> "I myself saw, in the years after 1988, how the return of communities which had been separated from Rome *changed their interior attitudes;* I saw how returning to the bigger and broader Church e*nabled them to move beyond one-sided positions* and *broke down rigidity* so that positive energies could emerge for the whole."– Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 Letter to World's Bishops on the "Remission" of SSPX "Excommunications"

Jiu-Jitsu is a form of Martial Arts where you use your opponent's strengths against him. I cannot help but wonder whether this is the tactic used by today's Vatican against the Society of St. Pius X.

What is the strength of the Traditional Catholic if not a desire to be obedient; love of the papacy; filial piety; good order, and the longing to be instrumental in helping to bring an end to today's unprecedented crisis of Faith.

We now hear unofficially – that is, not directly from Pope Benedict himself – that for "regularization," the SSPX will not be required to accept the Second Vatican Council and the New Mass. We hear the Pope is ready to grant this because he wants the SSPX to help him correct the crisis in the Church.

Indeed, as I have said in the past: if it is true the SSPX does not have to accept the Council, this could be a real game-changer. It could mark the effective end of Vatican II. For it is impossible that one group of Catholics in the world could be considered "exempt" from embracing the Council, and other Catholics are still bound to accept it.

It is for this reason, however, that I believe we will never see Pope Benedict XVI give a written guarantee that the SSPX does not have to accept the Council. And if such guarantees are not carved in stone, publicly for all to see, then any agreement is fraught with peril.

None of us can predict the future, and I will be happy if proven wrong. But if I were a betting man, I would place my little stack on Benedict protecting Vatican II to the end.

We also hear rumors that Pope Benedict has somehow changed, that he is more traditional than he was in the past.

I was privileged to study philosophy with Dr. Raphael Waters, one of the top Thomists in North America. It was he who insisted that, in the realm of philosophy, the argument from authority is always the weakest. Evidence alone matters.

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I cannot help but apply this same dictum to the rumor that Benedict has become more traditional. Maybe it's true, but since "the mode of acting follows the mode of being," the recent actions of Pope Benedict lead us to believe there is not much change.

First of all, we have heard this type of claim in the past, as far back as 1988.

This is not intended to pick on any one group, but I well remember going to see one of the first Fraternity of St. Peter priests give a lecture in the summer of 1988 in North Jersey. He was full of high praise for Cardinal Ratzinger. When someone from the audience brought up Cardinal Ratzinger's modernism, the priest froze the audience with a stare and said haughtily, "Well, you don't know the *new* Cardinal Ratzinger!" As time proved, there wasn't much new.

As for Pope Benedict: we will look at what he has said in the past, which indicates his mindset his entire career, and then look at recent actions to see if we note any considerable change.

Consistent Progressivism

Before I start with my observations, I would urge the reader to resist an emotional response. When I point out these simple facts, I've seen people go shrieking into the snowbanks, "You're attacking the Pope," or "You're flirting with sedevacantism."

None of what I say is an attack. I simply lay out the facts without emotion. Further, I have never even been tempted toward the sedevacantist position. I see sedevacantism as a kind of despair that ends up asking more questions than it answers.

Cardinal Ratzinger published some shocking statements in his 1986 work, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* a book I would never use to teach the Catholic Faith. This is not the only book that contains disturbing passages from the Cardinal, but it will suffice for the sake of examples.

On page 202, Cardinal Ratzinger says, "The Catholic does not insist on the dissolution of the Protestant confession and the demolition of their churches, but hopes rather that they will be strengthened in their confessions and in their ecclesial reality". The obvious conclusion: the writer hopes that Protestants will become strong and cling even more tightly to heretical creeds solemnly anathematized by the infallible Council of Trent.

On page 381, Cardinal Ratzinger writes, "[*Gaudium et Spes*] as a whole, we might say that (in conjunction with the texts on religious liberty and world religions) it is a revision of the

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Syllabus of Pius IX, a kind of countersyllabus … Let us be content to say here that the text serves as a countersyllabus and, as such, represents on the part of the Church, an attempt at an official reconciliation with the new era inaugurated in 1789. …"

He speaks of the "one-sidedness of the position adopted by the Church under Pius IX and Pius X" and claims the Syllabus represents "an obsolete Church-state relationship."

In other the words, the writer is calling two of the greatest Popes in Church history "one-sided" in their efforts to protect the Church from the errors of liberalism and modernism. The Cardinal goes on to celebrate that Vatican II made an "attempt" to "correct" and "counter" the teaching of Blessed Pope Pius IX and Pope Saint Pius X, and to reconcile Herself instead with the Masonic French Revolution and the Enlightenment.

On page 191 of the same book, we read, "*There can be no return to the Syllabus*" of Blessed Pope Pius IX. This can only please Freemasons who have worked to overthrow the great Syllabus since it first appeared in 1864

The fact that he recognizes Vatican II as a countersyllabus demonstrates the Council as a rupture with the past. Any talk of the Council being understood within a "hermeneutic of continuity" is not realistic.

Cardinal Ratzinger says on page 334, "The impetus given by Teilhard de Chardin exerted a wide influence. With daring vision, it incorporated the historical movement of Christianity into the great cosmic process of evolution."

Teilhard was a pantheist and evolutionist, and was admired and defended by Ratzinger's mentor, Father Henri de Lubac. The Cardinal goes on to rejoice that this Teilhardian evolutionary influence was particularly evident in the Council document, Gaudium et spes.

"We can not resist them too firmly"

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Of traditional Catholics who oppose Vatican II, Cardinal Ratzinger says on page 389: "Was the Council a wrong road that we must now retrace if we are to save the Church? The voices of those who say that it is are becoming louder and their followers more numerous. Among the more obvious phenomena of the last years must be counted the increasing number of integralist [traditionalist] groups in which the desire for piety, for the sense of the mystery, is finding satisfaction. We must be on our guard against minimizing these movements. *Without a doubt, they represent a sectarian zealotry that is the antithesis of Catholicity. We can not resist them too firmly.*"

We see similar sentiments on the same point from Cardinal Ratzinger – now Benedict XVI – only three years ago.

On March 10, 2009, writing to the world's bishops about the lifting of the alleged "excommunication" of the SSPX, Pope Benedict reveals what he regards as positive elements to "regularization" of Traditional groups; they tend to soften their stand:

"I myself saw, in the years after 1988, how the return of communities which had been separated from Rome c*hanged their interior attitudes;* I saw how returning to the bigger and broader Church enabled them to *move beyond one-sided positions* and *broke down rigidity* so that positive energies could emerge for the whole."

Wait a minute. Did we not hear Cardinal Ratzinger use the term "one-sidedness" before?

Yes, it was in his denunciation of Pius IX and his 1864 Syllabus of Errors, the "*one-sidedness* of the position adopted by the Church under Pius IX and Pius X".

It is the same terminology we heard from him in his 1986 *Principles of Catholic Theology*.

And what do the traditional groups – especially the Society of St. Pius X – represent but fierce adhesion to the teaching of Popes Pius IX and Pius X?

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On this point, I wish to recount that I had gone to the Ecclesia Dei office in 1994. I was then with a group that wanted to learn first-hand what "regularization" entailed. The priest at the Ecclesia Dei office boasted with pride that the newly "regularized" Society of Saint Vincent Ferrer was "now writing articles defending Vatican II's religious liberty."

Likewise the monks at Le Barroux, not long after their "regularization," began producing works defending the Council's religious liberty, and even defending the New Catechism.

So when Pope Benedict recently celebrates that "regularized" groups "change their interior attitudes", and "break down their rigidity" and "move beyond one-sidedness", I can't see any other way to interpret this than his delight that once-traditional orders now defend the very points about the Council they opposed prior to "regularization".

Synagogues and Assisi

In 2007 Pope Benedict made the important step of admitting the Tridentine Mass was never forbidden. But in 2008, Pope Benedict shocked the Traditional Catholic world by changing the Tridentine Mass' Good Friday Prayer for the Jews.

On page 106 of his 2010 book *Light of the World,* Benedict himself admits the change was enacted because it was offensive to Jews, and because the prayer, he claimed, was theologically inaccurate.

When the interviewer asks Benedict why in February 2008 he changed the Old Good Friday prayer, he answered:

> "…in the old liturgy this point seemed to me to require a modification. The old formulation really was offensive to Jews and failed to express the positively overall intrinsic unity between the Old and New Testaments. I believed that a modification of this passage of the old liturgy was necessary, especially, as I have already said, out of consideration for our relation with our Jewish friends. I altered the text in such a way as to express our faith that Christ is the Savior for all, that there are not two channels of salvation, so that Christ is also the redeemer of the Jews, and not just of the Gentiles. But the new formulation also shifts the focus from a direct petition for the conversion of the Jews in a missionary sense to a plea that the Lord might bring about the hour in history when we may all be united."

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Nowhere do we see in his new formula a prayer for the Jews' conversion (I detailed this and more in my April 2011 article, "Common Mission and 'Significant Silence'")

Pope Benedict has also made a point to visit synagogues.

Whereas John Paul II visited one synagogue during 26 years as Pope, Benedict visited three synagogues in the space of 6 years. On his last visit to the Rome Synagogue in January 2010, Rabbi David Rosen exulted that "*Pope Benedict has institutionalized revolution*."

Then we come to the latest meeting of Assisi, October, 2011.Here Pope Benedict called the leaders of the world religions together for the cause of peace. I attended the event. In the Basilica of Saint Mary's of the Holy Angels, the fourth most venerated shrine in the Catholic world, Wanda Abimbola was allowed to invoke the god and goddesses of the Yaruba religion from inside the Church's sanctuary. A Hindu also invoked his own version of god "I see you in each hand and in each foot… I bow down to you in all them," The Hindu went on to announce the relativist principle that "the truth is one," but "announced in different ways."

These invocations took no one by surprise. They were printed in the full color booklet I received at the Press Office the day prior to the event.

The Assisi event gives visual expression to the greatest heresy of our time, that any religion is good enough for salvation. It is religious indifferentism enfleshed.

One final point about Assisi. I was recently on a webradio talk show with Colleen Hammond, Louis Verrechio and others. Louis Verrechio is a true gentleman, is no sedevacantist, and is most respectful of Pope Benedict XVI.

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Yet Assisi was so scandalous that he felt compelled to admit on the air: “Even prior to the meeting the Holy Father announced in the first general audience of 2011 his intentions to go to Assisi and to convene this third gathering … And he said that the aim of this event was to invite peoples of many different religions, the ones that John just named, to gather with him ‘to solemnly renew the commitment of believers of every religion to live their own religious faith as a service to the cause of peace’.

“Now this is an indication of a couple of things to me,” continued Mr. Verrechio. “One, is how much we have to pray for our Holy Father, he is surrounded by enemies, he’s pulled in all sorts of different directions, and he needs our prayers for strength. But it’s an indication of how far we have fallen over the last two millennia, [especially] in the last four decades or so. It would have been absolutely unthinkable for a Roman Pontiff to suggest that non-Catholics do well to persist in their false religion for any reason, much less with the implication that doing so could possibly render a service to the cause of peace. And as John said, it is simply not a Catholic thought.”

Thus I would be perfectly happy to learn that Pope Benedict has secretly – very secretly – become more Traditional. But as Dr. Waters rightly said, “evidence alone matters.”

The Council

Add to these difficulties the opposition from most of the Curia and modern Catholics around the world to anything that would diminish Vatican II.

As noted last month, Cardinal Koch from the Vatican already stated publicly that all Catholics – SSPX included – are bound to accept the Council. Abraham Foxman, from the Anti-Defamation League, issued a May 31 press release criticizing Cardinal Brandmuller who suggested that Nostre Aetate, Vatican II’s Decree on the Jews, is not a binding document, and praising Cardinal Koch for his claim that Catholics are bound to accept all of the Council, Nostre Aetate included.

Jewish groups such as the ADL do not want to see the SSPX “regularized”. As I reported two months ago in *CFN*, a local rabbi told a Buffalo reporter that he and his fellow rabbis are nervous about a possible “regularization” of the SSPX. They fear it may end up with the Vatican returning to the Traditional Catholic doctrine that the Old Covenant is superseded by the New. It seems these Rabbis have a better grasp of some of the issues at stake than do many traditional Catholics. There is little doubt the rabbis and Jewish groups are voicing their concerns to Rome.

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SSPX and Diocesan Bishops

We will now touch upon the “shock heard round the world”.

Though nothing is yet finalized, it appears Rome insists a “regularized” SSPX can not set up new foundations without the permission of the local bishop.

In his recent DICI interview of June 8, discussing the Personal Prelature offered by Rome, Bishop Bernard Fellay said, “However, and let us say this clearly, if a personal prelature were granted to us, our situation would not be the same [as the Opus Dei]. In order to understand better what would happen, we must reflect that our status would be much more similar to that of a military ordinariate, because we would have ordinary jurisdiction over the faithful. Thus we would be like a sort of diocese, the jurisdiction of which extends to all its faithful regardless of their territorial situation. All the chapels, churches, priories, schools, and works of the Society and of the affiliated religious congregations would be recognized with a real autonomy for their ministry. It is still true — since it is Church law — that in order to open a new chapel or to found a work, it would be necessary to have the permission of the local ordinary. We have quite obviously reported to Rome how difficult our present situation was in the dioceses, and Rome is still working on it. Here or there, this difficulty will be real, but since when is life without difficulties?”

SSPX Bishop Tissier de Mallerais takes a dim view of this proposal. In a June 1 interview with the French journal *Rivarol*, Bishop Tissier said, “According to the project of prelature, we would not be free to create new priories without the permission of the local bishops and, additionally, all our recent foundations would have to be confirmed by these same bishops. It would thus mean subjugating us quite unnecessarily to an overall Modernist episcopate.”

Finally, on the doctrinal level, it appears nothing is signed, nothing is yet public, nothing is carved in stone.

On June 13, a meeting was held between Bishop Fellay and the Vatican’s Cardinal Levada. Reports indicate there is still no agreement on the doctrinal preamble.

A press release from Menzingan the following day said Bishop Fellay “spelled out the doctrinal difficulties posed by the Second Vatican Council and the Novus Ordo Missae” to Cardinal Levada. “The desire for additional clarifications could result in a new phase of discussions.”

Also on June 14, for what it’s worth, Le Figaro reported that Bishop Fellay returned from the Vatican “with a Rome dossier that is heavier than what had been foreseen.”

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Cardinal Joachim Meisner of Cologne recently said he could imagine a good working relationship between the Church and the Society of St. Pius X, although there was “still a long way to go.”

The General Chapter

From July 1 to 14, the Society of St. Pius X will hold its General Chapter where these issues will be discussed. It is common knowledge that not everyone in the SSPX thinks regularization at this time is a good move. As is now public news, Bishop Williamson, Bishop Tissier de Mallerais and Bishop de Galarreta collectively voiced their concerns against it to Bishop Fellay.

On May 1, 2005, twelve days after the election of Pope Benedict XVI, in a speech I gave about the new Pope, I made the observation: “I believe he [Benedict XVI] has the potential to split the traditionalist camp right in half, and to split traditionalist groups right in half, because so many are enamored with those good things he has said about the Latin Mass.”

I also said at the time what I believe to be still the case today: Pope Benedict XVI is first and foremost a man of Vatican II.

Thus we should redouble our prayers for a happy outcome of the upcoming General Chapter. My own prayers for the SSPX — now and during the crucial meeting in July — is that they will approach this latest overture from Rome with caution, caution and more caution.

On all quotes, emphasis added by author.

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