

Open Letter to Mr. John Vennari



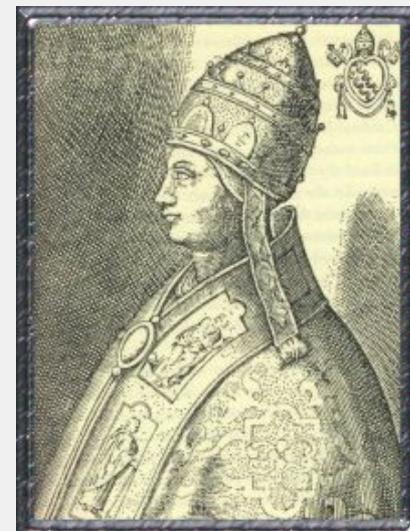
from Mr. Jerry Ming

I presume that most of the readership of *Catholic Family News (CFN)* is feeling cozy and comfortable in their “recognize and resist” easy chairs after having been “doctrinally fortified” by the elaborate “assurances” and legal “proofs” of Mr. John Salza’s article, “Sedevacantism and the Sin of Presumption” (*CFN*, April 2011). However, as a subscriber to *CFN*, this writer was very uncomfortable during his reading of it. He is still very uncomfortable, especially, since this article was published in a purportedly Catholic newspaper. In his short essay, Mr. Salza uses the 1917 Code of Canon Law, the teachings and commentaries of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Robert Bellarmine, and his, Mr. Salza’s, own interpretations of and contributions to Catholic teaching in his oily attempt to debunk Sedevacantism. However, all he produces are gross distortions and unsubstantiated assertions of fact, which I presume is the product of his ignorance of Catholic truth and/or the deleterious influence of the Society of St. Pius X. In any case, it seems he is out to deceive the readership of *CFN* with the evident connivance of Mr. John Vennari (shown above, speaking at the 2010 Fatima Challenge), who published Mr. Salza’s mish-mash of errors. This should cause any subscriber of *CFN* to become very uncomfortable and not so cozy in their assumptions.

It is the purpose of this essay to demonstrate the falseness of Mr. Salza’s argument and to offer *CFN* readers the only other alternative that explains the ecclesiastical paradox stemming from the Modernist Revolution of Vatican II. The best place to start is to give an accurate statement of the nature of sedevacantism in order to clear up any confusion that probably inhabits the minds of *CFN* subscribers due to the bias of certain “Traditional” commentators. It is really quite simple and Fr. Anthony Cekeda explains it quite clearly. He says, “Traditional Catholics have tried to explain in various ways how the errors and evils of the officially-sanctioned Vatican II changes could come from what appears to be the

authority of an infallible Church. The sedevacantist position maintains that the only coherent explanation for this state of affairs is to conclude that, since error and evil cannot come from the authority of an indefectible and infallible Church, the ecclesiastics who promulgated these changes – from pope on down – at some point lost their office and authority through personal heresy.”[1]

The authority by which the Vicar of Christ governs, teaches, and sanctifies is the authority of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.[2] Authority is one of the three attributes of the Catholic Church. The power to govern, to teach, and to sanctify by a pope is for the purpose of “building-up...the Mystical Body of Christ, not for its destruction.”[3] This means that he is legally bound by the Divine Law. He cannot go outside it in terms of his authority. As Pope Boniface VIII taught in *Unam Sanctam*, “Christ and His Vicar constitute one only head.” So, when the Pope speaks or acts, he is speaking or acting for Christ within the parameters of the Divine Law.



The Catholic Church is indefectible, another of its attributes. Among other things, it means that her teaching is immutable and it remains the same always.

The third attribute of the Catholic Church is her infallibility, which not only pertains to ex cathedra papal pronouncements like that of the Immaculate Conception, but it also applies to the universal ordinary magisterium and the Church’s universal disciplinary laws.[4] In sum, it is impossible that the Catholic Church give something evil in her laws or something doctrinally erroneous. Yet, as mentioned above, officially-sanctioned errors and evils have come forth. Since it is impossible for the Mystical Body of Christ to spawn these evils, then the only conclusion is that they have come from ecclesiastics who have personally defected from the Faith. As Fr. Anthony Cekeda points out,

The only explanation for these errors and evils that preserves the doctrines of the Church’s indefectibility and infallibility is that the clerics who promulgated them somehow lost as individuals the authority of the offices in the Church they otherwise appeared to possess – or that they never possessed such authority before God in the first place. Their pronouncements became juridically void and could not bind Catholics – just as the decrees of the bishops in England who accepted the Protestant heresy in the 16th century became void and empty of authority for Catholics. Such a loss of authority flows from a general principle in Church law: public defection from the Catholic faith automatically deprives a person of all ecclesiastical offices he may hold.[5]

The idea of a pope, in his personal capacity, able to defect from the faith or become a heretic is not something made up by post Vatican II sedevacantists. Prior to Vatican II, theologians and canonists, as well as at least two popes (Innocent III and Paul IV) admit the principle behind it. When the fact of his defection becomes manifest, such a pope automatically (ipso facto) loses his office and authority.

St. Robert Bellarmine wrote, “A pope who is a manifest heretic automatically (per se) ceases to be pope and head, just as he ceases automatically to be a Christian and a member of the Church. Wherefore, he can be judged and punished by the Church. This is the teaching of all the ancient Fathers who teach that manifest heretics immediately lose all jurisdiction.”[6]

St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote, “If ever a pope, as a private person, should fall into heresy, he would at once fall from the pontificate.”[7]

Before proceeding further, it might be wise to define some theological terms so that *CFN's* readership may have a correct understanding of this rebuttal against Mr. Salza. What is meant by heresy?

St. Thomas lucidly defines heresy as a matter of unbelief. “Falsehood is contrary to truth. Now a heretic is one who devises or follows false or new opinions. Therefore heresy is opposed to the truth, on which faith is founded; and consequently it is a species of unbelief.” [8] Canon 1325.2 states, “After the reception of baptism, if anyone, retaining the name Christian, pertinaciously denies or doubts something to be believed from the truth of divine and Catholic faith, [such a one is] a heretic; if he completely turns away from the Christian faith, [such a one is] an apostate; if finally he refuses to be under the Supreme Pontiff or refuses communion with the members of the Church subject to him, he is a schismatic.” What is very important to note about this canon is that one does not have to manifest his denial or doubt of one or more truths of divine and Catholic faith to become a heretic. He is a heretic by the very fact of his pertinacious denial or doubt of a Catholic truth and automatically excommunicates himself from membership in the Catholic Church; although, in the external forum this will not be known until made manifest, and thus, any Church office held will become vacant. The canonist Michels comments, “Because the act of heresy is an erroneous judgment of intelligence, to commit the sin of heresy it suffices to knowingly and willingly express this erroneous judgment in opposition to the Church’s magisterium. From the moment that one sufficiently knows the existence of the rule of the faith in the Church and that, on any point whatsoever, for whatever motive and in whatever form, one refuses to submit to it, formal heresy is complete.”[9]

What is manifest heresy? When heresy is brought about in a public way, then does heresy become manifest or notorious. In other words, manifest means open, not hidden. It refers to the case of a heretic whose heresy is not hidden. Does canon law require large numbers of people throughout the Church to actually recognize a pope’s statements as heretical? According to the canonist Michels, whom Fr. Cekeda cites, the answer is no. “Such ‘actual publication’...is not required – only ‘the positive danger that publication can easily and proximately take place...’ This would occur, for example, ‘in surroundings necessarily accompanied by publication, such as one committed in a public place or gathering with many persons present, or through a means naturally directed toward publication, such as heresy professed in a public journal.’”[10]

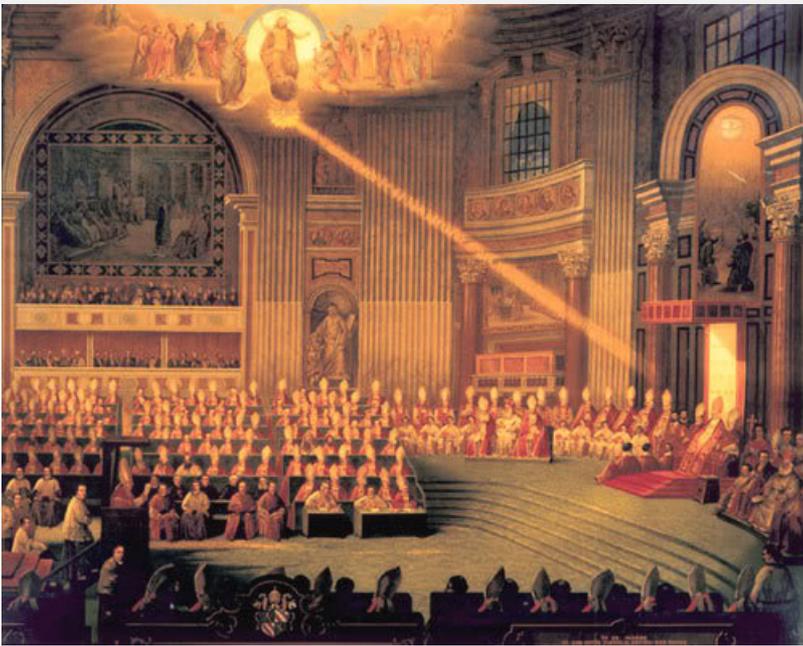
What is notorious heresy? We are dealing, here, with heresy as sin. Therefore, canon 2198.3 defines “Notorious by notoriety of fact, if it is publicly known and was committed under such circumstances that no clever evasion is possible and no legal opinion could excuse [the act];...” Apropos notoriety of fact, does canon law require large numbers of Catholics to recognize a pope’s formal, pertinacious guilt? Again, the answer is no. According to Fr. Cekeda, “The public notice... required for notoriety is also present when the existence of an offence is ‘established in a public way...’ This occurs, Michels says, when it ‘is established through authentic public documents... because such documents of their nature are open to inspection by many people, and therefore necessarily bring with them public notice.’”[11] The authentic public digest for all documents of the Holy See is the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. Publishing heretical decrees, pronouncements and encyclicals in the *Acta* would therefore render heresy notorious.[12]

What is pertinacity? Pertinacity is the willed opposition to the Church’s magisterium and constitutes the pertinacity authors require for the sin of heresy. “With Cajetan we must observe that pertinacity does not of necessity include long obstinacy by the heretic and warnings from the Church. A condition for the sin of heresy is one thing; a condition for the canonical crime of heresy, punishable by canon laws is another.”[13]

So, it should be clear to all, that heresy is a crime against canon law and a sin against the divine law. ‘It is by violating the divine law through the sin of heresy that a heretical pope loses his authority –

‘having become an unbeliever...’ as Cardinal Billot says, ‘he would by his own will be cast outside the body of the Church.’” Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, taught, “For not every sin, however grave and enormous it be, is such as to sever a man automatically from the body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy” (my emphasis). Further, canonist Matthaeus Conte a Coronata explains, “If indeed such a situation would happen, he [the Roman Pontiff] would, by divine law, fall from office without any sentence, indeed, without even a declaratory one.” [14]

Pope Innocent III raised the idea that it is possible that a heretic could somehow occupy the throne of St. Peter. He said, “He [the Roman Pontiff] can be judged by men, or rather, can be shown to be already judged, if for example he should wither away into heresy; because he who does not believe is already judged.”[15] In like manner, we find the same idea in Pope Paul IV’s Bull, *Cum ex Apostolatus Officio*. He decreed that if someone who was elected to the Roman See had beforehand, “deviated from the Catholic faith or fallen into any heresy”, his election would be “null, legally invalid and void.”



The Ecumenical Council of Vatican I, 1869-70, taught that the faith of Peter cannot fail. However, Serapius Iragui notes, that the absolute impossibility of such of a pope falling from the faith cannot be proven.

Therefore, “For this reason, theologians commonly concede that the Roman Pontiff, if he should fall into manifest heresy, would no longer be a member of the Church, and therefore could neither be called its visible head.” Yet, according to Udalricus Beste, there has been no example of this in history. Beste was writing in the twentieth century.[16] This leads us to the probable conclusion that, what with the evidence of consistent, numerous heretical statements and writings by the conciliar popes and their acts of apostasy before our

eyes and ears, these men never had the Catholic Faith before their elections. The elections were “null, legally invalid, and void.” They were and are not true popes protected by the Holy Ghost. They could not be or else indefectibility and infallibility of the Catholic Church are thrown overboard.

With this outline as a background, we begin the rebuttal of Mr. Salza’s flawed thesis with one example of a defection from the Catholic Faith by Karol Wojtyla’s (aka John Paul II) in one of his declarations, described rather frantically, by the way, in the March 2011 edition of *CFN* by Mr. Vennari – albeit, this venerable editor refused to call it heresy. In a meeting with Jews in the Mainz synagogue on November 17, 1980, John Paul II said, “The first dimension of this dialogue, that is, the meeting between the people of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God, and that of the New Covenant, is at the same time a dialogue within our Church, that is to say, between the first and second part of her Bible...Jews and Christians, as children of Abraham, are called to be a blessing to the world.”[17] This is a public and pertinacious contradiction of the Catholic teaching that the New Covenant replaced or superseded the Old Covenant.[18] In other words, it is explicitly heretical (if Mr. Salza, or Mr. Vennari for that matter, can prove that it is not, then, they are welcome to respond and show us how it is not). As I wrote in an article published on Dr. Thomas Droleskey’s website, www.christorchaos.com, John Paul II’s statement was fraught with dangerous implications. “First, it explodes Catholic teaching that the Church is one in faith, indefectible and infallible, and is an admission that the gates of Hell have prevailed, if one thinks or believes John Paul II was a true pope. [19] Second, regarding the salvation of the Jewish people, and by extension to all adherents of false religions, it is a denial of the solemnly defined dogma of the New Covenant Church – the Catholic

Church – which proclaims that outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation. Finally, there is the ambiguous novelty that seems to insinuate that the Catholic Church is a composite of Old Covenant Jews and New Covenant Catholics, because they are children of Abraham.[20] In other words, the obvious purport of John Paul II’s statement is that the Jews can be saved without believing in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, because the Old Covenant is a viable alternative to salvation – it has never been revoked by God!” [21] The conclusion is that John Paul II publicly defected from the Catholic Faith. This spells heresy. St. John the Evangelist under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost wrote, “Whosoever revolteth and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2 John 9).

Canon 188.4 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law states definitely and clearly, “Through tacit resignation, accepted by the law itself, all offices become vacant ipso facto and without any declaration if a cleric: ...Has publicly forsaken the Catholic Faith.”[22] That should settle the matter and in normal circumstances it would. But, no, we do not live in normal circumstances. Thus, Mr. Salza is allowed to sidle up to CFN readers with his canonical spin.

Now, one of the two main purposes of his article is to water down canon 188.4, i.e., that it does not stand alone regarding the personal heresy of a pope and the loss of office. This is one of the big guns upon which his argument depends. According to his manner of thinking (very similar to that of the leadership of the SSPX), he says, “...the sedevacantist automatically concludes that canon 188.4 applies and the Pope loses his office. This conclusion is erroneous and shows a lack of understanding of both divine and canon law...First, a Pope who makes heretical statements is not presumed to be a formal heretic based on those statements alone. A person can make heretical statements while maintaining orthodox internal dispositions, that is, he may not necessarily believe what he says, based on many factors (peer pressure, misplaced zeal, emotional imbalance, even diabolical disorientation).”

Of course, this is preposterous. He is spinning for us a new idea. He is saying that a pope can dissemble (to give a false semblance to) and for nearly whatever reason, because a pope is a person. He gives us no authority to support his assertion. He doesn’t cite any pope, or father or doctor of the Church, or saint, or theologian prior to Vatican II.

To give *CFN* readership assurance of the “truth” of his novelty, he cites the apostate, Benedict XVI, and canon 2199ff. As to the first, He writes, “In fact, after retracting a statement he made about Islam, Pope Benedict XVI admitted that his speeches...do not necessarily reflect his personal beliefs. In other words, Pope Benedict confessed that what he says and what he believes may be two different things (evidence that he may be laboring under an inculpable inadvertence or error of mental reservations).” So, says John Salza, Esq.[23] In other words, Benedict XVI is admitting that he is a dissembler. A pesky sedevacantist may ask, “is that the way the Vicar of Christ carries out his office: speaking with forked tongue?” “Is that how the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ is to be preached to the world?” “Is that how a Pope demonstrates his oneness with Christ?” “Couldn’t Benedict XVI’s confession be that which characterizes the type of heretic known as Modernist described by Pope St. Pius X in *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*?”[24] “Is it evidence that Benedict XVI is laboring under an inculpable inadvertence or error of mental reservations; or is it just Salza’s presumption?”



In opposition to this novelty of dissembling, the canonist, Bishop Eric Francis MacKenzie explains, “If the delinquent making this claim be a cleric, his plea for mitigation must be dismissed, either as untrue, or else as indicating ignorance which is affected, or at least crass and supine...His ecclesiastical training in the seminary, with its moral and dogmatic theology, its ecclesiastical history, not to mention its canon law, all insure that the Church’s attitude towards heresy was imparted to him.”[25] By the way, Benedict XVI has several doctorates in theology, so he knows the rule of faith. Ignorance cannot be offered as an excuse.

His appeal to canon 2199ff in for the purpose of refuting a straw man he has cleverly created. It is the straw man called, “the sin of presumption of heresy” by those villainous sedevacantists. By this charge, he hopes to demolish sedevacantism. He furiously writes, “Contrary to the sedevacantist thesis, the Church’s greatest theologians do not presume that an alleged heresy is ‘notorious’ or ‘pertinacious,’ for that would constitute the sin of presumption.” Doesn’t that sound absolutely despicable? It looks as if sedevacantism is done for, at last, sigh the readers of *CFN*. But, if the reader will observe, at the end of this sentence is footnote (#3), citing the *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 21, Art 1-2, composed by the Catholic Church’s greatest theologian. We dutifully turn to Q. 21 and read articles one and two and are quite surprised to find that it only concerns the sin of presumption against the Holy Ghost with regard to the virtue of Hope pertaining to one’s salvation. There is absolutely no reference, connection, or allusion to Salza’s straw man. Nothing regarding the presumption of heresy of a pope is found. There is not one paragraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or word in the two articles that supports his claim. Unfortunately, this obviously brings his credibility, as well as his motive for writing this article, into doubt and it becomes suspect. Readers of his article should have thrown their copy of *CFN* into the circular file after having had to swallow this egregious subterfuge. However, let us not presume too much. After all, Mr. Salza may have been daydreaming at the time of writing or else he’s just plain ignorant.

Despite this, he rumbles on with his ever leaky thesis. He writes, “In accordance with the principles of justice and due process, the heresy must be proven beyond any reasonable doubt...Thus, a Pope is to be considered the rightful Pope unless and until he is proven to be a formal heretic beyond a reasonable doubt. One cannot imagine a more important principle when dealing with the elected Vicar of Christ. To ensure against a presumption of heresy, canon law (2199ff) provides seven defenses to culpability, which includes ‘habitual inculpable ignorance’ and ‘actual inculpable inadvertence or error.’ Given their apparent desire to please the world, it is possible that the conciliar Popes have an [sic] habitual inculpable ignorance or actual inadvertence or error concerning the harm they have caused the Church by actions they thought would benefit the Church. It is certainly possible, if not probable, which means their statements and actions do not in themselves prove formal heresy.” Is this a presumption on the part of Mr. Salza?

In any case, according to canon law, if Mr. Salza were John Paul II’s lawyer, it would be up to him to prove that his client had one of the seven excusing causes enumerated in 2199ff.[26] We can immediately eliminate ignorance and probably actual inculpable inadvertence, because, Karol Wojtyla held a doctorate in Sacred Theology. Canon 2200.2 lays down the general principle of presumption of guilt and contradicts Mr. Salza’s claims: “When an external violation of the law occurs, in the external forum the existence of malice (*dolus*) is presumed until the contrary is proved” (my emphasis). Fr. Anthony Cekeda cites McKenzie to show in the case of heresy (a violation of the law) that a prosecutor is not required to prove pertinacity in an alleged heresy. “The very commission of any act which signifies heresy, e.g., the statement of some doctrine contrary or contradictory to a revealed defined dogma, gives sufficient ground for juridical presumption of heretical depravity...[E]xcusing circumstances have to be proved in the external forum, and the burden of proof is on the person whose action has given rise to the imputation of heresy. In the absence of such proof, all such excuses are

presumed not to exist”[27] These presumptions exist in the law, because “in the external forum one acts based on the way things ordinarily happen and externally appear. And indeed ordinarily, each person of sound mind customarily acts reasonably and freely, fully knowing and deliberately willing whatever he really does.”[28]

So canon 2200.2 stands and reinforces canon 188.4, and creates new, bigger holes in Mr. Salza’s sinking thesis.

Continuing his attempt to enlighten his readership, he writes “Under the 1917 Code of Canon Law, to be guilty of formal heresy, the Church requires that one’s heresy must be ‘public’ and notorious’ under canon 2197.3 (which means the heretic acts with malice which is widely known by the Church) or ‘pertinacious’ under canon 1325.2 (which means the heretic remains obstinate in his errors after being confronted with them). The Church’s theologians throughout the years have underscored the high evidentiary standard that is required to prove ‘notorious’ heresy, particularly when dealing with one duly elected to the papal throne.”

First, canon 2197.3 enumerates only the degrees of manifestation of a delict.[29] “A delict is:…3. Notorious by notoriety of fact, if it is publicly known and was committed under such circumstances that no clever evasion is possible and no legal opinion could excuse [the act].” Thus, it does not support his claim. Canon 188.4 stipulates that public defection from the Catholic Faith is all that is necessary for loss of a Church office. Canon 2200.2 applies the principle of presumption of malice.

As to the “evidentiary standard that is required to prove ‘notorious’ heresy”, which Mr. Salza puts forth, canon 1747.1 states, “Requiring no evidence are: 1. Notorious facts, according to the norm of Canon 2197, nn. 2 and 3;…” Mr. Salza is contradicted. Therefore, he must provide us with those “theologians throughout the years”, who “have underscored the high evidentiary standard that is required to prove ‘notorious’ heresy, particularly when dealing with one duly elected to the papal throne.”

His attempt to destroy the sedevacantist argument concerning canon 188.4 relative to automatic loss of the papal office due to the sin of heresy has backfired. So, a new way around the problem is conjured – and it is new, folks. He writes, “...sedevacantists miss or ignore the fact that canon 188, when harmonized with the rest of the code, requires ecclesiastical inquiry before formal heresy can be determined. This is because canon 18 says: ‘Ecclesiastical laws are to be understood according to the meaning of their own words considered in their text and context; as for those things that remain unclear or in doubt, reference should be made to parallel provisions in the Code, if there are any, to the purposes and circumstances of the law and to the mind of the legislator. As applied here, canon 188 must be harmonized with other parallel provisions of the code. To that end, canon 2314 (and 2379 and 2388)[30] is referenced in Canon 188. That means canon 2314 sheds further light on the meaning and reach of canon 188.” Does it mean: it “must be harmonized?” Can Mr. Salza give us his authorities for this claim?



The operative clause in canon 18 is: "...as for those things that remain unclear or in doubt..." Now, canon 188.4 is very clear textually – it means that if certain conditions exist (like public defection from the faith), "any office becomes vacant upon the fact and without declaration..." When John Paul II declared before a Jewish audience in a synagogue in Mainz, Germany in 1980 that the Old Covenant had not been revoked by God, a public defection of faith occurred. There was nothing unclear. There was no doubt. Every requirement of formal heresy was present: a public denial of Catholic dogma and pertinacity.[31] Canon

2314 is included under the Third Part (On penalties for individual delicts) of the Fifth Book (On Delicts and Penalties), Title 11 (On delicts against the faith and unity of the Church) of the 1917 Code of Canon Law. Canon 2314 states in para. 1, "All apostates from the Christian faith and each and every heretic or schismatic: 1. Incur by that fact excommunication." This is exactly what popes, fathers and doctors of the Church, theologians and canonists of the Church have been teaching for centuries: excommunication is ipso facto when the sins of heresy, apostasy, or schism are committed. 2314.2 states, "Unless they [all apostates, heretics, and schismatics] respect warnings, they are deprived of benefice, dignity, pension, office, or other duty that they have in the Church, they are declared infamous, and [if] clerics, with the warning being repeated, [they are] are deposed [sic]." A juridical process (trial) is indicated here, and therefore, 2314.2 does not apply, because being the supreme legislator, a pope cannot be judged by an ecclesiastical court. As A. Vermeersch wrote, "At least according to the more common teaching, the Roman Pontiff as a private teacher can fall into manifest heresy. Then, without any declaratory sentence (for the supreme See is judged by no one), he would automatically (ipso facto) fall from power which he who is no longer a member of the Church is unable to possess." [32]

Unfortunately, Mr. Salza adds more confusion when he supposes that canon 2314.2 "requires formal warnings followed by the obstinate refusal to heed the warnings before the public defection can be established...[in order] to demonstrate whether the heresy is notorious or pertinacious and, if not, whether a special investigation (under canon 1939.1) and a declaratory sentence (under canon 2223.4) are required." Again, these two canons do not apply because the Roman Pontiff can be judged by no one and they refer to pre-trial investigations and judges of trials. What he does not seem to be getting is that Sedevacantists are talking about the sin of heresy – the sin which automatically excommunicates without declaration.

Further on, Mr. Salza makes the attempt to refute sedevacantists who "dismiss the relevance of ecclesiastical law and focus solely on the Divine Law." He goes on to say that, "Not only is such approach nonsensical, it also does nothing for their case. While canonical imputability is in the external forum (dealing with loss of office), moral imputability is in the internal forum (dealing with the Pope's heart and mind). If the sedevacantist wishes to disregard the ecclesiastical laws addressing canonical imputability, he is stuck with having to prove the moral imputability of the Pope by judging his internal dispositions. But this is impossible."

Why is it impossible to the mind of John Salza? Because, as an example, "a Pope may have a mental reservation when he makes a heretical statement (again, this means stating a heresy in public does not always equate to 'public heresy'.)" Did you get that one folks? You might want to peruse that explanation, again.

Here is what St. Thomas Aquinas says in opposition to Mr. Salza's supposition relative to the internal forum. "It belongs to faith not only that the heart should believe, but also that external words and deeds should bear witness to the inward faith, for confession is an act of faith. In this way too, certain external words or deeds pertain to unbelief, in so far as they are signs of unbelief, even as a sign of health is said itself to be healthy." [33] From this teaching, we can arrive at a moral certitude that Karol Wojtyla's declaration in Mainz was an act of unbelief, it was new, and it manifested a sign of faithlessness within him, because the external indicators point to something internal. "Manifest heretics can be known with certainty as such, by various external indicators," as Mr. John Lane wrote. They can be known with moral certitude, based on the principles enunciated in Monsignor Paul Glenn's book *Criteriology*." He explained, "Matters in which men's wills are essential are matters of the moral order... Moral certitude is the unwavering assent of the mind to what expresses the normal mode of human conduct. Thus we have moral certitude that a mother will love her child.... That which is morally certain can be conceived of as existing otherwise, and may in fact exist otherwise without the intervention of a miracle, but not without the intervention of a human will which acts in a manner contrary to the normal and rational mode of human conduct, that is, of such conduct as proceeds from the deliberate will of a normal person." [34] In other words, we can be morally certain that Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II was not only not expressing the normal conduct of a Roman Pontiff when he made his heretical statement in a Jewish synagogue, he was also expressing his disbelief in Catholic dogma, a not normal mode of the Vicar of Christ. As our Lord once cautioned, "by their fruits you shall know them."

Again, I must remind the readership of Mr. Salza's constant appeal to a red herring: the possibility of a mental reservation when a pope makes a heretical statement. But, as was mentioned above, that would have to be proven and not taken for granted. Besides, for the umpteenth time, he cannot be judged by anyone except God. Therefore, he would be automatically excommunicated without declaration and loss of office would follow immediately.

"God did not promise that He would prevent the Pope from using his authority in confusing or even destructive ways. That a Pope harms the Church by engaging in ecumenism or common worship does not mean he is no longer the Pope." So, declares John Salza, Esq. However, St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out that if anyone went and worshipped at Mohammed's tomb he would be deemed an apostate. [35] Apostasy is one of the sins that automatically excommunicates. Karol Wojtyla, acting under the presumption that he was a true pope, having taken the name of John Paul II (which will live in infamy), did kiss with reverence the Koran on June 1, 1999; he hosted the ecumenical abomination of false religions at Assisi, Italy on October 27, 1986; on Aug. 8, 1985, he visited Togo and prayed in a "sacred forest" consecrated to the worship of pagan gods and participated in a pagan initiation ritual; on June 24, 1986, he sat with the Grand Rabbi Elio Toaff in the sanctuary of the Jewish synagogue at Rome while the Jewish hymn, "Awaiting the Messiah" was sung, etc. These are acts of apostasy. [36] Spinning ever downward into foolishness, Mr. Salza continues, "The example of St. Peter is clear: by his words and actions, St. Peter appeared to deny the Church's infallible dogma that the Gentiles were equal members of the New Covenant, and yet he did not lose his privileged office." Would Mr. Salza, please, for the edification of the Catholic world, cite the circumstances of the definition of the "infallible dogma" about the equality of Gentiles in the Catholic Church? While he is searching for that evidence, he might read up on the commentaries of St. Paul's standing up to St. Peter (Galatians 2:11). He'll find that according to many Catholic commentators, including St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Cyprian, St. John Chrysostom, St. Anselm, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Pope Gelasius, Origen, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Robert Bellarmine, et al., that the consensus is: St. Peter was guilty of the "venial fault of imprudence" [37] – not heresy.

We have come to the end of the line for Mr. Salza. His argument – a mish-mash of truth, distortion, unsupported claims and deception – will not hold water. He hasn't proven anything against sedevacantism. Sedevacantism stands because it is supported by the teaching of Popes, Fathers and Doctors of the Church, Saints, Theologians and Canon Law. It stands because there is no other choice to explain the evils that have come forth at and since Vatican II. "The only way to reconcile infallibility with such soul-destroying evil is to conclude that those who perpetrated it at some point defected from the faith, lost their authority before God, and hence were no popes at all." [38]

It is impossible to have it both ways. Yet, persons like John Salza and John Vennari follow in the footsteps of the SSPX in trying to do so by its policy of "recognize and resist". The basis of this policy is grounded in the misinterpretation of the teaching of St. Robert Bellarmine. Mr. Salza quotes him: "St. Robert Bellarmine says it 'is licit to resist a Sovereign Pontiff who is trying to destroy the Church. I say that it is licit to resist him in not following his orders and in preventing the execution of his will.'" Supposedly, this justifies SSPXers in resisting the false doctrines and evil laws and sacrilegious worship that Paul VI and his successors have promulgated, while at the same time recognizing them as true popes. This is an unwarranted conclusion.

However, as Fr. Cekeda very clearly explains, "But these conclusions are simply another example of low intellectual standards in traditionalist polemics. Anyone who consults the original sources for the Bellarmine passage and who understands a few fundamental distinctions in canon law can easily see that:

(a) Bellarmine is talking about a morally evil pope who gives morally evil commands – not one who, like the post-Vatican II popes, teaches doctrinal error or imposes evil laws.

(b) The context of the statement is a debate over errors of Gallicanism, not the case of a heretical pope.

(c) Bellarmine is justifying 'resistance' by kings and prelates, not by individual Catholics.

(d) Bellarmine teaches in the next chapter of his work (30) that a heretical pope automatically loses his authority."

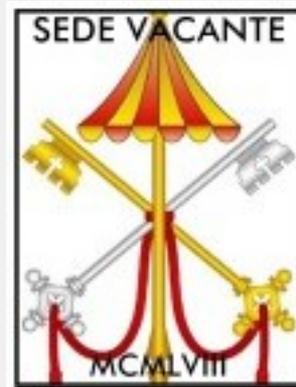


With reference to (d), Fr. Cekeda says, "And finally, in the chapter that follows the famous quote (30), Bellarmine explicitly treats the question: 'Whether a heretical pope can be deposed.' (an papa haereticus deponi posit.) Bellarmine refutes answers given by various theologians, including Cajetan, who maintained that heretical pope would need to be deposed. He bases his own answer on the following principle: 'Heretics are outside the Church even before their excommunication, and, deprived of all jurisdiction, are condemned by their own judgment, as St. Paul teaches in Titus 3.' (op. cit. 1:419) The saint concludes, 'The fifth opinion therefore is the true one. A pope who is a manifest heretic automatically (per se) ceases to be pope and head, just as he ceases automatically to be a Christian and a member of the Church. Wherefore, he can be judged and punished by the Church. This is the teaching of all the ancient Fathers who teach that manifest heretics immediately lose all jurisdiction.' Bellarmine's writings, then, support rather than refute the principle behind the sedevacantist position: a heretical pope is self-deposing. In sum: It is utterly indefensible to claim that the famous passage in Bellarmine 'refutes sedevacantism,' and at the same time justifies 'resistance' to a true pope who somehow promulgates false doctrines and evil laws. Such a fanciful interpretation of

Bellarmino is based on ignorance of both the meaning of the text and its context.”[39]

It is quite evident that Mr. Salza, Mr. Vennari and the SSPX are in a pickle.

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NOTES:

[1] Cf. “Is Sedevacantism ‘Pope-Sifting’?” at www.traditionalmass.org.

[2] Authority is one of the three attributes of the Catholic Church. “By the authority of the Catholic Church is meant that the Pope and the bishops, as the lawful successors of the apostles have power from Christ Himself to teach, to sanctify, and to govern the faithful in spiritual matters” (Baltimore Catechism No. 3, para. 162.).

[3] Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 286. Since Vatican II, the world has witnessed to the ongoing massive destruction that has afflicted the Catholic Church, especially, in terms of the great numbers who have lost the Faith as compared to those who practiced and professed it prior to December 1962. Who will deny it?

[4] Cf. Van Noort, *Dogmatic Theology*.

[5] Cf. “Traditionalists, Infallibility and the Pope”, by Fr. Cekeda. See, also, canon 188.4 wherein this principle is enshrined.

[6] Cf. *De Romano Pontifice*, II, 30, cited in “Traditionalists, Infallibility and the Pope”.

[7] Cf. *Oeuvres Completes*, 9:232; cited in “Traditionalists, Infallibility and the Pope”.

[8] Cf. *Summa Theologica*, Part II-II, Question 11, Article 1.

[9] Cf. Fr. Cekeda’s “Resisting the Pope, Sedevacantism and Frankenchurch.”

[10] Cf. *De Delictis et Poenis*, in Fr. Cekeda’s article, “Sedevacantism Refuted?”

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] There are many examples of notorious heresy in the documents of Vatican II and the encyclicals of the conciliar popes, e.g. *Pacem in Terris*; Vatican II heresies: especially *Dignitatis Humanae*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Lumen Gentium*, and *Unitatis Redintegratio*; the encyclicals, *Redemptor Hominis* and *Dominus Jesus*. Also, one can find heresies in *The New Catechism*, the 1983 Code Canon Law, and of course in the evil rite known as the *Novus Ordo Missae*.

[13] Fr. Cekeda is citing Michels; Cf. “Resisting the Pope, Sedevacantism and Frankenchurch.”

[14] Cf. “Sedevacantism Refuted?” Fr. Cekeda references Cardinal Billot’s *De Ecclesia*, 5th ed. [1927] 632; and from *Coronata’s Institutiones iuris Canonici* [1950] 1:316.

[15] Sermon 4. Cited in Fr. Cekeda’s “Traditionalists, Infallibility and the Pope.”

[16] Cf. “Traditionalists, Infallibility and the Pope”.

[17] “Those of the seed of Abraham who live according to the Law of Moses and who do not believe in Christ before death shall not be saved; especially they who curse this very Christ in the synagogues; who curse everything by which they might obtain salvation and escape the vengeance of fire” (St. Justin Martyr). “So clearly was the transition then made from the Synagogue to the Church that, when the Lord gave up His soul, the veil of the Temple was rent in two” (Pope St. Leo the Great). “Many, I

know, respect the Jews and think that their present way of life is a venerable one. This is why I hasten to uproot and tear out this deadly opinion. I said that the synagogue is no better than a theater and I bring forward a prophet as my witness.