A Blessed Christmas to All of Our Benefactors and Readers
My dear Catholic people,

Recently someone criticized me for harping too much on sedevacantism. It is true that it is a subject I often write about. If I do, it is because the faithful tend to forget the importance of it.

Declaration of war. Vatican II happened in 1962 with all of the apparent authority and fanfare of a general council of the Catholic Church. By all manner of judging, it was one of the most solemn gatherings since the beginning of the Church’s existence.

Being only twelve at the time, I was enthusiastic about it, thought it was a momentous and historic meeting, and looked forward to what it would say and do.

I remember in 1963 that for religion class in high school I had to look for and cut out articles dealing with ecumenism, mostly from The Tablet, the diocesan newspaper of the Diocese of Brooklyn. Even then, I thought of ecumenism as some new effort of the Church to draw Protestants back to the one true Church, which is, of course, the Roman Catholic Church.

The bubble of optimism and enthusiasm blew up in my face, however, on the First Sunday of Advent of 1964. It was the first Sunday on which the initial changes of Vatican II, ordered by Paul VI, were introduced. These changes were rather tame by today’s standards, but I noticed the trend of the stripping of the sacred liturgy as well as the introduction of vernacular, the dialogue Mass, and other Protestant influences which made me very uncomfortable. I remember walking home from Mass thinking to myself, “There is something Protestant about the Mass.” These words would turn out to be my declaration of war upon Vatican II and its subsequent changes. It is a war which I have been waging now for fifty years, almost to the day. It has consumed my whole lifetime, and promises to do so for as many years as God grants me. I doubt that I will live to see the outcome of the war.

The roiling central problem. From what I have just described, anyone can see that a very deep problem immediately presents itself. How do you declare war on an infallible and indefectible Church?

The answer to this problem has caused enormous turmoil and division in the ranks of traditionalists.

All traditionalists consider Vatican II and its changes to be in some way bad. How they are bad, and how something bad could come to us from an infallible and indefectible Church accounts for nearly all of the discussions among traditionalists, and at times become very heated.

As everyone knows, there are three basic “camps” of traditionalists: (1) the Novus Ordo conservatives; (2) the Recognize and Resist groups, principally the Society of Saint Pius X; (3) the sedevacantists.

The Novus Ordo Conservatives

This group holds that Vatican II contains no substantial error, but that it has been misinterpreted. They hold these misinterpretations to be substantially erroneous, perhaps even heretical. They give to Vatican II an interpretation which is, they feel, in accordance with the tradition of the Church. This is known as “accepting the Council in the light of tradition.” These are the words of John Paul II to Archbishop Lefebvre as a basis for a possible reconciliation. They also call it the “hermeneutic of continuity.” The position of the Novus Ordo conservatives is held by the Fraternity of Saint Peter and similar institutes, as well as by many Novus Ordo priests functioning within the Modernist religion. In a similar way, they say that the liturgical and disciplinary changes, while unfortunate, are not contrary to faith or in any way sinful. They are merely not as good as the pre-Vatican II liturgy and discipline.

Critique. The position is untenable. For it means that for fifty years the Roman Catholic Church has been promulgating a false interpretation of a general council. The very dogmatic deviations, disciplinary aberrations, and liturgical abominations, which all traditionalists abhor, have come down to us from the authority of the Church if we accept the system of the Novus Ordo conservatives. The only way in which this system could be saved from denying the indefectibility of the Church would be to prove that (1) Vatican II in fact contains no error; (2) the Catholic hierarchy has promulgated nothing but Catholic dogma and Catholic moral teaching, nothing but holy disciplines, and nothing but sacred and Catholic liturgical practices; (3) and the reason for the present chaos is that others have somehow muzzled the hierarchy and spread an entirely false interpretation of Vatican II and have initiated all of the bad reforms and unorthodox teachings which we experience every day.

To imagine that these things are true is to live in a world of fantasy. Reality tells a wholly different story. What is obvious is that Vatican II has been interpreted by magisterial teachings of Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. Imagine, Francis’ heretical blasphemy, “There is no Catholic God,” and “God does not exist” now belongs to the authentic
magisterium of the Catholic Church, if this system is
correct, and will take its place alongside the venerable
tomes of the teachings of Saint Pius X and of the entire
Bullarium Romanum.¹

Furthermore, where is this true interpretation of
Vatican II which will put all minds at ease? Everyone
speaks about it, but no one finds it. It is the unicorn in
the forest. And after fifty years? Nor is it Catholic to
interpret a council in a manner contrary to the official
magisterial interpretation given to it. This interpretation
has been done by the Novus Ordo hierarchy not only in
many post-conciliar documents, but also through many
official acts, e.g. the abominations against the First
Commandment at Assisi.

It was the Jansenists who said “We accept the papal
documents, but we interpret them according to our own
fashion.”

The 1983 Code of Canon Law incorporates the
false teachings and evil practices of Vatican II, such as
the new ecclesiology and the sacrilege of giving Holy
Communion to non-Catholics. Can we dismiss this
document as a “false interpretation?”

That a few conservatives think up a “true
interpretation” of Vatican II does nothing for the
continuity of Catholic teaching. The true interpretation
of any council is not the domain of private individuals,
but of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. The only
accurate interpretation of Vatican II is what Paul VI
meant when he promulgated the documents of Vatican
II, and what the authors of the subsequent post-Vatican
II magisterial documents and acts meant. We must find
the authentic interpretation of Vatican II in the speeches
and documents of Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II,
Benedict XVI, and Francis. We cannot find it in the
“spin” which some conservative writers put on it.

In the fantasy world of the Novus Ordo
conservatives, the Catholic hierarchy would have to one
day repudiate the false interpretation given to Vatican II
by the hierarchy over the past fifty years, and promulgate
an entirely new interpretation. How could we ever, in
such a case, explain to a Protestant that the Church is
infallible and indefectible, when for fifty years it has been
spreading false teaching?

Finally, it is downright impossible to give an
interpretation to Vatican II and its changes which is
compatible with Catholic doctrine. To shine the light of
tradition on Vatican II is to shine a powerful flashlight
down a dark alley full of smelly trash cans and rats.

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¹ The Bullarium Romanum is the collection of all official papal teachings and disciplinary measures.
infallibility, that the Catholic hierarchy promulgate to the whole Church false teaching, false liturgical practices, and evil disciplines.

These are Catholic principles which are recognized by all. No one could deny these principles without also denying the Catholic Faith.

From these principles, the sedevacantist concludes to the following: the very intention to promulgate false doctrines, false liturgical practices, and evil disciplines to the Church is an intrinsic obstacle to the reception of the authority of Christ to teach, rule, and sanctify the Church.

He also understands the principle, upheld by all theologians and various popes, that he who falls into public heresy cannot possibly rule the Church.

To these principles he applies the changes of Vatican II. Since they are manifestly contrary to Catholic doctrine, Catholic liturgical practice, and Catholic disciplines, he draws the necessary and inevitable conclusion: that it is impossible that those who have promulgated Vatican II be the true hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

Critique. The sedevacantist position is solidly based on principles which derive from the very nature of the Catholic Church, the papacy, and the very notion of authority itself. These principles are unassailable.

Its assessment that the changes of Vatican II are non-Catholic is easily provable. This fact becomes more and more evident every day as Bergoglio strays ever more boldly and scandalously from Catholic truth and practice. For this reason, even some Novus Ordo clergy have raised recently the possibility of sedevacantism.

Sedevacantism, furthermore, avoids the intrinsic problems of the first two systems. The problem of the system of the Novus Ordo conservative is that he must lead a life in perpetual denial, a denial of the realities which are before his face every moment of the day, and a denial that his disgust for the Novus Ordo derives from the aversion of the Catholic faith itself for what is heretical and alien. Instead he constructs a card house of theological fantasy that Vatican II changed nothing substantial in the Catholic Church, a card house about to collapse as Bergoglio relentlessly pursues his Modernist goals.

It is downright absurdity and insanity to believe that the current devastation of the Church in all of its aspects, a true Hiroshima, has been the effect of merely accidental and non-substantial changes to the Catholic religion by Vatican II. It defies common sense to say that there is some “hermeneutic of continuity,” that is, some Catholic interpretation of Vatican II floating somewhere in the air, which no one has heard or seen for fifty years! Yet the Novus Ordo conservative cling these notions tenaciously, since they are his only lifeline to “making sense” of the glaring contradiction between the pre- and post-Vatican II religions.

Sedevacantism furthermore avoids the impossible system of the R & R’s. On the one hand, the R & R's reject as non-Catholic the whole new religion of Vatican II, but on the other hand hold that it has been promulgated by the authority of Christ invested in the Catholic hierarchy. Such a position means the Catholic Church has defected, which is contrary to faith.

Conclusion. It is for these reasons that I harp constantly on the issue of sedevacantism and una cum. For the lay people, and even many of the clergy, tend to have a mere “gut reaction” to the changes of Vatican II. They decide they do not like them, and they seek out sacraments from traditionalist priests of every kind, or if clergy, may even say the traditional Mass. They give no thought to the problem of authority in the Church, and how both infallibility and indefectibility must be protected in this present resistance to Modernism.

You cannot have a Catholic position in this Modernist crisis unless you have a Catholic position regarding the Roman Pontiff. Pope Pius IX said, “You cannot separate the Pope from the Church.” Catholics who remain indifferent to the question of the papacy of the Modernist “popes” are acting like Modernists themselves. For the Modernist has no care of authority, but takes his religion from his inner feelings. Many traditionalists adhere to tradition for Modernist reasons, that is, they adhere to it not because of the authority of the Church teaching, but because tradition is more in accordance with their personal religious feelings.

It is therefore, for this reason that I harp on sedevacantism: to impress upon the faithful the necessity of a Catholic attitude toward authority.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Donald J. Sanborn
Rector