



S S P X

Letter to Friends and Benefactors #82 - April 2014

Dear friends and benefactors,

If on April 27th John XXIII and John Paul II are canonized, the act will present a double problem to the Catholic conscience. Firstly, the problem of the canonization itself: how can it be possible to offer to the whole Church as an example of sanctity the instigator of Vatican Council II and the Pope of Assisi and human rights?

But there is also the deeper problem of what will appear to be an unprecedented recognition of catholicity: how is it possible to put the Church's stamp of approval and sanctity on the teachings of such a Council, which inspired all of Karol Wojtyla's action and whose rotten fruits are the indisputable indication of the Church's self-destruction? This second problem offers the solution: the errors contained in the documents of Vatican Council II and in the reforms that followed, especially in the liturgical reform, could not possibly be the work of the Holy Ghost, who is at once the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Holiness.

That is why it seems necessary to us to recall the principal errors and the fundamental reasons for which we cannot subscribe to the novelties of the Council and of the reforms that came of it, any more than to these canonizations that hope to "canonize" Vatican II.

For this reason, as we vigorously protest these canonizations, we wish to denounce the undertaking that has denatured the Church since Vatican Council II. Here are its principal elements.

I. The Council

"Whereas the Council was prepared itself to be a shining light in today's world (if those pre-conciliar documents in which we find a solemn profession of safe doctrine with regard to today's problems, had been accepted), we can and we must unfortunately state that, in a more or less general way, when the Council has introduced innovations, it has unsettled the certainty of truths taught by the authentic Magisterium of the Church as unquestionably belonging to the treasure of Tradition. [...] On all these fundamental points the traditional doctrine was clear and unanimously taught in Catholic universities. Now numerous texts of the Council on these truths will henceforward permit doubt to be cast upon them. [...] Thus driven to this by the facts, we are forced to conclude that the Council has encouraged, in an inconceivable manner, the spreading of Liberal errors.¹



II. An ecumenical conception of the Church

The expression “*subsistit in*” (*Lumen gentium*, 8) means that the Church of Christ has in the separate Christian communities a presence and an action that are distinct from the Church of Christ’s subsistence in the Catholic Church. Taken in this sense, the expression denies the strict necessity of identifying the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church, which had always been taught, especially by Pius XII, both in *Mystici corporis*² and *Humani generis*³. The Church of Christ is present and active as such, that is, as the unique ark of salvation, only where the Vicar of Christ is present. The Mystical Body of which he is the visible head is strictly identical to the Roman Catholic Church.

The same declaration (LG, 8) also recognizes the presence of “salvific elements” in non-Catholic Christian communities. The decree on ecumenism goes even further, adding that “the Spirit of Christ does not refrain from using these churches and communities as means of salvation, which derive their efficacy from the fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.” (UR, 3)

Such statements are irreconcilable with the dogma “No salvation outside of the Church,” which was reaffirmed by a Letter of the Holy Office on August 8, 1949. A separated community cannot cooperate with the action of God, since its separation is a resistance to the Holy Ghost. The truths and the sacraments that it may maintain can have good effects only in opposition to the erroneous principles on which these communities are founded and which separate them from the Mystical Body of the Catholic Church, whose visible head is the Vicar of Christ.

The declaration *Nostra aetate* says that non-Christian religions “often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men,” although such men must find in Christ “the fullness of religious life;” it also “regards with sincere respect those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and doctrines.” (NA, 2) Such a claim must be criticized just as the preceding one. When coupled with heresy or schism, the sacraments, the partial truths of the Faith, and Scripture are in a state of separation from the Mystical Body. That is why, even though using such means, the sect as such cannot be a mediator of grace or contribute towards salvation, for it is deprived of supernatural grace. The same must be said for the ways of thinking, living, and acting that are found in non-Christian religions.

These texts of the Council already favor the latitudinarian conception of the Church condemned by Pius XI in *Mortalium animos*, as well as the religious indifferentism that was also condemned by all the Popes from Pius IX to Pius XII.⁴ All the initiatives inspired by ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, the most visible example being the Assisi meeting in 1986, are only the practical application, “the visible illustration, the concrete lesson, a catechesis that can be understood by all” (John Paul II) of these conciliar teachings. But they also express the indifferentism denounced by Pius XI, when he reproved the hope

that it would one day be possible to lead the peoples without difficulty, in spite of their religious differences, to a brotherly agreement on the profession of certain doctrines considered as a common basis of the spiritual life. [...]

Joining in with the partisans and propagators of such doctrines means turning completely away from the divinely revealed religion.⁵

III. A collegial and democratic conception of the Church

1. After having shaken the Church’s unity of Faith, the texts of the Council also disturbed the Church’s unity of government and hierarchical structure. The expression “*subjectum quoque*” (LG, 22) means that the college of bishops united to the Pope as to their head is also, besides the Pope alone, the habitual and permanent subject of the supreme and universal power of jurisdiction in the Church. This is an open door to a decrease in the Sovereign Pontiff’s power, or even to its being challenged, at the risk of endangering the unity of the Church.

This idea of a permanent double subject holding primacy is in fact contrary to the Church’s teaching and practice, especially to the constitution *Pastor aeternus* of Vatican I (DS 3055) and Leo XIII’s encyclical *Satis cognitum*. Only the pope holds in a habitual and constant manner the supreme power, which he communicates only in special circumstances to councils, when so doing appears opportune to him.



2. The expression “common priesthood” proper to all baptized souls, distinct from the “ministerial priesthood,” (LG, 10) does not explain that only the latter can be taken in the true and proper sense of the word, while the former can be taken in a mystical and spiritual sense only.

This distinction was clearly stated by Pius XII in his speech on November 2, 1954. It is absent from the texts of the Council and opens the door to a democratic orientation of the Church, condemned by Pius VI in the bull *Auctorem fidei* (DS 2106 [Denzinger]). This tendency of having the people participate in the exercise of power is seen also in the multiplication of all sorts of organizations, in conformity with the new canon law (canon 129 §2). It loses sight of the distinction between the clergy and the laity, a distinction which is of divine right.

IV. False natural human rights

The declaration *Dignitatis humanae* makes the false claim that men have a natural right in religious matters. Until now the Tradition of the Church unanimously recognized that non-Catholics have the natural right not to be forced by the civil power to adhere (by intention in the internal forum and by practice in the external forum) to the one true religion. It also authorized, at least in some circumstances, a certain tolerance for the exercise of false religions in the public external forum. Vatican II recognized as the natural right of every man not to be prevented by the civil authorities from practicing a false religion in the external public forum. The Council claimed that this natural right of freedom from constraint by the civil authorities was also a civil right. The only laws limiting this right would pertain to the purely civil order of secular society. Thus the Council obliged civil governments no longer to discriminate for religious motives and to establish a juridical equality between the true and false religions.

This new social doctrine is opposed to the teachings of Gregory XVI in *Mirari vos* and of Pius IX in *Quanta cura*. It is based on a false conception of human dignity as something purely ontological, and not moral. Consequently, the constitution *Gaudium et spes* teaches the principle of the temporal domain’s autonomy (GS, 36), i.e., the denial of the social kingship of Christ that was taught by Pius XI in *Quas primas*, and it opens the door to temporal society’s independence from the commandments of God.

V. The Protestantization of the Mass

The new rite of the Mass, “represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session XXIII of the Council of Trent.”⁵ By its omissions and equivocations, the new rite of Paul VI attenuates the identification of the Mass with the sacrifice of the Cross to such an extent that the Mass seems much more a simple memorial than a sacrifice. This reformed rite also obscures the role of the priest, putting the accent on the action of the community of the faithful. It gravely diminishes the expression of the propitiatory end of the sacrifice of the Mass, which is expiation and reparation for sin.

These defects forbid us to consider this new rite as legitimate. On January 11th and 12th of 1979, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith asked Archbishop Lefebvre the following question:

“Do you maintain that a faithful Catholic can think and claim that a sacramental rite, particularly that of the Mass approved and promulgated by the Sovereign Pontiff, can be inconsistent with the Catholic Faith, or favens haeresim?”

He answered:

“This rite does not in itself profess the Catholic Faith as clearly as the old *Ordo missae*, and therefore it can favor heresy. But I do not know to whom it should be attributed or whether the Pope is responsible. What is unbelievable is that a Protestant-leaning, and therefore favens haeresim, *Ordo missae* can have been issued by the Roman Curia.”⁷

These grave defects forbid us from considering this new rite as legitimate, from celebrating it, and from advising anyone to assist at it or participate positively in it.



VI. The New Code, expression of the Conciliar novelties

According to the very words of John Paul II, the new Code of Canon Law of 1983 represents “a great effort to translate into canonical language”⁶ the teachings of Vatican Council II, including—and especially—the seriously faulty points we have already mentioned. “Among the elements which characterize the true and genuine image of the Church,” explained John Paul II:

“we should emphasize especially the following: the doctrine which considers the Church as the People of God, and hierarchical authority as a service; the doctrine which considers the Church as a communion and which, therefore, determines the relations which should exist between the particular churches and the universal Church, and between collegiality and the primacy; the doctrine which teaches that all the members of the People of God, each in his proper way, participate in the threefold office of Christ: the priestly, prophetic and royal offices. To this teaching is attached the one concerning the duties and rights of the faithful, and particularly of the laity; and finally, the Church’s commitment to ecumenism.”

This new code of law underscores a false ecumenism of the Church by allowing the reception of the sacraments of penance, holy eucharist, and extreme unction from non-Catholic ministers (canon 844), and by encouraging ecumenical hospitality in authorizing Catholic ministers to administer the sacrament of holy eucharist to non-Catholics. Canon 336 repeats and accentuates the idea of a double permanent subject of the primacy. Canons 204 §1, 208, 212 §3, 216 and 225 stress the equivocal notion of the common priesthood and the correlative idea of the People of God. Lastly, there is also a false definition of marriage in this new Code, in which the precise object of the matrimonial contract and the hierarchy of its ends no longer appear. Far from encouraging the Catholic family, these novelties open a breach in matrimonial morality.

VII. A new conception of the Magisterium

1. The constitution *Dei Verbum* states imprecisely that,

“With the passing of time, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth, until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her. (DV, 8)”

This lack of precision opens the door to the error of a living and evolving Tradition, which was condemned by St. Pius X in the encyclical *Pascendi* and the *Anti-modernist Oath*. For the Church can “move toward the fullness of divine truth” only in that it gives a more precise expression of the truth, not in the sense that the dogmas proposed by the Church could receive “a different meaning from that which the Church meant and still means.” (*Dei Filius*, DS 3043)

2. Benedict XVI’s speech on December 22, 2005 attempted to justify this evolutionary conception of a living Tradition and thus to clear the Council of responsibility for any rupture with the Tradition of the Church. Vatican II wished “to redefine the relationship between the faith of the Church and certain essential elements of modern thought.” And in order to do so, its teachings

“...reviewed or even corrected certain historical decisions. But in this apparent discontinuity the Council actually preserved and deepened the inmost nature and true identity [of the Church],”

which is that

“of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us; it is a subject that increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.”

This explanation supposes that the unity of the Church’s Faith reposes not upon an object (for there is a discontinuity, at least on the points we have underlined, between Vatican II and Tradition), but upon a subject, in the sense that the act of faith is defined much more by the believers than by the truths believed. This act becomes principally the expression of a collective conscience, and no longer a firm adherence of the intelligence to the truths revealed by God.

Yet Pius XII taught in *Humani generis* that the Magisterium is the “immediate and universal rule of truth in matters of faith and morals,” the objective truth of the deposit of the Faith, whose sources are Holy Scripture and



Tradition. And the constitution *Dei Filius* of Vatican Council I also taught that this deposit is not “a philosophical invention that can be completed by human ingenuity,” but that it was “confided to the Spouse of Christ that she might guard it holily and declare it infallibly.” (DS 3020)

3. Pope John XXIII’s opening speech (October 11, 1962) and his allocution to the Sacred College on December 23, 1962, obviously attribute to Vatican Council II a very particular, so-called “pastoral” intention, by which the Magisterium is supposed to “express the Faith of the Church according to the modalities of investigation and literary formulation of modern thought.” Paul VI’s encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* (August 6, 1964) repeats this idea, saying that the Magisterium of Vatican II aims

“to inject the Christian message into the stream of modern thought, and into the language, culture, customs, and sensibilities of man as he lives in the spiritual turmoil of this modern world (#68);”

in particular, in announcing the truth, there will be no

“thoughts of external coercion. Instead we will use the legitimate means of human friendliness, interior persuasion, and ordinary conversation. We will offer the gift of salvation while respecting the personal and civic rights of the individual. (#75)”

The pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* maintained that

“the Council, first of all, wishes to assess in this light those values which are most highly prized today and to relate them to their divine source. Insofar as they stem from endowments conferred by God on man, these values are exceedingly good. Yet they are often wrenched from their rightful function by the taint in man’s heart, and hence stand in need of purification. (GS, 11)”

From these values of the world came the three great novelties introduced by Vatican II: religious liberty, collegiality, and ecumenism.

4. So on the authority of this immediate and universal rule of the revealed truth that is the constant Magisterium, we contest the new doctrines that are contrary to it. That is exactly the criterion given by St. Vincent of Lerins:

“The criterion of truth and, moreover, of the infallibility of the Pope and of the Church, is its conformity to Tradition and to the deposit of the Faith. Quod ubique, quod semper—That which is taught everywhere and always, in space and in time.”⁹

But Vatican II’s doctrine on ecumenism, collegiality and religious liberty is a new doctrine, contrary to Tradition and to the public law of the Church, which is itself based on divinely revealed principles, which are thus immutable. We conclude from this that the Council, having wished to propose these novelties, is deprived of a constraining magisterial authority, to the very extent that it proposes them. Its authority is already doubtful because of the new so-called “pastoral” intention mentioned in the preceding paragraph. It seems moreover certainly null and void in the matter of the various points on which it contradicts Tradition (see above, I to VII, 1).

Faithful to the constant teaching of the Church, along with our venerated founder Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and following his example, we have never ceased to denounce the Council and its major texts as one of the principal causes of the crisis shaking the Church from top to bottom, penetrating into her “very entrails” and her “veins,” to use the forceful language of St. Pius X.

The more we study the matter, the more we realize just how accurate was the analysis Archbishop Lefebvre presented with an extraordinary clarity in the Aula on September 9, 1965. Allow us to use his own words concerning the conciliar constitution on “The Church in Today’s World” (*Gaudium et spes*):

“This pastoral Constitution is not pastoral, nor does it emanate from the Catholic Church. It does not feed Christian men with the Apostolic truth of the Gospels and, moreover, the Church has never spoken in this manner. We cannot listen to this voice, because it is not the voice of the Bride of Christ. This voice is not that of the Spirit of Christ. The voice of Christ, our Shepherd, we know. This voice we do not know. The clothing is that of the sheep. The voice is not the voice of the Shepherd, but perhaps that of the wolf.”¹⁰



The fifty years that have gone by since speech have only confirmed his analysis.

Already on December 7, 1968, only three years after the closing of the Council, Paul VI had to admit that: “The Church is in a time of anxiety, of self-criticism; one might even say of self-destruction.” And on June 29, 1972, he recognized that “By some crack the smoke of Satan has entered into the temple of God; it is doubt, incertitude, problems, anxiety, confrontation.” He realized it, but did nothing. He continued the conciliar reform whose promoters had not hesitated to compare it to the French Revolution of 1789, or the Russian Revolution of 1917.

We cannot remain passive; we cannot be accomplices to this self-destruction. That is why we invite you, dear friends and benefactors, to remain firm in the Faith, not to let yourselves be troubled by these novelties of one of the most terrible crises that the Holy Church must undergo.

May the Passion of Our Lord and His Resurrection comfort us in our fidelity, in our unshakeable love for God, for Our Lord, true God and true Man, for His Holy Church, divine and human, in an unfailing hope... in Te speravi non confundar in aeternum. May the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary deign to protect us all, and may her triumph soon come!

Winona, Palm Sunday, April 13, 2014
+Bernard Fellay

Footnotes

¹ Archbishop Lefebvre, Reply to Cardinal Ottaviani on December 20, 1966, in *I Accuse the Council*, Angelus Press, Kansas City, 1982, p. 82-83.

² Pius XII, encyclical *Mystici corporis*, June 29, 1943, *Enseignements pontificaux*, L'Eglise, Solesmes-Desclée, 1960, vol. 2, #1014. [Editor's translation.]

³ Pius XII, encyclical *Humani generis*, August 12, 1950, *Enseignements pontificaux*, L'Eglise, Solesmes-Desclée, 1960, vol. 2, #1282. [Editor's translation.]

⁴ On indifferentism and latitudinarianism, see the following propositions (nos. 15–18) condemned in chapter 3 of the Syllabus: Every man is free to embrace and profess the religion that he esteems true in the light of reason. Men can find the path to eternal salvation and obtain this eternal salvation in the practice of any religion. We must at least be confident of the eternal salvation of all those who do not live within the true Church of Christ. Protestantism is none other than a different form of the same true Christian religion, a form in which one can be just as pleasing to God as in the Catholic Church.

⁵ Pius XI, encyclical *Mortalium animos*, January 6, 1928, *Enseignements pontificaux*, L'Eglise, vol. 1, #855. [Editor's translation.]

⁶ Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci, Letter to His Holiness Pope Paul VI in *A Brief Critical Study of the Novus Ordo Missae*, September 25, 1969.

⁷ “Archbishop Lefebvre and the Holy Office”, *Itinéraires* #233, May 1979, p. 146-147.

⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Sacrae disciplinae leges*, January 25, 1983, *La Documentation Catholique*, #1847, p. 245-246. [Editor's translation.]

⁹ Archbishop Lefebvre, Conclusion in *I Accuse the Council*, Angelus Press, Kansas City, 1982, p. 85.

¹⁰ Archbishop Lefebvre, *I Accuse the Council*, Angelus Press, Kansas City, 1982, p. 68.