2021 seminary newsletter, “...the organizational structures of the Catholic Church exist for the Catholic Faith and not vice-versa.”<sup>59</sup>

In the Oath against Modernism, one swears: “I firmly hold ... and shall hold to my dying breath the belief of the Fathers in the charism of truth, which certainly is, was, and always will be in the succession of the episcopacy from the apostles.”<sup>60</sup> Here again we see that the *purpose* of a succession of bishops and Popes is the preservation of the Faith for the salvation of souls. All the episcopal succession in the world is of no use if those who succeed the Apostles do not have the Faith. No one needs a perpetual succession of heretics.

It is a futile task, therefore, for the recognize-and-resist traditionalist to point out that since there must always be a living magisterium in the Church, therefore the error-laden Novus Ordo magisterium must be it – we just have to reject those things from it that are false or dangerous. As our Blessed Lord told the Pharisees, “...which is greater, the gold, or the temple

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<sup>56</sup> Pope Pius IX, Apostolic Letter *Iam Vos Omnes*. Available online at <https://novusordowatch.org/pius9-iam-vos-omnes>.

<sup>57</sup> Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum*, n. 9.

<sup>58</sup> First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, Chapter 3.

<sup>59</sup> Most Holy Trinity Seminary Newsletter, June 2021, p. 2. Available online at <https://mostholymostholyschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Jun2021.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> The Oath against Modernism was instituted by Pope St. Pius X with his Apostolic Letter *Sacrorum Antistitum* on Sep. 1, 1910. Its English text is available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10moath.htm>.

that consecrates the gold?” (Mt 23:17; Knox). The divinely established magisterium of the Church and the submission that must be given to it, are two sides of the same coin. You cannot divide the one from the other.

Pope Pius XII speaks of the Church as “a real kingdom, in which all believers should make [to Christ] the entire offering of their intellect and will, and humbly and obediently model themselves on Him who for our sake ‘was made obedient unto death’ [Phil 2:8].”<sup>61</sup> An ecclesiastical magisterium that need not be obeyed, or, worse still, that *cannot* be obeyed under pain of heresy or other spiritual danger, does not exist. At least it is not the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

Now, some attempt to get around this intolerable contradiction by blaming the defection from the Faith on what they call the “human element” of the Church, usually without defining, however, just what that human element is. In actuality, the human element is nothing other than the fact that the Church is made up of members that are human, and, as such, they are sinners.<sup>62</sup>

Pius XII naturally admits as much but also clarifies that the Church’s magisterium and laws cannot be sullied by sinful men. He says: “Certainly the loving Mother [the Church] is spotless in the Sacraments, by which she gives birth to and nourishes her children; in the faith which she has always preserved inviolate; in her sacred laws imposed on all; in the evangelical counsels which she recommends; in those heavenly gifts and extraordinary graces through which, with inexhaustible fecundity, she generates hosts of martyrs, virgins and confessors.”<sup>63</sup>

This only makes sense, for if sinful members of the Church could defeat the purpose for which God has established her, then that would mean that God’s saving Work of Redemption, perpetuated throughout time, is dependent on the holiness of the very creatures whose *lack* of holiness He came to deliver them from. It would also mean that God founded His Church not on rock but on sand (cf. Mt 7:26-27). But of course our Lord told us that He would build His Church on *rock*, that is, on *the* Rock, St. Peter, Cephas – precisely so that the gates of hell would not prevail against her (see Mt 16:18; Jn 1:42).

The Catholic Church is not an end in itself. The Church was established for the sole reason of saving souls by attaching them to Christ. She does this by making them living members of His Mystical Body, of which He is the Head, by teaching, governing, and sanctifying souls.

The New Church of the Second Vatican Council does not do that. It does the opposite, which is the reason why the recognize-and-resist people, well, *resist*. But if such resistance is necessary, then the *recognize* part is not only useless but dangerous – because the *purpose* of recognizing must be that of rendering submission. For the sheep to insist that their shepherd is legitimate and can be recognized as such by his qualities, only to then *flee* from him, lest he should actually lead and shepherd them, vitiates the whole purpose of him having those recognizable qualities in the first place. In fact, it renders them eminently *harmful*.

The only reason why God established the Catholic Church with a hierarchy of lawful shepherds is to guarantee that the sheep will not go astray. It is to ensure that they will stay together, receive proper sustenance, stay out of trouble, be kept from harm, and follow the shepherd into ever greener pastures.

Our Blessed Lord foretold that the shepherd would be struck, and the sheep of the flock would be dispersed (see Mt 26:31). That was in reference to Himself, first of all, with regard to His Sacred Passion; but it makes sense that if the Church, too,

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<sup>61</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 65.

<sup>62</sup> See Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 92.

<sup>63</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 66.

is to undergo her own, Mystical Passion, then Christ's Vicar, the Visible Head of the Church, would likewise be struck – and so the sheep of the flock would again be scattered for a while.

And what are the sheep to do if they can't find their shepherd, if they don't really know what has happened to him, or what else might be going on? As our Lord said, the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd, “[b]ut a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers” (Jn 10:5). And so that's what we do: *We fly from* the false popes. How do we know they're false?

Consider the teaching of Pope Pius VI in his decree *Super Soliditate* of 1786. Speaking of the Pope, he writes that “in hearing him, the sheep hear in his voice the voice of Jesus Christ Himself, lest seduced by the voice of strangers they be led astray into noxious and deadly pastures.”<sup>64</sup> Recalling Pius XII's teaching that “Christ and His Vicar constitute one only Head,”<sup>65</sup> we know that the Pope in the exercise of his papal office will always and necessarily teach, rule, and sanctify our Lord's flock like the Good Shepherd whom he represents.

In this manner we can really answer pretty much all objections of our recognize-and-resist opponents, whether they be concerning visibility, apostolicity, unity, perpetual succession, or peaceful universal acceptance.

Let them insist that Francis is their Pope. The fact is that the Pope is the rule of Faith,<sup>66</sup> and yet Francis is not their rule of Faith. The Pope is the principle of unity in the Church, yet Francis does not unite them in one true Faith, one holy worship, or one salutary government. The Pope is the Supreme Legislator, yet they reject Francis's laws as they deem necessary or useful. The Pope is the final arbiter, the ultimate authority in the Church, yet they do not even shy away from declaring his judgments to be of no effect. The Pope is the Universal Teacher, yet they would never want Francis so much as to teach basic catechism to their children.<sup>67</sup> The Pope is the Father of all Christians, yet they treat him like an unwelcome stepfather at best. The Pope is the rock which guarantees the Church's solidity as the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), whereas Francis undermines every Catholic foundation.

To conclude, we must candidly acknowledge that we are left with a great mystery – not with a *contradiction* but with a *mystery*: What has happened to the Church? Where is the Church's hierarchy? We can fairly easily identify *Catholics*, ordained and non-ordained, but we don't know what has happened to the living magisterium (the Church's teaching office) or to the hierarchy that exercises the Church's ordinary power to rule.

That the final persecution of the Mystical Body of the Incarnate Son of God should involve *mystery* is surely not too much to ask of anyone to believe. As Christ was hidden from view on Holy Saturday, so the Church is currently eclipsed. As the “mystery of iniquity” seeks to supplant the true Messiah, so its “operation of error” substitutes itself for His Mystical Body. Our only option is to continue to profess the Faith, live holy lives, and refuse to have anything to do with the false New Church. That can never be wrong.

Yes, we are happy to call it “Sedevacantism,” but it really isn't an “-ism” other than Catholicism during these perplexing times. It is a theological position that “creates itself”, as it were, after we've ruled out the things we know to be impossible in light of the timeless truths of the Catholic Faith. Sedevacantism is what is left once we have rejected what is clearly false.

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<sup>64</sup> Pope Pius VI, Bull *Super Soliditate*. Available online at <https://novusordowatch.org/pius6-bull-super-soliditate>.

<sup>65</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 40.

<sup>66</sup> See Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Sapientiae Christianae*, nn. 21-25. Available online at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13sapie.htm>.

<sup>67</sup> The late recognize-and-resist writer John Vennari once said as much: “...I would never allow Pope Francis to teach religion to my children.” See <https://novusordowatch.org/2013/06/vennari-against-francis>.



If Francis and his five predecessors of unhappy memory were true Popes, then the forces of darkness would indeed have prevailed. Then the “most deadly foes of the Catholic religion,”<sup>68</sup> as Pope Pius IX called them, would have triumphed, then the “proud gates of hell”<sup>69</sup> would have succeeded in overthrowing the Chair of Truth and turning it into a fount of blasphemy and heresy. Then what had been the “citadel and bulwark of the Catholic faith”<sup>70</sup> would have become the bulldozer of Catholicism.

There is simply no point to having a faithless Pope or a defected Church, any more than there would be to having salt that has lost its flavor. For then, as Christ said, “[i]t is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men” (Mt 5:13).

We reject the Vatican II Church because we believe in the Catholic Church. We want no part in the ecumenical church of apostasy, because we only want to be Christ’s and part of His Mystical Body (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-16).

The dogma of “no salvation outside the Church” is not simply a slogan – it has real meaning. The reason there is no salvation outside the Church is that she is the Mystical Body of Christ, and Christ is the only Savior (see Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5). He who does not gather with Him, scatters (see Mt 10:35); or, as St. Jerome put it, “he who is not Christ’s, is Antichrist’s.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Pius IX, *Inter Multiplices*, n. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Pius IX, *Inter Multiplices*, n. 7.

<sup>70</sup> Pius IX, *Qui Nuper*, n. 3.

<sup>71</sup> St. Jerome, Letter XV to Pope Damasus, n. 2. Quoted in *Papal Teachings: The Church*, n. 185.