

“Like Sheep without a Shepherd”: Sixty Years of *Sede Vacante*

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When Pope Pius XII died on October 9, 1958, no one could have fathomed the calamities that would befall the Church in the years to come. What we have witnessed in the past six decades is unprecedented, and surely if anyone at the time had been told that in just a few short years, the world would see an apparent Catholic Church that has made peace with the errors of the modern world and transformed the Holy Mass into a Protestant worship service, he would not have believed it. If such a one had been told that the so-called Catholic Church of the next few decades would indoctrinate children and adults in Naturalism and the so-called “rights of man” and engage in efforts to seek the truth conjointly with heretics, Jews, Muslims, and heathens, he would have considered such a prediction insane.

So stark is the contrast between the Catholic Church the world knew until the passing of Pope Pius XII and the institution that has since claimed that name, that in 1968, only ten years after Pius XII’s death, the Australian writer Frank Sheed published a book with the telling title, *Is it the same Church?*¹ The Novus Ordo cardinal Karol Wojtyla, who would later call himself “Pope John Paul II,” wrote in his 1977 book *Sign of Contradiction* that “the Church succeeded, during the second Vatican Council, in re-defining her own nature.”² This was apparently also the position of the Vatican, whose Substitute Secretary of State, the Novus Ordo cardinal Giovanni Benelli, in 1976 had been the first to use the term “Conciliar Church” to refer to the new religion that the council had brought about. And Mgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton, the distinguished American theologian honored by Pope Pius XII, who attended Vatican II as theological advisor to Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, wrote in his personal diary that the council marked “the end of the Catholic religion as we have known it.”³

A quick survey of the ecclesial landscape as we find it in the year of our Lord 2018 shows an institution that *calls* itself the Catholic Church but retains virtually nothing of the substance of the Church of Pope Pius XII and his predecessors except for some of the external trappings. After roughly six decades of error, heresy, scandal, contraception and loose morals, liturgical anarchy, architectural blasphemy, doctrinal chaos, philosophical and theological bankruptcy, and a generous helping of the spirit of this world, the “Conciliar Church” – if this is the term we want to use – is now itself in shambles, crushed under the weight of its own irrelevance and the consequences of its own doctrinal, sacramental, and procreative sterility. And all this is to say nothing of the moral corruption of many – by no means *all*, but of *many* – of its clergy.

¹ F. J. Sheed, *Is it the same Church?* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

² Karol Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1979), p. 17.

³ Mgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton, “Journal of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth trips to Rome, March 1962-February 1963”, entry dated Oct. 31, 1962. Available online at Digital Collection of *Catholic University of America*, <https://cuislandora.wrlc.org/islandora/object/ahc-fenton:6> (accessed Oct. 5, 2018).

Think about what this means in light of roughly 1,900 years of Church history: What the persecutions of the Jews and the Romans, the heresies of Arius, Pelagius, Nestorius, Eutyches, Sergius, and Leo the Isaurian, the schism of Photius and Michael Cerularius, the Great Western Schism, Martin Luther and the Protestant “Reformation,” the Thirty Years’ War, Jansenism, the French Revolution, Communism, and the First and Second World Wars taken together were not able to accomplish, the Second Vatican Council and the “Conciliar Church” it engendered, pulled off in just a few years, all by themselves.

With the sower in the Gospel, we can only infer: “An enemy hath done this.”⁴ What we have before us is nothing less than the Great Apostasy, the “revolt” spoken of by St. Paul the Apostle,⁵ which must precede the reign of Antichrist before the end of the world.

What had happened?

To explain an effect of such a nature and magnitude, we must posit a correspondingly grave cause; and only one cause can account for such infernal and soul-destroying devastation: After the death of Pope Pius XII, the papal throne was usurped so that his apparent successors have been impostors, impostors who created a new church and gave it a false theology, a false liturgy, a false magisterium, false sacraments, false saints, false disciplinary laws – in short, a false religion.

Given the fact that there is now a new and false religion reigning in the Catholic structures in Rome, it is absolutely certain that the putative popes who are responsible for its creation and promulgation are impostors, for it is Catholic doctrine that the Chair of St. Peter, for as long as it has a valid occupant, cannot fail:

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.⁶

Since the Papacy has the unbreakable divine guarantees and promises, and since God can neither err nor deceive, no other conclusion is possible: The Chair of St. Peter is vacant – *non habemus Papam!*⁷ Another, more pregnant way of saying it would be: *If Francis is a true Pope, then Jesus Christ is not God!* This is no exaggeration – the matter really is that serious.

But how, one may legitimately ask, was the Papal Throne usurped? What is the evidence?

In 1994, a former Vatican insider and member of the pontifical Noble Guard by the name of Franco Bellegrandi published a book on John XXIII, the first of the false Conciliar popes. The book bears the

⁴ Matthew 13:28

⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:3

⁶ Pope Pius IX, Encyclical Letter *Inter Multiplices* (Mar. 21, 1853), n. 7.

⁷ This is to be understood to mean that there is no Pope *that we know of*: That there might be a true Pope in exile, underground, cannot be ruled out completely in the opinion of the present writer.

curious title *Nikita Roncalli: Counterlife of a Pope*,⁸ and in it Bellegrandi recounts that Count Paolo Sella of Monteluce told him of his encounter “seven or eight days before the Conclave” with

a character I knew as a high Masonic authority in contact with the Vatican. He told me, driving me home, that “...the next Pope would not be Siri, as it was murmured in some Roman circles, because he was too authoritarian a cardinal. They would elect a Pope of conciliation. The choice has already fallen on the patriarch of Venice Roncalli. “Chosen by whom?” I rejoined surprised. “By our Masonic representatives in the Conclave,” responded placidly my kind escort. And then it escaped me: “There are freemasons in the Conclave?” “Certainly,” was the reply, “the Church is in our hands.”⁹

This would explain why Mgr. Fenton recorded in his diary that Cardinal Francis Spellman had come out of the 1958 conclave “looking white and shaken.”¹⁰

For the last 60 years, the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, has been in the hands of her enemies, just as Christ Himself was in the hands of His enemies on Good Friday, and for the very same reason: only because *He wills it so*. He wills it so for the sake of His glory and honor and for the sake of the salvation of souls.¹¹ He wills it so also in punishment of those who will be damned, as St. Paul the Apostle says:

...in all seduction of iniquity to them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Therefore God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying; that all may be judged who have not believed the truth, but have consented to iniquity.¹²

This “operation of error”¹³ is what we are witnessing today.

In his interpretation of Chapter 13 of the Apocalypse, Fr. Sylvester Berry, a seminary professor who died in 1954, mentions a vacancy of the papal throne being filled by a false pope as part of this operation to deceive the world:

Our divine Saviour has a representative on earth in the person of the Pope upon whom He has conferred full powers to teach and govern. Likewise Antichrist will have his representative in the

⁸ The original title is *Nichitaroncalli: Controvita di un Papa* (Rome: International Eiles, 1994). This nickname for Angelo Roncalli is in reference to the Soviet statesman and Communist Party leader Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971). Although not published until 1994, Bellegrandi had essentially completed the manuscript for this book by 1977.

⁹ Bellegrandi, *Nichitaroncalli*, p. 62. Translation taken from English edition at http://www.huttongibson.com/PDFs/hutton_johnxxiii_book.pdf (p. 76; accessed Oct. 5, 2018). This testimony was also confirmed to me personally by the daughter of a Rosicrucian Freemason, who recalled her father telling her in 1958 that there would be no more Popes after Pius XII and that John XXIII was “ours” (email message by undisclosed individual to me, Oct. 31, 2016).

¹⁰ Mgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton, “The Continuation of the Journal of my Fourteenth Trip to Rome, Beginning of the Journal of my Fifteenth Trip to Rome, October 1960-September 1961”, entry dated Nov. 2, 1960. Available online at Digital Collection of *Catholic University of America*, <https://cuislandora.wrlc.org/islandora/object/achc-fenton:7> (accessed Oct. 5, 2018).

¹¹ Cf. John 10:18; John 19:11; Isaias 55:8-9.

¹² 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11

¹³ The Latin Vulgate uses the term *operationem erroris*, and the Greek has ἐνέργειαν πλάνης (*energeian planēs*).

false prophet who will be endowed with the plenitude of satanic powers to deceive the nations. ...[T]he [false] prophet will probably set himself up in Rome as a sort of antipope during the vacancy of the papal throne.... But the elect will not allow themselves to be deceived; they will recall the words of our Lord: “Then if any man shall say to you: Lo here is Christ, or there, do not believe him” [Mt 24:23].¹⁴

This greatest of all deceptions with a false pope could not be effective, could not threaten to deceive even the elect,¹⁵ unless the true Pope were out of the way, or at least eclipsed, out of sight. A counterfeit will be so much more compelling if the original is absent or hidden. Metaphorically speaking, St. Peter is once again in chains¹⁶ in our day, as the Papacy is being held captive by the Church’s enemies until it pleases God to release it.

But “where Peter is, there is the Church”¹⁷ – with the oppression of the Papacy comes the oppression of the entire Church. The 19th-century Cardinal Henry Edward Manning noted the following in his series of lectures on the end times:

The Word of God tells us that towards the end of time the power of this world will become so irresistible and so triumphant that the Church of God will sink underneath its hand.... It will be deprived of protection. It will be weakened, baffled, and prostrate, and will lie bleeding at the feet of the powers of this world....

[The Church] will seem, for a while, to be defeated, and the power of the enemies of the faith for a time to prevail.¹⁸

In his 1948 book *Communism and the Conscience of the West*, Mgr. Fulton Sheen warned that Satan would

set up a counterchurch which will be the ape of the [Catholic] Church, because he, the Devil, is the ape of God. It will have all the notes and characteristics of the 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....¹⁹

This is consistent with the visions of a “counterfeit church” seen by the Ven. Anne Catherine Emmerich in 1820; with the prophetic warnings of Our Lady of La Salette in 1846 and Our Lady of Fatima in 1917; and with the *Exorcism Prayer against Satan and the Apostate Angels*, published by Pope Leo XIII in 1890, in which the Sovereign Pontiff prays:

¹⁴ Rev. E. Sylvester Berry, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Columbus, OH: John W. Winterich, 1921), p. 135.

¹⁵ Cf. Matthew 24:24.

¹⁶ See Acts 12:3-19.

¹⁷ “*Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*” – this maxim was first enunciated by St. Ambrose in his *Commentary on Twelve Psalms of David* (389 AD).

¹⁸ Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, *The Pope & the Antichrist* (Sainte-Croix du Mont: Tradibooks, 2007), pp. 78, 75. This book is a reprint of the original *The Present Crisis of the Holy See Tested by Prophecy* (London: Burns & Lambert, 1861).

¹⁹ Mgr. Fulton J. Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West* (Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, 1948), p. 24.

These most crafty enemies have filled and inebriated with gall and bitterness the Church, the spouse of the Immaculate Lamb, and have laid impious hands on her most sacred possessions.

In the Holy Place itself, where has been set up the See of the most holy Peter and the Chair of Truth for the light of the world, they have raised the throne of their abominable impiety, with the iniquitous design that when the Pastor has been struck, the sheep may be scattered.²⁰

All this is likewise consistent with the visions of Bl. Anna Maria Taigi, which disclosed to her the Masonic plots to subvert the Church. It is consistent with the *Permanent Instruction* of the *Alta Vendita* Lodge, a veritable blueprint for the systematic infiltration of the Church, which providentially fell into the hands of Pope Gregory XVI and was exposed to the public by order of Pope Pius IX. This Masonic document states:

It is to the youth we must go. It is that which we must seduce; it is that which we must bring under the banner of the secret societies... In a few years the young clergy will have, by the force of events, invaded all the functions. They will govern, administer, and judge... Let the clergy march under your banner in the belief always that they march under the banner of the Apostolic Keys... Lay [your nets] in the depths of sacristies, seminaries, and convents.... You will have fished up a Revolution in Tiara and Cope, marching with Cross and banner—a Revolution which it will need but to be spurred on a little to put the four quarters of the world on fire.²¹

It is with good reason that particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries the Popes warned time and again of the undermining of Catholicism by secret societies and heretical sects. So, to mention just a few, Pope Pius VII exhorted his bishops to “guard the deposit of Christ’s teaching, whose destruction has been planned, as you know, by a great conspiracy.”²² Pope Pius VIII instructed them to “eradicate those secret societies of factious men who, completely opposed to God and to princes, are wholly dedicated to bringing about the fall of the Church, the destruction of kingdoms, and disorder in the whole world.”²³ Pope Leo XIII denounced Freemasonry for “its conspiracy to forcefully deprive the Italian people of their Catholic faith,”²⁴ lamenting that “[b]y way of conspiracies, corruptions, and violences,” it had already “come to dominate Italy and even Rome.”²⁵

All this, in turn, is consistent with the Freemasons’ open march on St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome in 1917, which was witnessed by Fr. Maximilian Kolbe. The banners they carried proclaimed their intent to have

²⁰ *Acta Sanctae Sedis* XXIII (1890-91), p. 744. Translation taken from Rev. Anthony Cekada, “The St. Michael Prayer: A ‘Falsified’ Text?” (Nov. 12, 2007) at <http://www.fathercekada.com/2007/11/12/the-st-michael-prayer-a-falsified-text> (accessed Oct. 5, 2018). Although it is clear that these words are written in the past tense and refer directly an event in the past (as Fr. Cekada shows), it is nevertheless *consistent* with the idea being presented here; and one may surmise that in addition to their primary and immediate meaning, God intended them also to have a secondary and prophetic meaning pointing to future events that have since clearly been fulfilled.

²¹ In Mgr. George F. Dillon, *Grand Orient Freemasonry Unmasked* (Palmdale, CA: Christian Book Club of America, 1999), pp. 92,94-95.

²² Pope Pius VII, Encyclical *Diu Satis* (May 15, 1800), n. 11.

²³ Pope Pius VIII, Encyclical *Traditi Humilitati* (May 24, 1829), n. 6.

²⁴ Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical *Inimica Vis* (Dec. 8, 1892), n. 3.

²⁵ Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical *Custodi Di Quella Fede* (Dec. 8, 1892), n. 3.

Satan rule from the Vatican with the Pope as his slave.²⁶ It is consistent with former Communist Bella Dodd's public testimony that in the 1930s she helped put 1,100 Communist agents into Catholic seminaries so they would become priests and bishops to destroy the Church from within.

Finally, all this is also consistent with the words of Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, who said to his friend Count Enrico Galeazzi:

Suppose, dear friend, that Communism is but the most visible of the instruments of subversion against the Church and against the tradition of divine revelation, then we will witness the invasion of all that is spiritual: philosophy, science, law, teaching, art, press, literature, theater, and religion. I am obsessed by the secrets of the Virgin to little Lucia of Fatima. The obstinacy of the Good Lady in view of the danger that threatens the Church is a divine warning against the suicide that the alteration of the faith—in its liturgy, theology, and soul—represents. I hear all around me innovators who want to dismantle the Sacred Chapel, destroy the universal flame of the Church, reject its ornaments, make it regret its historical past.²⁷

The evidence in favor of Communist-Masonic infiltration into the Catholic Church and the subsequent usurpation of the papal office is simply staggering.

It was a strategic masterstroke from hell: Since the Pope is the Supreme Teacher and Legislator in the Church to whom all will submit, the ultimate target of the enemies of the Church had always been the Papacy. The Papacy, after all, is the restraining force appointed by God to keep the “mystery of iniquity” at bay until the appointed time. As St. Paul the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians: “For the mystery of iniquity already worketh; only that he who now holdeth, do hold, until he be taken out of the way.”²⁸

Just as Christ the Lord successfully restrained His enemies until His hour had come, so His Vicar held back the mystery of iniquity until the appointed time, when 60 years ago he was “taken out of the way”; and with the shepherd having again been struck, the sheep are now scattered once more.²⁹ God's lament from long ago, recorded by the prophet Ezekiel, is applicable again to our times: “...my sheep are become a prey to all the beasts of the field, because there was no shepherd...”³⁰

Today, of course, we have the benefit of hindsight. Whereas the various warnings, predictions, and prophecies from 100-200 years ago might have appeared to some as undue pessimism or exaggerated vigilance based on conspiracy theories about forces warring against the Church, today they can only be considered the result of wisdom, prudence, and a clear understanding of the spiritual battle.³¹

Is it any wonder that in his opening address at the Second Vatican Council, the first of the false popes,

²⁶ See Francis M. Kalvelage, *Kolbe: Saint of the Immaculata* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2002), p. 31.

²⁷ Mgr. Georges Roche and Philippe Saint Germain, *Pie XII devant l'Histoire* (Montreal: Editions du Jour, 1972), p. 52; translation by Alan Aversa taken from <http://strobertybellarmine.net/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=1651&view=next> (accessed Oct. 5, 2018).

²⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:7

²⁹ Zacharias 13:7; Matthew 26:31

³⁰ Ezekiel 34:8

³¹ Cf. Ephesians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 2:14-15.

John XXIII, made it a point to shoot down “those prophets of doom, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand”?³² Fifty-six years later, we can say with only a joyless satisfaction: Those prophets of doom were right.

There is probably no better metaphor for the state of what is considered Catholicism today than that of the devastated vineyard.³³ One is reminded of the warning our Blessed Lord spoke to the Jews at the very end of the Old Covenant: “Behold, your house shall be left to you, desolate.”³⁴

No doubt, we are living at a time of sifting. “I will try them as gold is tried,” God says through the prophet Zacharias.³⁵ God tries our Faith, our loyalty, and our love for Him above all things, and by doing so, He sifts and purifies His elect.

The virtue of Divine Faith is the readiness of the mind, aided by grace, to assent firmly to what God has revealed – not because we have found it to be acceptable according to our own standards, or because it fits into our worldview, or because we happen to agree that it is true – but *because God, who can neither lie nor make a mistake, has revealed it*. There can be no higher, no more certain knowledge than the acceptance of God’s very speaking.

“Be not faithless, but believing”, our Lord said to the doubting St. Thomas after His Resurrection.³⁶ “Fear not, only believe”, He said to Jairus before raising His daughter back to life.³⁷

When Christ was lying prostrate at the feet of His enemies and *appeared* to be defeated on the Cross, He didn’t demand of His disciples that they should have all the answers – what He *did* demand is that they should have Faith: Faith that His Word is true, Faith that He who had shown Himself Master over life and death could and would still be victorious, despite all appearances to the contrary.

“During the Passion, the Apostles and disciples lost their faith; they doubted their Master’s being the true God and Messiah...”, writes the famous liturgist and Benedictine abbot Dom Prosper Gueranger.³⁸ Let us not imitate the Apostles in their incredulity, for which our Lord justly rebuked them.³⁹

The same Faith that God demanded of His Apostles He demands no less of us today: Faith that He who “is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham,” as St. John the Baptist said,⁴⁰ can once again give to this world a true Pope, a genuine Vicar of Christ, and restore the Catholic Church to her former glory.

³² Antipope John XXIII, Address *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* (Oct. 11, 1962).

³³ Perhaps the first person to apply this metaphor to the chaos inflicted by the Conciliar Church was Dietrich von Hildebrand, who published a book by that title in German in 1973.

³⁴ Matthew 23:38

³⁵ Zacharias 13:9

³⁶ John 20:27

³⁷ Mark 5:36

³⁸ Abbot Prosper Gueranger, *The Liturgical Year*, vol. 8, trans. by Dom Laurence Shepherd (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2000), p. 286. Gueranger does, of course, except the Blessed Virgin Mary from his indictment.

³⁹ See Mark 16:14.

⁴⁰ Matthew 3:9

Tragically, a great number of people in our day who mean to be traditional Catholics show themselves, in the final analysis, *not* to have Faith. They are only willing to accept what they can personally make sense of or what does not upset too much their comfortable little world – so much so that they would sooner affirm that the Catholic Church has turned into a dangerous heretical sect, a veritable ark of damnation, rather than conclude that the men who today claim to be the Catholic hierarchy, are anti-Catholic impostors who have no authority in the Church whatsoever – “false apostles,” as St. Paul calls them, “deceitful workmen, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.”⁴¹

Such faithless pseudo-Catholics – for such they are objectively – cannot bear the thought of having no Pope, and so they opt for the (at this point) rather *obvious* counterfeit instead. Better a Pope to *refuse* submission to than no Pope to *submit* to, their strange logic seems to say.

They cannot bear the thought of not having a clear answer to the question where the Church is or what has happened to her, and so they content themselves with pointing instead to an institution that has clearly abandoned the true Faith and the true worship of God, having persuaded themselves that it will one day be converted back to what they euphemistically call “Tradition”, but which in reality is simply the Faith.

In this they resemble somewhat the renegade Israelites of old. Unable to bear for an indefinite period of time the absence of Moses, their leader, who was receiving the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai, they made for themselves a molten calf to adore.⁴² Better to have something tangible to know what to do with, than to be left hanging indefinitely, with no clear direction, having no choice but to trust in God with Faith and hope.

Again, I am speaking objectively. I am trying to *describe* what is happening – I am not trying to judge anyone’s subjective state before God. Describing things objectively is permissible and, in this case, quite necessary. In his 1907 encyclical *Pascendi*, Pope St. Pius X referred to the Modernists as “the most pernicious of all the adversaries of the Church”, yet in the same breath he made clear that “God alone is the judge” of the “internal disposition of the[ir] soul[s].”⁴³

Although it is true that we must always presume good will in others where the contrary is not evident, we must also be on our guard not to confuse good will with orthodoxy or with a worthy cause. Speaking in the context of the coming deceptions of the Antichrist in a sermon given on Pentecost Sunday of 1861, Fr. Frederick Faber warned:

Now we must remember, that if all the manifestly good men were on one side, and all the manifestly bad men on the other, there would be no danger of any one, least of all, the elect, being deceived by lying wonders. It is the good men, good once, we must hope good still, who are to do the work of Antichrist and so sadly to crucify afresh the Lord whom they do more than profess to love. Bear in mind this feature of the last days, that this deceitfulness arises from good men being

⁴¹ 2 Corinthians 11:13

⁴² See Exodus 32:1-6.

⁴³ Pope St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (Sep. 8, 1907), n. 3.

on the wrong side.⁴⁴

In other words: Being of good will does not suffice to make you a Catholic. *Meaning* to do the work of Christ is not the same as actually *doing* the work of Christ.

“But, but”, we often hear, “you sedevacantists are so divided amongst yourselves!” It is ironic that people who believe they have a Pope – the principle of unity in the Church – and profess attachment to a church that officially includes in its fold people from Hans Kung and Richard Rohr on the left to Atila Guimaraes and Athanasius Schneider on the right, object that *we* are divided.

Sedevacantists certainly are divided in *government*, not in principle but by circumstance, and that’s quite simply because the governing authority, for all we know, is absent. This lack of unity is the necessary consequence of having no supreme shepherd, and that, in turn, is the consequence of the usurpation of ecclesiastical offices by the enemies of the Church roughly six decades ago. In other words, if anyone is to blame for divisions among sedevacantists, it is the Conciliar Church, the very institution our critics say we ought to attach ourselves to. In any case, an accidental lack of unity in government is most certainly not repaired by professing allegiance to shepherds who are not united to us in Faith and then refusing to be shepherded by them.

You may have noticed that there really is no “leader” of the sedevacantists – and that is a good thing! There is only one visible head of the Catholic Church, and that is the Pope. In the absence of a Pope, there can be no substitute! There can be no “ersatz Pope” while the Papal Throne is vacant, similar to how the recognize-and-resist traditionalists have accepted Abp. Marcel Lefebvre or some other conservative prelate in the Conciliar Church as the man to follow *de facto*, in *opposition to* the man they recognize as the Vicar of Christ.

Our Lord’s promises of infallibility and perpetual orthodoxy have only been made to the Popes and to no one else. It is absurd to think that the Pope could defect and when he does, another figure emerges to whom all orthodox believers then attach themselves until the Pope converts back to Catholicism. And yet, how many people there are who consider themselves traditionalists and believe precisely that!

As sedevacantists, as Catholics, our leader always remains in principle the Pope, whose current temporary absence we greatly regret. But we will accept no substitute! Contrary to the impression that has long been given by our opponents, it is *we* who believe in the Papacy! It is *we* who believe in the Church! It is *we* who believe in the promises of Christ for His Vicar and His Church, and it is for *this reason alone* that we reject an institution that, although it claims to be the Catholic Church, teaches ecumenism instead of conversion, religious liberty instead of the social reign of Christ the King, the rights of man instead of the rights of God!

In his book on the Apocalypse, Fr. Berry wrote:

Most of the evils that afflict the Church and society in general can be traced directly to the so-called [Protestant] Reformation. To it must be ascribed the apostacy of nations, the weakening of

⁴⁴ Rev. Frederick William Faber, *Devotion to the Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Richardson and Son, 1861), p. 27.

faith, and the rapidly increasing impiety and unbelief of the present day [1921].⁴⁵

By contrast, the Vatican II Church has recently declared that Catholics can now recognize Martin Luther, the instigator of the Reformation, as a “witness to the gospel.”⁴⁶

Writing in his First Epistle to St. Timothy, St. Paul refers to the Church our Lord established as the “pillar and ground of the truth.”⁴⁷ Who, in all seriousness and sincerity, could hold that this is an accurate description of the Vatican II Church? And if it is, why the need to resist? Why should anyone resist the “pillar and ground of the truth”?

The fact of the matter is that the recognize-and-resist traditionalists believe in a defected church, a “Catholic Church gone bad.” And how could they *not*, since they believe the Conciliar Church to be the Catholic Church!? But in so doing, they reveal themselves as not having Faith in the promises of Christ. They simply do not *believe* in the Catholic Church. They do not *believe* in the Papacy. They do not *believe*.⁴⁸

And there it is again: that lack of genuine Divine Faith. They only accept what satisfies their intellect. *The Catholic Church has gone bad, and God will fix it* – this they can understand. The trouble is only that this diametrically contradicts what God has revealed – it is heresy! A Church that can go bad, so to speak, is not the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Conversely, the Church founded by Jesus Christ cannot go bad.

On that note, I would like to recommend the booklet *Devotion to the Church* by Fr. Frederick Faber,⁴⁹ which contains the entire sermon he preached on Pentecost 1861, quoted from earlier. This beautiful text explains what attitude a Catholic should have towards the Church, and our critics should ask themselves if what Fr. Faber says there they can seriously affirm of the Conciliar Church of Vatican II.

My dear fellow-Catholics, we must stop looking at our situation today as though it were an unforeseen accident crossing God’s plan for the Church. It is not. Rather, it is the very fulfillment of that plan. Yes, it is a cross, but this cross is not something unhappily *interfering* with our salvation, it is, just like any other cross, the very *instrument* of our salvation if we embrace it through God’s grace. In undergoing this Passion of the Mystical Body, the Church, like St. Paul, “fill[s] up those things that are wanting of

⁴⁵ Berry, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. 99.

⁴⁶ Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, “Resources for The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and throughout the year 2017”, Introduction to the Theme for the Year 2017 (May 31, 2016). Available online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/weeks-prayer-doc/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20160531_week-prayer-2017_en.html (accessed Oct. 5, 2018). The document takes this quote from the same council’s joint statement with Lutherans, “From Conflict to Communion” (2013), n. 29.

⁴⁷ 1 Timothy 3:15

⁴⁸ This is most lamentable because “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6), and Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation (see Mark 16:16). He who disbelieves even one dogma disbelieves them all and is in no wise a Catholic (see Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical *Satis Cognitum* [June 29, 1896], n. 9; Pope Benedict XV, Encyclical *Ad Beatissimi* [Nov. 1, 1914], n. 24).

⁴⁹ This booklet can be read for free online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=eA91hh6luNgC> or ordered in hardcopy from <https://miqcenter.com/products/devotion-to-the-church-ph7175> (accessed Oct. 18, 2018).

the sufferings of Christ.”⁵⁰

As the fulfillment of prophecy, all we are enduring today should really make our Faith stronger, not tempt us to doubt or despair. As Fr. Berry put it: “...the prophecies of the Apocalypse should be a source of consolation when we see the Church opposed and persecuted for we have the assurance of the Holy Ghost that she shall come forth triumphant and reign peacefully over all nations.”⁵¹

Clearly, God is preparing His elect, He is separating the wheat from the chaff. There is nothing that attracts us to Sedevacantism other than the sheer force of its truth.⁵² It is not convenient, it is not popular, it is not personally fulfilling. But holding to the true Faith with all its occasionally unpleasant consequences is what separates the Catholic from the heretic. We *believe*, not because we see or because we feel good about it, but because God has revealed it and His Word is true. Like St. Paul, “we walk by faith, and not by sight.”⁵³ It is the grace of God alone that sustains us in these perilous and absurd times.

Finally, we also have cause to rejoice: The Church’s enemies wanted to get rid of all of us, but they failed! They wanted to destroy the Mass and the other sacraments, but they failed! They wanted to stamp out the ancient Faith, but they failed! They wanted to eliminate the Papacy, but all they managed to do is take away the true Pope for a time – and even that only with God’s permission!

We must keep in mind always that God has placed us in the world at this particular moment in time, not by accident but by His holy Providence. It was the decision of the all-knowing Intelligence of an infinitely good God, “who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”⁵⁴ In other words, we are alive now and not at some other time in history because this time is most favorable to *our* salvation.

Being alive today is a tremendous grace for which we must always be grateful. We run the risk of not sufficiently grasping, and therefore not sufficiently appreciating, the unique moment in Church history through which we are passing. Recall the words Christ spoke to His disciples: “For, amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them.”⁵⁵

We have been privileged by God to witness the Mystical Passion, the Passion of the Mystical Body of Christ – of the Christ who so long ago already “had compassion on [the multitude], because they were as sheep not having a shepherd....”⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Colossians 1:24

⁵¹ Berry, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. 8.

⁵² In this, the Mystical Body of Christ resembles its Head: “...there is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him: Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not” (Isaias 53:2-3).

⁵³ 2 Corinthians 5:7

⁵⁴ 1 Timothy 2:4

⁵⁵ Matthew 13:17

⁵⁶ Mark 6:34

By keeping the true Faith, no matter the cost, and by living lives loyal to Christ our King and to the Blessed Virgin Mary our Queen, may we obtain the grace to be given a true Pope once again, petitioning the God who is the ultimate “shepherd and bishop of [our] souls.”⁵⁷

⁵⁷ 1 Peter 2:25