Resistance And Indefectibility

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At the root of all disputes: Where is the Church?

MOST GREATLY DEPLORED among those who have resisted the changes of Vatican II is that they themselves cannot get along with one another. For although they agree on the fundamental necessity of resisting the reform of Vatican II, they nevertheless manage to tear one another apart over other issues. In fact, "traditionalists" spend most of their energies in combating one another, and not the modernists. This state of affairs certainly must be a delight to the devil, since this infighting immeasurably weakens the resistance to modernism.

At the root of nearly all of the disputes is the question of the Church. *Where is the Church?* Is the Catholic Faith to be identified with the Novus Ordo religion? This question is thorny, since, if you answer affirmatively, i.e., that the Novus Ordo religion is the Catholic Faith, then resistance to it becomes schismatic and possibly heretical. On the other hand, if the answer be negative, then there arises the problem of the Catholic Church without a visible hierarchy.

Thus the great dividing line between the diverse camps of "traditionalists" is the issue of the Church. And because the pope is the visible head of the Church, this controversy expresses itself naturally in the terms of John Paul II's "papacy". The reason why so many "traditionalists" see him as pope, indeed insist that he is the pope, is not because they are enamored with his theology. Rather it is because they see as a theological necessity the identification of the Novus Ordo religion and the Roman Catholic Church. They see this as a necessity because of the indefectibility of the Church, i.e., that it must endure until the end of time with a visible hierarchy. From this they conclude that, heretic or not, John Paul II and the college of Novus Ordo bishops are the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, since they have been duly elected and nominated, and have succeeded to the sees of their Catholic predecessors. Deny this, they say, and you deny the Church. Repudiate this hierarchy, they say, and you are schismatic, since you are cutting yourself off from the Catholic hierarchy.

In the other camp, however, indefectibility dictates the very opposite conclusion. Vatican II is heretical. John Paul II is heretical. The bishops are heretical. The new sacraments are non–catholic, and in most cases are either dubiously valid or downright invalid. In the name of indefectibility, therefore, these "traditionalists" declare that it is a theological necessity that the Novus Ordo religion not be the Catholic Faith, and consequently the Novus Ordo hierarchy not be the Catholic hierarchy.

This bitter disagreement, which ironically arises out of the same principle of indefectibility, is the result of the fact that those popes and bishops who have succeeded, by the normal

means of succession, to the places of the pre–conciliar Catholic popes and bishops, have produced, through Vatican II and its subsequent reforms, a religion which is not identifiable with the Catholic Faith of two thousand years. Hence the question is: where does indefectibility lie? Does it lie with the Faith? Or does it lie with the visible succession of popes and bishops from the time of the Apostles?

The answer is that the indefectibility of the Catholic Church lies with *both*, and to deny one or the other would be a "grievous and pernicious error", to use the words of Pope Leo XIII.

> If we consider the chief end of His Church and the proximate efficient causes of salvation, it is undoubtedly *spiritual*; but in regard to those who constitute it, and to the things which lead to these spiritual gifts, it is *external* and necessarily visible.
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> For this reason the Church is so often called in the Holy Writ a *body*, and even the *body of Christ* — "Now you are the body of Christ" (I Cor 12:27) — and precisely because it is a body is the Church visible: and because it is the body of Christ is it living and energizing, because by the infusion of His power Christ guards and sustains it, just as the vine gives nourishment and renders fruitful the branches united to it. And as in animals the vital principle is unseen and invisible, and is evidenced and manifested by the movements and action of the members, so the principle of supernatural life in the Church is clearly shown in that which is done by it.
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> From this it follows that those who arbitrarily conjure up and picture to themselves a hidden and invisible Church are in grievous and pernicious error: as are also those who regard the Church as a human institution which claims a certain obedience in discipline and external duties, but which is without the perennial communication of the gift of divine grace, and without all that which testifies by constant and undoubted signs to the existence of that life which is drawn from God. It is assuredly as impossible that the Church of Jesus Christ could be the one or the other as that a man should be a body alone or a soul alone. The connection and union of both elements is as absolutely necessary to the true Church as the intimate union of soul and body is to human nature. (Pope Leo XIII, encyclical *Satis Cognitum*, June 29, 1896)

I. The Indefectibility of the Church

The fundamental notion of indefectibility is that the Church must endure until the end of time with the essential nature and qualities with which Christ endowed it at its foundation. In other words, it is impossible that the Catholic Church undergo a substantial change. It may, indeed it must, undergo many accidental changes, especially in its laws, in order to prudently react to differing circumstances in diverse ages, but these accidental changes must never touch the substance of Christ's foundation. This indefectibility is a certain sign of the Church's supernatural origin and character, for no human organization could traverse two thousand years and remain essentially the same. Its indefectibility is ever more a sign of its divine origin and assistance when one considers how many times and with what force the enemies of the Church have tried to make her change essentially.

What is this essential nature? What are these essential qualities?

The primary indefectibility of the Catholic Church is in doctrine. Faith objectively considered, i.e., the deposit of sacred re-

vealed doctrine, is the foundation of the entire structure of the Catholic Church. Similarly faith subjectively considered, i.e., the virtue of faith, is the basis of the entire supernatural life of the soul. Hence the most important way in which the Catholic Church cannot defect is in teaching true doctrine. Since God is changeless, the doctrine of the Church is therefore forever changeless, and it is a testimony of Christ's assistance to the Church that her teaching has remained the same and consistent throughout the two thousand years of her existence. A single contradiction or inconsistency in her ordinary or extraordinary magisterium would be sufficient to prove that the assistance of God was not with her.

But her indefectibility is not limited to doctrine, but rather extends to all those things which have been endowed to her by the Divine Founder. We know that Christ endowed the Church with both structure and power. He established the Church as a monarchy, placing all power in the hands of Saint Peter. He also instituted bishops who, in union with and subject to Saint Peter, would rule the Church in diverse localities. To this structure He endowed the power to teach, to rule, and to sanctify the entire human race. This power derives from the apostolic mission, i.e., the act of being sent by Christ for the purpose of saving souls. Therefore this structure and this mission to the souls of mankind must endure throughout all ages unchanged. In addition, the Church is endowed with the power of orders, by which human beings are made into supernatural instruments of divine power to effect the supernatural sanctification of men through the sacraments, in particular the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Therefore the Church would defect if:

(a) it ever changed its doctrine;

(b) it ever altered or abandoned a monarchical and hierarchical structure;

(c) it ever lost, substantially changed, or abandoned the apostolic mission of teaching, ruling and sanctifying souls;

(d) it ever lost, substantially changed, or abandoned the power of orders.

The teaching of indefectibility is confirmed by ecclesiastical documents. The first is the Bull *Auctorem Fidei* of Pope Pius VI (August 28, 1794), which condemns as heretical the following proposition of the Council of Pistoia:

> The proposition which asserts "that in these latter times there has been spread a general obscuring of the more important truths pertaining to religion, which are the basis of faith and of the moral teachings of Jesus Christ." (Denz. 1501.)

The second is of Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical *Satis Cognitum*. Having first explained in what the Church is spiritual and in what she is visible, and emphasizing the fact that these two things are absolutely necessary for the true Church, analogous to the necessity of union of body and soul for the human being, he then says:

> Since the Church is such by divine will and institution, she must remain such without any interruption until the end of time.

Furthermore the Vatican Council of 1870 states:

> The eternal Pastor and Bishop of souls decreed to establish a holy Church to *perpetuate* the saving work of salvation. (Denz. 1821.)

There are, furthermore, many texts of the Fathers which support indefectibility, and it is the universal teaching of theologians.

II. The Problem: The State of the Church

How does one reconcile the present state of the Catholic Church with indefectibility? This problem, with its diverse answers, is at the root of most of the controversy among those who have remained faithful to tradition. The problem poses itself more bluntly this way: *Where is the Church?* For no one can err in following the Catholic Church, at least in her essential roles of teaching doctrine, of leading souls to heaven through her general laws, and of sanctifying souls by means of valid sacraments. In order to save one's soul, therefore, it simply suffices to know where the Church is. One can and must, in all good conscience, follow the teaching and prescriptions of the Church in order to save one's soul, and to set oneself up against these is to be heretical, schismatic, or at least gravely disobedient. In any case one could not save his soul.

This particular question is highly problematic for the fact that no matter how you answer concerning the Novus Ordo religion, i.e., yes or no that it is the Catholic Faith, you end up in some deep problems with regard to indefectibility. If you answer that the Novus Ordo is Catholic, then you are in the immense problem of the defection of teaching, the defection of the general legislation of the Church, and the defection of sacraments. It also reduces to absurdity — not to mention the sin of disobedience and schism — the systematic resistance to the Novus Ordo which has been maintained by "traditionalists". If, on the other hand, you answer that the Novus Ordo is not Catholic, then you have the problem of finding the visible Church, since it would seem that the entire Catholic hierarchy has defected into this new non-Catholic sect. Thus the "yes" answer leads to the defection of the essential spiritual qualities of the Church, whereas the "no" answer seems to lead to the defection of the essential material qualities of the Church. Put in another way, the "yes" answer seems lead to the defection of the *mission* of the Church, whereas the "no" answer seems to lead to a defection of the *structure* of the Church. Yet we know from Pope Leo XIII that both are absolutely necessary for the Church, like body and soul for the human nature, and that both must endure until the end of time in order that the Church live up to its indefectibility.

One then easily sees the causes of the bitter controversy, since each side perceives itself to be a veritable savior of the Church, the one side, those who say *yes* to the catholicity of the Novus Ordo, see themselves as maintaining the visible structure of the Church against those who would abandon it, whereas the other side, the *no's*, see themselves as maintaining the spiritual and doctrinal purity of the Church against those who would sully her by association with the Novus Ordo. And because it is a battle for the Church itself here, the "traditionalists" fight much more bitterly against one another than against the Novus Ordo.

III. The Three Solutions

There are essentially three solutions proposed to deal with this question: (a) the *Ecclesia Dei* solution, (b) the *Lefebvrist* solution, and (c) the *sedevacantist* solution. One would think that be-

cause there are only two principles at stake here, i.e., the material integrity of the Church one the one hand, and the spiritual on the other, that there would be only two solutions. But as we shall see later, the Lefebvrist solution is a hybrid of both, combining into a salad virtually all the elements of the other two systems. Let us examine each of these systems in detail.

A. The Ecclesia Dei Solution

On May 5, 1988, Archbishop Lefebvre signed the much talked about *Protocol,* in which he entered into a preliminary agreement with the Novus Ordo hierarchy. This agreement called for the recognition of the Society of Saint Pius X as an institute of pontifical right in exchange for certain reassurances from the Society, among them that they accepted Vatican II, the New Code of Canon Law, the validity of all the new sacramental rites, and the legitimacy of John Paul II. This agreement was subsequently (the next day) broken by Archbishop Lefebvre for the reasons that he did not like the appointees to the "tradition commission", and because he did not like the date of consecration set by John Paul II. Archbishop Lefebvre thus consecrated four bishops without the mandate from John Paul II, and was immediately excommunicated in a document issued by John Paul II entitled, of all things, *Ecclesia Dei.* In the wake of this, a significant number of priests and seminarians of the Lefebvrist group split off and accepted the Vatican's terms originally contained in the Protocol. The Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter was thus established, and the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission was set up to oversee it, whence derives the name for this solution.

Those who adhere to this solution accept the Novus Ordo hierarchy as the Catholic hierarchy, and accept Vatican II and all of the *official* reforms made in consequence of Vatican II. They have been granted the right by the modernists to retain the John XXIII Mass, and to operate a seminary and institute according to more or less pre-Vatican II lines. Their solution, then, is *to adhere to tradition under the auspices of and in obedience to the Novus Ordo hierarchy.* Their adherence to tradition, therefore, is not seen as a defense of the Faith against modernists, but rather as a preference, something like the High Church in the Anglican communion. It should be of no surprise, then, that they invite well-known Novus Ordo potentates (like suit-and-tie-at-Vatican II Ratzinger) to say Mass for them.

B. The Lefebvrist Solution

The Lefebvrist solution, simply stated, is this: *to recognize the authority of John Paul II, but not to follow him in his errors.* Although it is very difficult to pin down the Lefebvrists to a permanent and somewhat coherent statement of position, their activity and statements taken collectively produce the above description. Archbishop Lefebvre was insistent that all within the Society of Saint Pius X regard John Paul II as pope, and purged from the Society everyone who publicly held that he was not. He always dealt with the Roman modernists as if they had authority, seeking from them approval for his Fraternity. He saw as the solution for the modernist crisis a popular traditional movement which would, in every diocese of the world, clamor for traditional priests, and reject modernist ones. He surmised that the sedevacantist solution would wreck such a popular movement,

since he thought that saying John Paul II was not the pope was too much for the average person to bear.

To the obvious obedience problem which his position posed, Archbishop Lefebvre replied that no authority, including that of the pope, has the right to tell us to do something wrong. But the Novus Ordo is wrong. Therefore the pope cannot oblige us to accept the Novus Ordo. This reasoning led to the need to *sift* the Novus Ordo for Catholicism. Like the man panning for the grains of gold hidden in the mud, so the Catholic had to sift Paul VI's and John Paul II's magisterium and decrees for grains of the true faith. Whatever turned up traditional would be accepted, whatever modernist, rejected. And since Archbishop Lefebvre was the most prominent of those adhering to tradition, his word became the *proximate norm of belief and obedience for hundreds of priests and tens of thousands of Catholics.* Thus John Paul II's supposed authority was not sufficient to move the minds and wills of Catholics faithful to tradition, but had to be augmented by Archbishop Lefebvre's approval. This role of sifter which the Fraternity acquired was jealously guarded, and anyone who dared to ignore it was considered a subversive and ultimately expelled.

To the steaming hot question of whether the Novus Ordo is Catholic, Archbishop Lefebvre and his followers have given answers that please both sides. It is very difficult to tell *what* they think about it. During the "hot summer" of 1976, Archbishop Lefebvre referred to the New Mass as a "bastard mass" and to Vatican II as a schismatic council, and the Conciliar Church as a schismatic church. On the other hand, they have been very careful to say that the New Mass is not *intrinsically* evil, and that all of the new sacraments are certainly valid. This line of reasoning indicates that they see a *necessity* that the Novus Ordo be considered intrinsically good and valid, since they understand that *it is impossible that the Catholic Church produce evil or invalid rites.* This insistence that the new rites be good and valid shows that they really do see the Novus Ordo religion as the Catholic Faith. Despite this, they make statements which are completely incompatible with the position that the Novus Ordo religion is the Catholic Faith. For example, on the occasion of the consecrations of 1988, they issued the following statement, signed by Fr. Schmidberger and many superiors of their group: *"We have never wished to belong to this system which calls itself the Conciliar Church, and identifies itself with the* Novus Ordo Missae*...The faithful indeed have a strict right to know that the priests who serve them are not in communion with a counterfeit church..."* But is not John Paul II the head of this counterfeit "church" which identifies itself with the *Novus Ordo Missae?* Are we to conclude that they are not in communion with John Paul II? If not, then why do they insist that he is the pope? How can you *not* be in communion with the pope?

They feel that they save indefectibility by recognizing the Novus Ordo hierarchy as the Catholic hierarchy, and by recognizing Vatican II and its reforms as only extrinsically bad, i.e., subject to poor interpretation or in some way misleading. One of them recently said in a letter to benefactors: *"That is why we insist on recognizing the Papacy and the hierarchy despite the fact that we do not at all feel ourselves one with them".* This sentence is most descriptive of their position, which combines two things which are intrinsically incompatible, i.e., to recognize John Paul II as pope,

but not to be one with him in the same church. The reader must understand that the doings and sayings of the Lefebvrists over the years have not, to say the least, followed a consistent line, and that it is, therefore, difficult to determine exactly what they think. By applying a certain hermeneutic, however, I think that it is fair to say that *they regard John Paul II to be at the head of two churches, the one the Catholic Church, the other the Conciliar Church*. As head of the Catholic Church, they are loyal to him; as head of the Conciliar Church they oppose him. It was ultimately Archbishop Lefebvre who decided what was Catholic in John Paul II's decrees, and what was conciliar, and therefore what was to be accepted, and what was to be rejected. Now that he has passed away, there does not seem to be any clear figure emerging who will be able to harness the loyalties of their followers the way the Archbishop did, a loyalty which is *essential* to their unity.

C. The Sedevacantist Solution

The fundamental principle of this solution is that *it is impossible to identify the Novus Ordo with the Catholic Church*. It is impossible, they say, because of the indefectibility of the Church in matters of faith, morals, worship and discipline. If one admits that the Novus Ordo changes in these matters proceed from the Catholic Church, then one must admit that the Catholic Church has defected. For these changes substantially contradict the faith, morals, worship and discipline of the Catholic Church. But it is impossible that the Catholic Church defect. Therefore it is impossible that these changes proceed from the Catholic Church. Therefore it is impossible that those who have enacted these changes (viz. Paul VI, John Paul I, & John Paul II) enjoy the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church, the *mission from Christ to rule the faithful*. If they did enjoy this jurisdiction, they would have enjoyed infallibility in these matters, as it is impossible for this authority to teach something false or to prescribe something sinful for the Church. The sedevacantist therefore insists that one cannot regard the modernist hierarchy as the Catholic hierarchy, since otherwise one would be associating heresy, sacrilege, invalid sacraments, error, and sinful laws with the Immaculate Spouse of Christ, making absurd the words of Christ, "he who hears you, hears Me" (Lk 10:16). In a word, the sedevacantist position is that *the modernist hierarchy cannot possess the Catholic authority which they claim to possess, because the Catholic authority is preserved by the assistance of the Holy Ghost from doing what these modernists have done.*

The obvious objection to this position is that the mass defection of the hierarchy creates a state of universal vacancy of the sees, and thus destroys the visibility of the Church. The sedevacantist replies that the vacancy of the papal or episcopal see is not incompatible with the visibility of the Church, as the Church remains visible during the vacancies which have occurred at the death of every incumbent. While the *length* of the vacancy certainly puts the Church in turmoil, there is nothing *intrinsically* contrary to the nature of the Church in the vacancy of the see. He would further respond that to identify the modernists with the Catholic hierarchy does nothing for the visibility of the Catholic Church, but rather simply maintains the visibility of a heretical church. In other words, indefectibility is not saved by a theory which identifies the modernist hierarchy with the Catholic

Church, but rather is *destroyed* by such a theory. For the Faith, they would argue, is much more important than the visibility of the structure of the Church, i.e., there is a dependence of the visibility of the Church on the Faith of the Church, and therefore it is not sufficient for the Church's visibility that merely *any* structure be visible, but rather *a structure which professes the Catholic Faith.* To have some visible organization which does not profess the Catholic Faith may be a visible organization, but it is not the Catholic Church.

Quite a few of the sedevacantists hold to the *materialiter/-formaliter* theory — a widely misunderstood theory — which simply states that although the modernist hierarchy does not enjoy jurisdiction, the formal aspect of authority, they do, nevertheless, carry on the material succession of the Roman and episcopal sees. The holders of this theory would therefore say that although John Paul II is *not* the pope, he is nonetheless in possession of a valid election which puts him in a position to *become* the pope, should he remove the obstacles to his reception of the authority. The obstacle to the acceptance of papal authority is his adherence to Vatican II, which, if accepted, would place an *essential disorder* in the Catholic Church, inasmuch as Vatican II contradicts the teaching of the Church. He is also, they would add, in a position to have the election removed from him by some authoritative act, for example, by a conclave of Catholic cardinals, or even, *à la rigueur*, a council of a few jurisdictional bishops, however small it may be. Such an act is obviously unlikely in the foreseeable future, but so was Vatican II unlikely. This theory, they say, saves both the indefectibility of the Church in matters of faith, morals, worship and discipline, and the permanence of the hierarchy of the Church inasmuch as it calls for its *material* continuity through the crisis.

The other kind of sedevacantist is the absolute sedevacantist, who says that due to the public profession of heresy, manifested both by word and by deed, John Paul II and the Novus Ordo hierarchy in general have publicly defected from the Catholic Faith, and have therefore tacitly resigned from their offices, in accordance with at least the spirit of Canon 188, no. 4. Others invoke Pope Paul IV's *Cum ex Apostolatu*s, which states that even if a heretic should be elected to the papacy by the unanimous consent of the Cardinals, and even if he should have in appearance acceded to the papacy he would still *not* be the pope.

IV. Critique of the Various Systems

A. Fundamental Principles.

1. The Novus Ordo is either Catholic or it is non-Catholic, but it cannot be both.

The Catholic Faith does not admit of degrees. It is by nature *integral*, since it proceeds from the authority of God and is believed on the authority of God. It therefore cannot admit of exceptions. If there is the slightest taint of heresy in a doctrinal or moral teaching, in worship, or in discipline, then it is *not* Catholic.

> The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church, whoever would recede in the least degree from any

> point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative Magisterium. (Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum).*

To somehow predicate both Catholic and non-Catholic of the Novus Ordo would be an absurd contradiction, not to mention blasphemy. And it should be understood here that by the term "Novus Ordo", I mean that system — for it is an *ordo,* an order — of doctrines, moral teachings, worship and discipline which is the product of Vatican II and the post-Vatican II reforms.

2. If the Novus Ordo is Catholic, it must be accepted; but if it is not Catholic, it must be rejected; there is no middle ground.

The Novus Ordo has been promulgated with the full authority of what is *apparently* the Catholic Church. No Catholic could therefore assume to disregard these teachings, worship, and discipline. There is, furthermore, *no reason* to resist the changes of Vatican II if they are Catholic. If its teachings, worship, and discipline are Catholic, then the belief and observance of these things are causative of the salvation of our souls. *But if you can save your soul in the Novus Ordo, why go to the bother of retaining the traditional?* The adherence to tradition in this case would be motivated by nostalgia or preference, and would in no way be justified if it were against the will of the hierarchy. On the other hand, if the Novus Ordo is a substantial change of the Church's doctrines, worship, and discipline, it is obvious that the Catholic must fight it as he would have fought Arianism or Protestantism, preferring death to compromise.

3. It is impossible to recognize the authority of the pope without at the same time recognizing the prerogatives of his authority.

Papal authority is infallible in teaching faith and morals, *even in the exercise of the ordinary universal magisterium*, and is infallible in matters of worship and discipline, inasmuch as it cannot prescribe anything sinful, heretical, or harmful to souls in these matters. The recognition of papal authority in Paul VI or John Paul II involves automatically the recognition that Vatican II is free from doctrinal error, and that the Novus Ordo liturgy and sacraments, as well as the 1983 Code of Canon Law contain no doctrinal error nor anything which is sinful or harmful to souls. The worst that could be said about these things, if they are admitted to have proceeded from true papal authority, is that they may be imprudent, perhaps less aesthetic, or in some way *extrinsically* repugnant. They must be admitted to be *intrinsically* Catholic, perfect, and conducive to eternal salvation. Pope Pius VI declared "false, rash, scandalous, pernicious, offensive to pious ears, injurious to the Church and to the Spirit of God, by Whom it is ruled, at least erroneous," the proposition that the Church could prescribe some discipline which would be false or harmful (Denz. 1578). Pope Pius IX excoriated those who would recognize his authority on the one hand, but ignore his discipline on the other:

> What good is it to proclaim aloud the dogma of the supremacy of St. Peter and his successors? What good is it to repeat over and over the declarations of faith in the Catholic Church and of obedience to the Apostolic See when actions give the lie to these fine words? Moreover, is not rebellion rendered all the more inexcusable by the fact that obedience is regarded as a duty?

> Again, does not the authority of the Holy See extend, as a sanction, to the measures which We have been obliged to take, or is it enough to be in communion of faith with this See without adding the submission of obedience, — a thing which cannot be maintained without damaging the Catholic Faith? In fact, Venerable Brothers and beloved Sons, it is a question of recognizing the power (of this See), even over your churches, not merely in what pertains to faith, but also in what concerns discipline. He who would deny this is a heretic; he who recognizes this and obstinately refuses to obey is worthy of anathema. (Pope Pius IX, *Quae in Patriarchatu,* Sept. 1, 1876, to the clergy and faithful of the Chaldean rite)

These principles now stated, let us proceed to the critique of the various systems.

B. Application of Principles to the Systems

1. The Ecclesia Dei Solution. From the forgoing principles, the reader will easily determine that this is not a solution at all. Since they have accepted the Novus Ordo as Catholic, they have reduced their adherence to tradition to a "nostalgia trip". They have become a High Church within an extremely Broad Church, one that even admits of the worship of snakes, of Shiva, of the Great Thumb and Buddha, the praise of heresiarchs such as Martin Luther, not to mention topless female lectors. Indeed the name which ought to be given to this idea is the *Ecclesia Diaboli* solution. But one thing must be said in favor of those who follow this, and that is that they are at least *consistent* and *logical* in their thinking, inasmuch as they see that one cannot accept John Paul II as pope and at the same time ignore his doctrine and disciplinary authority. But it is absolutely deplorable that these people could permit themselves to be so blind so as to be in communion, i.e., in the same church, as the likes of these modernists, whom Saint Pius X said "ought to be beaten with fists".

2. The Lefebvrist Solution. If we accept as basically accurate the description given above of their position, namely that they see John Paul II as the head of two churches, the one Catholic, the other Conciliar, then it is immediately evident that their position involves labyrinthic contradictions from the point of view of Catholic ecclesiology. In the first place, they somehow see the Novus Ordo as both Catholic and non-Catholic, and for this reason they "sift" its teachings and disciplines in order to glean from the rotten mass whatever happens to be Catholic in it. They therefore associate the Novus Ordo with the Catholic Church. They consider the Novus Ordo hierarchy to be the Catholic hierarchy, as having the authority of Christ to teach, rule, and sanctify the faithful. Yet at the same time they are excommunicated by this very authority, since they *act* as though it does not exist, going so far as to consecrate bishops *in defiance of* a direct "papal" order.

To illustrate this confusion, let me cite an issue (August 1991) of *The Angelus*, which is their official organ, in which we read these alarming words:

> *The Church abandoned* the protective tradition of Christ. *The Church abandoned* the Mass, the Sacraments, the teaching of sound doctrine in schools, even the prayer to St. Michael to protect us from "the wickedness and the snares of the devil." [Emphasis added]

While the author may have merely expressed his thoughts improperly, nevertheless, as it stands, this sentence explicitly declares the defection of the Catholic Church.

In the same issue, we read these words with equal alarm on the editorial page:

> That the Holy Father refuses them [the bishops consecrated by Abp. Lefebvre] jurisdiction and consequently the authority to govern a portion of the flock is certainly unfortunate. But it is hardly more than accidental with respect to their more fundamental role in preserving the Faith and the Sacraments in the Church, especially when the false notion of collegiality has effectively paralyzed or destroyed the exercise of authority and hierarchy in the Church.

Such a statement reduces the apostolic mission of the Church, confided to Saint Peter, to something "hardly more than accidental". But it is this very authority, and the legitimate possession and transmission thereof, *which makes the Catholic Church Catholic.* It is the *form* of the Catholic Church, i.e., that by which it is what it is. Nothing could be more substantial to the Catholic Church than this authority. It should be furthermore pointed out that to exercise one's power of orders without the approval of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church is a *very grave mortal sin,* and smacks of schism when done in a systematic and permanent fashion. One may only lay claim to the principle of *Ecclesia supplet* when there is doubt as to whether one has jurisdiction; to use this principle against the very authority which possesses this jurisdiction makes a shambles of the whole Catholic Church. It is to sink into Protestantism, where each minister gets his power "directly from God". Why have a hierarchy, why have jurisdiction, if everyone can decide that he has a right to exercise his orders on his own assumption that the Church supplies it directly to him? In such a case, the hierarchy would be purely accidental, effectively what Protestant ministers are to Protestant belief, worship, and sacraments.

The Lefebvrist position is a *completely inconsistent* position, and it makes mincemeat of the indefectibility of the Catholic Church, since it identifies with the Catholic Church the doctrinal and disciplinary defection of Vatican II and its subsequent reforms. For if these are not a defection, *then why are they resisting them?* If these are not a defection, then what would possibly justify the consecration of four bishops in defiance of the order of that person whom they say is the representative of Christ on earth? The only thing which justifies the position of the "traditionalists" in their systematic refusal of Vatican II and its reforms is the fact that these reforms are not Catholic, and lead to the destruction of souls. But if they are not Catholic, then those who have promulgated them cannot possibly be bearers of Catholic authority, since, if they were, they would have been incapable of promulgating such things for the Catholic Church. Hence the Lefebvre group is in the impossible position of resisting the authority of the Catholic Church in matters of doctrine, discipline, and worship, which are the effects of the three essential functions of the Catholic hierarchy, i.e., the function of teaching, ruling and sanctifying, and which are the basis of the threefold unity of the Catholic Church, the unity of faith, the unity of government, and the unity of worship. To resist the Catholic Church in these matters is a *spiritual suicide*, since adherence to the Catholic Church is necessary for salvation. If it is permissible to resist

the Church in doctrine, discipline and worship, then in what is the Church to be obeyed? What is the authority of Saint Peter, if it can be ignored in these matters?

This "solution" therefore violates all three of the principles which I enunciated above, for (1) they hold that the Novus Ordo is a type of mixture of Catholic and non-Catholic; (2) they hold that although the Novus Ordo is intrinsically Catholic, one may still resist it and reject it, and (3) they recognize the authority of John Paul II, but at the same time reject the prerogatives of his authority. In this last matter they are unfortunately likened to Gallicans, Jansenists, and other Eastern Rite sects who did exactly the same thing, i.e., who "filtered" the doctrines and decrees of the Roman Pontiffs according to their liking.

Thus, while I think that those who are involved in the Lefebvre group are of good will and desire wholeheartedly the good of the Church, they nevertheless are laboring under some grave speculative and practical errors. They are also involved in deep inconsistency, and it is of little wonder that there are reportedly many crypto-sedevacantists among them, as well as *Ecclesia Dei* sympathizers.

3. The Sedevacantist Solution. Père Hugon O.P. said of the famous controversy of Thomism vs. Molinism, "Each system is subject to difficulties; in fact the exclusion of mystery in this matter would be a sign of error". He then points out that the obscurity of Thomism arises not from its principles, but rather from the weakness of the human intellect to understand how its certain principles are reconciled in God. Molinism, on the other hand, suffers from an exception made to most universal and most certain theological principles of divine causality, and finishes by placing *passivity* in God. Thus the obscurity of Molinism arises from the inability of reconciling God and passivity, which are two absolutely contradictory notions, whereas the obscurity of Thomism arises from the reconciliation in God of principles which are absolutely certain. Thomism therefore leaves you with open-ended mystery, but Molinism leaves you with contradiction.

Likewise the sedevacantist position asserts all of the proper principles, but remains obscure because we cannot see the ultimate reconciliation of them. In other words, while sedevacantism maintains all of the essential elements of the Church's indefectibility, it is nonetheless at a loss as to how to explain the mystery of the iniquity of the Novus Ordo, that is, how the prolonged vacancy of the Apostolic See will ultimately serve the glory of God, and how the Church will one day overcome this terrible problem. But in asserting that the Apostolic See is vacant, sedevacantism will not attempt to assert contradictory things: either (1) that the Novus Ordo religion and the Catholic faith are the same thing, (the contradiction of the *Ecclesia Dei* adherents), or (2) that the Catholic Church has promulgated teachings, rites and disciplines which are contrary to faith and harmful to souls.

The point of departure for the sedevacantist is the principle that *there is a substantial difference between the Novus Ordo and the Catholic Faith.* This difference is most evident in the virtual word-for-word contradiction between *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Quanta Cura,* but is also plain for all to see in the New Mass and sacraments, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the new disciplines, the

new catechisms, the new ordinary universal magisterium. These two religions are incompatible, and cannot coexist in the same church. But if the Novus Ordo is substantially different from the Catholic Faith, they reason, then it cannot be Catholic. But if it is not Catholic, they further reason, then it is impossible that such a thing be promulgated by the authority of the Church, since the authority of the Church cannot err in such matters as doctrine, worship, and discipline. Therefore, they conclude, it is *impossible* that those who promulgate the Novus Ordo have the authority of the Catholic Church. It is therefore *impossible* that Paul VI, John Paul I, or John Paul II be popes.

These principles which have led to this conclusion are absolutely ironclad. They are supported either by philosophy or the teaching of the Church. They are unassailable, and do logically lead to their conclusion. The indefectibility of the Church is thus saved in this system, since it refuses to associate with the Immaculate Spouse of Christ this abomination of modernism which is the work of the devil.

But then where is the visible Church? It is realized in those who publicly adhere to the Catholic Faith, and who at the same time look forward to the election of a Roman Pontiff. What about the bishops? This system does not *necessarily* strip every bishop of authority, but only those who publicly adhere to the new religion. But even if it did strip every one of them of their authority, sedevacantism does not intrinsically alter the nature of the Catholic Church, but leaves to the Providence of God the restoration of order. Those systems, on the other hand, which are fearful of cutting themselves off from the modernist hierarchy for their inability to see a solution without it, actually combine the Catholic Church with the defection of modernism, *which are two things absolutely incompatible, as incompatible as God and the devil*. Those systems cannot possibly be correct which recognize the papacy of conciliar "popes". Sedevacantism may lead you to *mystery*, but it does not lead you to *contradiction*.

Those who adhere to the *material/formal* sedevacantism would say that the visible hierarchy continues to exist *materially*, which is to say that on the one hand the elections of popes and appointments of bishops are still valid, but on the other hand, owing to their promulgation of false doctrine, they do not have the power of jurisdiction. Hence they are false popes and false bishops, but they are true popes-elect and bishops-elect.

Conclusion

As I stated earlier, the fundamental notion of the indefectibility of the Catholic Church is that it must endure until the end of time with the essential nature and qualities with which Christ endowed it at its foundation. The Church's most important essential quality is its Faith, *and it is for the Faith that the visible structure exists*. If the Novus Ordo is Catholic, then there is no problem of defection, and it makes no sense to carry on the traditional movement. If the Novus Ordo is not Catholic, then it does involve defection, and it would be blasphemous to in any way combine the Catholic Church and the Novus Ordo. There is no possible third way, just as there is no possible substantial alteration, augmentation or diminution of the deposit of revelation. The Novus Ordo is either Catholic or it is not. I firmly hold that it is not Catholic, and therefore hold that any system which claims that the Novus Ordo has been given to us by the authori-

ty of Christ is objectively blasphemous and ruinous of the Church's indefectibility.