

Editorial Note:

The Synod of Pistoia was a local council held in 1786 in Pistoia, Italy, which was somewhat similar in content to the modernist Second Vatican Council (1962-65) of the Novus Ordo Church, especially in terms of introducing novelties and using ambiguous language. In 1794, Pope Pius VI condemned 85 propositions taught by the synod and solemnly forbade Catholics from believing, teaching, or preaching them. While the text of the 85 propositions and the censures Pope Pius VI attached to each have long been published in English, the introductory part of the bull has never before been published in English in its entirety, yet it is precisely this introduction which delivers a most powerful blow against Vatican II. Novus Ordo Watch is honored to be able to make this text available in its entirety for the first time in English.

Source for Introduction: *Auctorem Fidei: Bula de N. SS. P. Pio VI. De Gloriosa Memoria Condenatoria del Execrable Synodo de Pystoya* (Mallorca: Felipe Guasp, 1814), pp. 3-15.

BULL OF POPE PIUS VI
AUCTOREM FIDEI

PIUS, BISHOP,

Servant of the Servants of God.

Greetings and [my] apostolic blessing to all the Christian faithful.

The Apostle Paul¹ commands us, who look on Jesus as the author and finisher of the faith, to consider diligently the nature and magnitude of the opposition against Him, which He endured from sinners, so that at some time or other we, wearied by labors and dangers, do not lose heart and fall almost lifeless. It is of utmost necessity that we strengthen and refresh ourselves with this most wholesome thought when the raging heat of the dreadful and never-ending conspiracy against the very body of Christ, which is the Church,² takes fire, so that, strengthened in the Lord and in the might of His power, we, protected by the shield of faith, may be able to resist in the evil day and quench all the fiery darts of the most wicked one.³ Truly in these tumultuous times, in this revolutionary

1 Hebrews 12

2 Colossians 1

3 Ephesians 6

upheaval, all good men must join the burdensome struggle against any and all enemies of the Christian name. The guardianship and guidance of the entire flock entrusted to our pastoral care are a more serious matter for Us, *upon whom greater zeal for the Christian religion is incumbent than upon all others.*⁴ But despite the heavy responsibility set upon our shoulders to bear the burden of all who are heavily laden, the more aware We are of our own frailty, the more We harbor a more robust hope: The divinely established ruling principle in the person of Blessed Peter lightens the apostolic duty, so that he, who never intended to abandon government of the Church once it has been given by Christ, might not cease to carry on his shoulders the burdens of the apostolic governance of those whom God had given to him as heirs to protect and safeguard with a perpetual succession.

And indeed in these hardships that surround us on every side, a heap of other troubles have mounded up as it were, so that what should have been for us a source of joy is the source of a greater sadness. *For in fact, when a leader of God's holy Church, under the name of Priest, turns the very people of Christ away from the path of truth toward the peril of an erroneous belief, and when this occurs in a major city, then clearly the distress is multiplied, and a greater anxiety is in order.*⁵

To be sure, this has not occurred in far-off lands, but in the full blaze of Italy, under the eyes of the City [viz. Rome], and near the threshold of the Apostles [viz. the tombs of Ss. Peter and Paul]. There has been a bishop, distinguished by the honor of two Sees (Scipione de' Ricci, formerly the bishop of Pistoia and Prato), whom we embraced with paternal love as he approached Us to take up his pastoral duty. In the very text of the rite of his sacred ordination, he, in turn, bound himself by means of a scrupulous, solemn oath to the fidelity and obedience due to Us and to this Apostolic See. And yet, this same man in the short space of time after he had left our embrace with the kiss of peace, surrounded by the deceits of a pack of teachers of a perverse school of thought, went to the people entrusted to him. He began to apply himself, but not in the measure he should have, that is to say, by defending, nurturing, and perfecting the praiseworthy and peaceful form of Christian teaching that his predecessor bishops had already introduced long ago and almost secured. Instead, he embarked on confusing, destroying, and utterly overturning it by introducing troublesome novelties under the guise of a sham reform. And furthermore, when at our urging he had decided upon a diocesan synod, it happened that, by his inflexible pertinacity in his own way of thinking, a more severe occasion of

4 Pope St. Siricius, *To Himerius of Tarragona, Epistle 1* in Coustant.

5 Pope St. Celestine I, *Epistle 12*, in Coustant.

ruin grew out of the source from which we should have looked for some kind of remedy for the wounds.

Truly, after the Synod of Pistoia emerged from the hiding places in which it lurked concealed for some time, there was no one with pious scruples and with any good sense who did not at once warn that the plan of the authors had been to unite into one whole, like a body, the seeds of the vicious teachings they had scattered beforehand through numerous pamphlets; to revive errors not long since condemned; and to detract from the faith and authority of those apostolic decrees by which they stood condemned.

When we clearly perceived that the more serious problems are in themselves, the more considerably they demand the support of our pastoral care, we did not delay to focus our attention on taking those counsels that seemed more apropos, either in healing or suppressing the emergent evil. And so, first of all, being mindful of the sage advice of our predecessor St. Zosimus: to wit, *Those things that are of great importance call for a weighty examination*,⁶ We tasked four bishops and their personal theologians from the secular clergy to examine the Synod that this bishop produced. Next we assigned a committee of several cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church and other bishops to study diligently the complete collection of [the synod's] acts, to compare the widely scattered passages with each other, and to discuss the identified formal opinions. We personally received their decisions, both orally and in writing. They decided that the synod must be universally condemned and that very many of the propositions taken from the synod must be reprov'd with more or less serious censures, some indeed in and of themselves and others in connection with the formally expressed opinions. After hearing and considering their observations, We also took care that certain leading statements of wrongful teachings taken from the whole synod – ones to which the condemnable opinions spread by the synod directly or indirectly referred – were reduced to a certain order for the future, and that each one of these be subject to its own special censure.

However, in case obstinate men seize an opportunity for detraction on account of this, notwithstanding either the very carefully conducted comparison of passages or the investigation of the formal opinions, We have determined, in order to meet this probable calumny, to make use of the wise counsel, duly and cautiously applied, which several of our most holy predecessors along with highly esteemed bishops and even general councils had left attested and recommended with notable examples when they had cause

⁶ Pope St. Zosimus, *Epistle 2* in Coustant.

to restrain the rise of dangerous or harmful novelties of this sort.

They knew the capacity of innovators in the art of deception. In order not to shock the ears of Catholics, the innovators sought to hide the subtleties of their tortuous maneuvers by the use of seemingly innocuous words⁷ such as would allow them to insinuate error into souls in the most gentle manner. Once the truth had been compromised, they could, by means of slight changes or additions in phraseology, distort the confession of the faith that is necessary for our salvation, and lead the faithful by subtle errors to their eternal damnation. This manner of dissimulating and lying is vicious, regardless of the circumstances under which it is used. For very good reasons it can never be tolerated in a synod of which the principal glory consists above all in teaching the truth with clarity and excluding all danger of error.

Moreover, if all this is sinful, it cannot be excused in the way that one sees it being done, under the erroneous pretext that the seemingly shocking affirmations in one place are further developed along orthodox lines in other places, and even in yet other places corrected; as if allowing for the possibility of either affirming or denying the statement, or of leaving it up to the personal inclinations of the individual – such has always been the fraudulent and daring method used by innovators to establish error. It allows for both the possibility of promoting error and of excusing it.

It is as if the innovators pretended that they always intended to present the alternative passages, especially to those of simple faith who eventually come to know only some part of the conclusions of such discussions, which are published in the common language for everyone's use. Or again, as if the same faithful had the ability on examining such documents to judge such matters for themselves without getting confused and avoiding all risk of error. It is a most reprehensible technique for the insinuation of doctrinal errors and one condemned long ago by our predecessor St. Celestine⁸ who found it used in the writings of Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, and which he exposed in order to condemn it with the greatest possible severity. Once these texts were examined carefully, the impostor was exposed and confounded, for he expressed himself in a plethora of words, mixing true things with others that were obscure; mixing at times one with the other in such a way that he was also able to confess those things which were denied while at the same time possessing a basis for denying those very sentences which he confessed.

⁷ Pope St. Leo the Great, *Epistle 129*, in the edition of Baller.

⁸ Pope St. Celestine I, *Epistle 13*, no. 2 in Coustant.

In order to expose such snares, something which becomes necessary with a certain frequency in every century, no other method is required than the following: Whenever it becomes necessary to expose statements that disguise some suspected error or danger under the veil of ambiguity, one must denounce the perverse meaning under which the error opposed to Catholic truth is camouflaged.

The more freely We embraced a program of complete moderation, the more we foresaw that, in order to reconcile souls and bring them to the unity of spirit in the bond of peace (which, we are glad to say, has by God's favor already happily occurred in many), it would be of enormous assistance to be prepared in case pertinacious sectarians of the synod – if any, God forbid, still remain, – should be free in the future to bring in as allies Catholic schools and make them partners of their own just condemnation in order to set in motion new disturbances: They endeavor to entice to their side the clearly unwilling and resistant schools by a kind of distorted likeness of similar terms, even though the schools profess expressly different opinions. Then, if any previously imagined, milder opinion about the synod has hitherto escaped the notice of these imprudent men, let every opportunity of complaining still be closed to them. If they are sound in doctrine, as they wish to seem, they cannot take it hard that the teachings identified in this manner – teachings that exhibit errors from which they claim to be entirely distant – stand condemned.

Yet We did not think that We had sincerely proved our mildness, or more correctly, the charity that impels us toward our brother, whom we wish to assist *by every means*, if We may still be able.⁹ Indeed, We are impelled by the charity that moved our predecessor Celestine.¹⁰ He did not refuse to wait with a greater patience than what seemed to be called for, even against what the law demanded, for priests [=bishops] to mend their ways. For we, along with Augustine and the Fathers of Milevis, prefer and desire that men who teach perverse things *be healed in the Church by pastoral care rather than be cut off from Her without hope of salvation, if necessity does not force one to act.*¹¹

Therefore, so as it should not appear that any effort to win over a brother was overlooked, before We progressed further, We thought to summon the aforementioned bishop to Us by means of very cordial letters written to him at our request, promising that we would receive him with good will and that he would not be barred from freely and

9 Pope St. Celestine I, *Epistle 14, To the Clergy and People of Constantinople*, no. 8, in Coustant.

10 *Epistle 13, To Nestorius*, no. 9.

11 *Epistle 176*, no. 4; *178*, no. 2 in the Maurist edition.

openly declaring what seemed to him to meet the needs of his interests. In truth, We had not lost all hope of the possibility that, if he possessed that teachable mind, which Augustine¹², following the Apostle, required above all else in a bishop, as soon as the chief points of doctrine under dispute, which seemed worthy of greater consideration, were proposed to him simply and candidly, without contention and rancor, then almost beyond a doubt he could, upon reflection, more reasonably explain what had been proposed ambiguously and openly repudiate the notions displaying manifest perversity. And so, with his name held in high regard amid the delighted acclaim of all good men, the turmoil aroused in the Church would be restrained as peaceably as possible by means of a much-desired correction.¹³

But now since he, alleging ill health, has decided not to make use of the kindness offered to him, We can no longer postpone fulfilling our apostolic duty.

It is not a matter of the danger of only one or another diocese: *Any novelty at all assails the Universal Church.*¹⁴ Now for a long time, from every side, the judgment of the supreme Apostolic See has not only been awaited but earnestly demanded by unremitting, repeated petitions. God forbid that the voice of Peter ever be silent in that See, where, living and presiding perpetually, he presents the truth of the faith to those in search of it.¹⁵ A lengthier forbearance in such matters is not safe, because it is almost just as much of a crime to close one's eyes in such cases, as it is to preach such offenses to religion.¹⁶ Therefore, such a wound must be cut away, a wound by which not one member is hurt, but the entire body of the church is damaged.¹⁷ And with the aid of divine piety, We must take care that, with the dissensions removed, the Catholic faith be preserved inviolate, and that those whose faith has been proved may be fortified by our authority once those who defend perverse teachings have been recalled from error.¹⁸

After beseeching the light of the Holy Ghost both with our own incessant public and private prayers and also with those of the pious Christian faithful, and after considering everything fully and seasonably, We have resolved to condemn and reprove several propositions, doctrines, and opinions of the acts and decrees of the aforementioned

12 Book 4, *On Baptism Against the Donatists*, ch. 5, and Book 5, ch. 26.

13 Pope St. Celestine I, *Epistle 16*, no. 2 in Coustant.

14 Pope St. Celestine I, *Epistle 21, To the Bishops of France*.

15 St. Peter Chrysologus, *Epistle to Eutyches*.

16 Pope St. Celestine I, *Epistle 12*, no. 2.

17 Pope St. Celestine I, *Epistle 11, To Cyril*, no. 3.

18 Pope St. Leo the Great, *Epistle 23, To Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople*.

Synod, either those expressly taught or those conveyed through ambiguity, with their own appropriate notes and censures for each of them (as was said above), just as we condemn and reprove them in this our constitution, which will be valid in perpetuity. They are as follows:

[The introduction ends here, and the list of condemned propositions begins. This list can be found in Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 30th ed. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), nos. 1501-1599 (new numbering: nos. 2601-2700), or online at <http://denzinger.patristica.net> at nos. 1501-1599.]