As discussed towards the end of the latest CFN "Weekly News Roundup" (July 3, 2020), Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the former apostolic nuncio turned Traditionalist, has recently come under fire for his bold public critiques of the Second Vatican Council. Over the past 10 days or so, counter-critiques of Archbishop Viganò's position – namely, that Vatican II should simply be "dropped" as a whole and "forgotten" – have been published by Professor John Paul Meenan via *LifeSiteNews*, Sandro Magister via *L'Espresso*, and JD Flynn via Catholic News Agency (NB: the latter's article was presented as impartial "analysis" but includes thinly veiled critiques of Viganò and his supporters, e.g., "accepting the legitimacy and authority of the Second Vatican Council is a necessary component of maintaining communion with the Church herself," and, "the archbishop is being supported by a Catholic faction with a clear objective").

The most vehement critic of Archbishop Viganò's position on the Council to date is certainly Sandro Magister, a veteran Italian Vaticanista, who accuses Viganò of having "blamed" Benedict XVI "for having 'deceived' the whole Church in that he [Benedict] would have it be believed that the Second Vatican Council was immune to heresies and moreover should be interpreted in perfect continuity with true perennial doctrine."

In simpler terms, Magister appears quite upset that Archbishop Viganò (like Bishop Athanasius Schneider in *Christus Vincit* and elsewhere) has abandoned Benedict XVI's famous "hermeneutic of continuity" – the notion that the entire Council can be interpreted in a manner consistent with Tradition – in favor of a more realistic assessment of the facts (see here for commentary). As His Excellency wrote in his June 9 missive, "despite all the efforts of the *hermeneutic of continuity* which shipwrecked miserably at the first confrontation with the reality of the present crisis, it is undeniable that from Vatican II onwards a *parallel church* was built, superimposed over and diametrically opposed to the true Church of Christ."

Magister, for his part, firmly defends the "hermeneutic of continuity" in his June 29 critique of Viganò, going so far as to claim that the retired Italian prelate is "on the brink of schism" for his rejection of what Magister calls "the keystone of the interpretation that Benedict XVI gave of Vatican Council II".

Today, Magister published the full Italian text of Archbishop Viganò's response to him (dated July 3, 2020), which another Italian journalist, Marco Tosatti, has made available in English on his website. CFN is pleased to reprint the English translation in full with permission (see below).

In his reply, Archbishop Viganò respectfully counters Magister's accusations by clarifying, "I have no desire to separate myself from Mother Church," and further, "I do not hesitate to

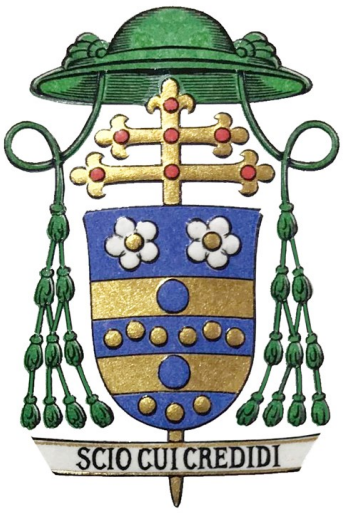
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say that that assembly [Vatican II] should be forgotten '*as such and en bloc*,' and I claim the right to say it without thereby making myself guilty of the delict of schism for having attacked the unity of the Church. The unity of the Church is inseparably in Charity *and* in Truth, and where error reigns or even only worms its way in, there cannot be Charity."

Regarding the contested "hermeneutic of continuity", His Excellency states, "The *fairytale* of the hermeneutic – even though an authoritative one because of its Author – nevertheless remains an attempt to want to give the dignity of a Council to a true and proper ambush against the Church, so as not to discredit along with it the Popes who wanted, imposed, and reproposed that Council. So much so that those same Popes, one after the other, rise to the honors of the altar for having been 'popes of the Council.'"

"I continue to hope," writes Archbishop Viganò to Magister, "that the tone of your article was not dictated by the simple fact that I have dared to reopen the debate about that Council that many – too many – in the ecclesial structure, consider as an *unicum* in the history of the Church, almost an untouchable idol."

Here follows the full English translation of His Excellency's letter of response to Sandro Magister, reprinted with permission:



3 July 2020

Saint Irenaeus, Bishop and Martyr

Dear Mr. Magister,

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Permit me to reply to your article "*Archbishop Viganò on the Brink of Schism*," published at *Settimo Cielo* on June 29 (here).

I am aware that having dared to express an opinion strongly critical of the Council is sufficient to awaken the inquisitorial spirit that in other cases is the object of execration by right-thinking people. Nonetheless, in a respectful dispute between ecclesiastics and competent laity, it does not seem to me to be inappropriate to raise problems that remain unresolved to date, the foremost of which is the crisis that has afflicted the Church since Vatican II and has now reached the point of devastation.

There are those who speak of the *misrepresentation* of the Council; others who speak of the need to return to reading it *in continuity* with the Tradition; others of the opportunity to correct any errors contained in it, or to interpret the equivocal points in a Catholic sense. On the opposing side, there is no lack of those who consider Vatican II as a *blueprint* from which to proceed in the *revolution*: the changing and transformation of the Church into an entirely new and modern entity, in step with the times. This is part of the normal dynamics of a "dialogue" that is all too often invoked but rarely practiced: those who thus far have expressed dissent about what I have said have never entered into the merit of the argument, limiting themselves to saddling me with epithets that have already been merited by my far more illustrious and venerable brothers in the episcopate. It is curious that, both in the doctrinal as well as the political arena, the progressives claim for themselves a primacy, a state of election, that apodictically places the adversary in a position of ontological inferiority, unworthy of attention or response and simplistically liquidatable as *Lefebvrian* on the ecclesial front or *fascist* on the socio-political front. But their lack of arguments does not legitimize them to dictate the rules, nor to decide who has the right to speak, especially when reason, even prior to faith, has demonstrated where the deception is, who the author is, and what the purpose is.

At first it appeared to me that the content of your article was to be considered more an understandable *tribute to the Prince*, who can be found in the frescoed salons of the Third Loggia or in the stylish offices of the Editor; and yet in reading what you attribute to me I discovered an inaccuracy – let's call it that – that I hope is the result of a misunderstanding. I therefore ask you to grant me space to reply at *Settimo Cielo*.

You state that I have supposedly blamed Benedict XVI "*for having 'deceived' the whole Church in that he would have it be believed that the Second Vatican Council was immune to heresies and moreover should be interpreted in perfect continuity with true perennial doctrine*." I do not think that I have ever written such a thing about the Holy Father; on the contrary: I said, and I reaffirm, that we were *all* – or almost all – deceived by those who used the Council as a "*container*" equipped with its own implicit authority and the

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authoritativeness of the Fathers who took part in it, while distorting its purpose. And those who fell into this deception did so because, loving the Church and the Papacy, they could not imagine that in the heart of Vatican II a minority of very organized *conspirators* could use a Council to demolish the Church from within; and that in doing so they could count on the silence and inaction of Authority, if not on its complicity. These are historical facts, of which I permit myself to give a personal interpretation, but one which I think others may share.

I permit myself also to remind you, as if there was any need, that the positions of moderate critical re-reading of the Council in a traditional sense by Benedict XVI are part of a laudable recent past, while in the *formidable* Seventies the position of then-theologian Joseph Ratzinger was quite different. Authoritative studies stand alongside the same admissions of the Professor of Tubingen confirming the partial repentances of the Emeritus. Nor do I see a "reckless indictment launched by Viganò against Benedict XVI for his 'failed attempts to correct conciliar excesses by invoking the hermeneutic of continuity,'" since this is an opinion widely shared not only in conservative circles but also and above all among progressives. And it should be said that what the innovators succeeded in obtaining by means of deception, cunning, and blackmail was the result of a vision that we have found later applied in the maximum degree in the Bergoglian "magisterium" of *Amoris Laetitia*. The malicious intention is admitted by Ratzinger himself: "*The impression grew steadily that nothing was now stable in the Church, that everything was open to revision. More and more the Council appeared to be like a great Church parliament that could change everything and reshape everything according to its own desires*" (cf. J. Ratzinger, *Milestones*, translation from the German by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1997, p. 132). But even more so by the words of the Dominican Edward Schillebeecks: "*We express it diplomatically [now], but after the Council we will draw the implicit conclusions*" (*De Bazuin*, n.16, 1965).

We have confirmed that the intentional ambiguity in the texts had the purpose of keeping opposing and irreconcilable visions together, in the name of an evaluation of utility and to the detriment of revealed Truth. A Truth that, when it is integrally proclaimed, cannot fail to be divisive, just as Our Lord is divisive: "*Do you think that I have come to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division*" (Lk 12:51).

I do not find anything reprehensible in suggesting that we should forget Vatican II: its proponents knew how to confidently exercise this *damnatio memoriae* not just with a Council but with everything, even to the point of affirming that *their* council was the first of the *new church*, and that beginning with their council the *old religion* and the *old Mass* was finished. You will say to me that these are the positions of extremists, and that virtue stands

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in the middle, that is, among those who consider that Vatican II is only the latest of an uninterrupted series of events in which the Holy Spirit speaks through the mouth of the one and only infallible Magisterium. If so, it should be explained why the *conciliar church* was given a new liturgy and a new calendar, and consequently a new doctrine – *nova lex orandi, nova lex credendi* – distancing itself from its own past with disdain.

The mere idea of setting the Council aside causes scandal even in those, like you, who recognize the crisis of recent years, but who persist in not wanting to recognize the causal link between Vatican II and its logical and inevitable effects. You write: "Attention: not the Council interpreted badly, but the Council as such and en bloc." I ask you then: what would be the correct interpretation of the Council? The one you give or the one given – while they wrote the decrees and declarations – by its very industrious architects? Or perhaps that of the German episcopate? Or that of the theologians who teach in the Pontifical Universities and that we see published in the most popular Catholic periodicals in the world? Or that of Joseph Ratzinger? Or that of Bishop Schneider? Or that of Bergoglio? This would be enough to understand how much damage has been caused by the deliberate adoption of a language that was so murky that it legitimized opposing and contrary interpretations, on the basis of which the famous *conciliar springtime* then occurred. This is why I do not hesitate to say that that assembly should be forgotten "*as such and en bloc*," and I claim the right to say it without thereby making myself guilty of the delict of schism for having attacked the unity of the Church. The unity of the Church is inseparably in Charity *and* in Truth, and where error reigns or even only worms its way in, there cannot be Charity.

The *fairytale* of the hermeneutic – even though an authoritative one because of its Author – nevertheless remains an attempt to want to give the dignity of a Council to a true and proper ambush against the Church, so as not to discredit along with it the Popes who wanted, imposed and reproposed that Council. So much so that those same Popes, one after the other, rise to the honors of the altar for having been "popes of the Council."

Allow me to quote from the article that Doctor Maria Guarini published on June 29 at *Chiesa e postconcilio* in reaction to your piece at *Settimo Cielo*, entitled: "*Archbishop Viganò is not on the brink of schism: many sins are coming to a head*." She writes: "*And it is precisely from here that is born and for this reason risks continuing – without results (thus far, except for the debate triggered by Archbishop Viganò) – the dialogue between deaf people, because the interlocutors use different reality grids: Vatican II, changing the language, has also changed the parameters of approach to reality. And so it happens that we talk about the same thing which, however, is given entirely different meanings. Among other things, the principal characteristic of the present hierarchy is the use of incontestable affirmations, without ever bothering to demonstrate them or with flawed and sophistic demonstrations.*

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But they do not even have need of demonstrations, because the new approach and the new language have subverted everything from the beginning. And the unproven nature of the anomalous 'pastorality' without any defined theological principles is precisely what takes away the raw material of the dispute. It is the advance of a shapeless, ever-changing, dissolving fluid in place of the clear, unequivocal, definitive truthful construct: the incandescent perennial firmness of dogma against the sewage and shifting sands of the transient neo-magisterium" (here).

I continue to hope that the tone of your article was not dictated by the simple fact that I have dared to reopen the debate about that Council that many – too many – in the ecclesial structure, consider as an *unicum* in the history of the Church, almost an untouchable idol.

You may be certain that, unlike many bishops, such as those of the *German Synodal Path*, who have already gone far beyond *the brink of schism* – promoting and brazenly attempting to impose aberrant ideologies and practices on the universal Church – I have no desire to separate myself from Mother Church, for the exaltation of which I daily renew the offering of my life.

> *Deus refugium nostrum et virtus,*
> *populum ad Te clamantem propitius respice;*
> *Et intercedente Gloriosa et Immaculata Virgine Dei Genitrice Maria,*
> *cum Beato Ioseph, ejus Sponso,*
> *ac Beatis Apostolis Tuis, Petro et Paulo, et omnibus Sanctis,*
> *quas pro conversione peccatorum,*
> *pro libertate et exaltatione Sanctae Matris Ecclesiae,*
> *preces effundimus, misericors et benignus exaudi.*

Receive, dear Sandro, my blessing and greeting, with best wishes for every good thing, in Christ Jesus.

+ Carlo Maria Viganò

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