Catholic Family News is happy to report that His Grace, Carlo Maria Viganò, has sent us a letter today replying to the important questions which CFN contributor Stephen Kokx respectfully posed in his recent article, "Questions for Viganò: His Excellency is Right about Vatican II, But What Does He Think Catholics Should Do Now?" In his detailed reply, Archbishop Viganò demonstrates that he is a true shepherd who cares for the confused and abandoned sheep of our time. He provides clear and practical answers for the increasing number of Catholics whose eyes are being opened to the Conciliar Revolution. In his prior interventions, Archbishop Viganò has accurately diagnosed the cause of the current crisis and identified the ultimate cure for it — the casting aside of the Conciliar texts. In today's letter, His Excellency advises what practical treatment members of the Church Militant can utilize to inoculate themselves against the deadly errors of the Conciliar and post-Conciliar period so that their faith can survive until that ultimate cure is administered by a future holy pope.

Refuting Sedevacantists

The archbishop begins by clearly refuting those who have mischaracterized his prior interventions as advocating that Catholics break with the Church or refuse to acknowledge the occupants of hierarchical offices (as do the Sedevacantists). He delineates the need both to refuse any admixture with the Modernist errors and to remain firmly within the Church: "While it is clear that no admixture is possible *with those who propose* adulterated doctrines of the *conciliar ideological manifesto*, it should be noted that the simple fact of being baptized and of being living members of the Church of Christ does not imply adherence to the *conciliar team*; this is true above all for the simple faithful and also for secular and regular clerics who, for various reasons, sincerely consider themselves Catholics and recognize the Hierarchy. "

His Excellency turns the question back on the Modernists of today, who try to claim that the defenders of Tradition, such as His Grace, have broken "full" communion with the Church. With respect to churchmen who "embrace the heterodox doctrines that have spread over these decades, with the awareness that these represent a rupture with the preceding Magisterium," he reassures the faithful that it is "licit to doubt their real adherence to the Catholic Church, in which however they hold official roles that confer authority on them. It is an illicitly exercised authority, if its purpose is to force the faithful to accept the revolution imposed since the Council." In a clear refutation of Sedevacantist claims, he urges the faithful: "[L]et us not give in to the temptation to abandon – albeit with justified indignation – the Catholic Church, on the pretext that it has been invaded by heretics and fornicators: it is they who must be expelled from the sacred enclosure, in a work of purification and penance…."

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In explaining how he understands that members of what he calls the "conciliar sect" can remain in hierarchical offices, His Excellency explains that he accepts the theory of Bishop Bernard Tissier de Mallerais that there are two entities coexisting in the Church. The Church of Christ coexists together with the "strange extravagant Church … like wheat with the tare, in the Roman Curia, in dioceses, in parishes." We must acknowledge this sad state but we "cannot judge our pastors for their intentions, nor suppose that all of them are corrupt in faith and morals.…"

He urges the same path as the one which Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre pointed out many decades ago, the path that is mockingly labeled by Sedevacantists as "Recognize and Resist". Just as we must avoid the perverted "obeisance of the court" and blindly adhere to novelties, we must also avoid the rejection of authority advocated by the Sedevacantists. He explains: "We must not rebel, but oppose; we must not be pleased with the errors of our pastors, but pray for them and admonish them respectfully; we must not question their authority but the way in which they use it."

Right and Duty to Avoid New Mass Parishes: It's About More Than the Latin Mass

Yet, do Catholics have the right to separate themselves from their geographical parish if it does not offer the sacraments according to the traditional rites and sound Catholic education? He unambiguously affirms that "faithful laity have the right and the duty to find priests, communities and institutes that are faithful to the perennial Magisterium. And may they know how to accompany the laudable celebration of the liturgy in the Ancient Rite with adherence to sound doctrine and morals, without any subsidence on the front of the Council." It is important that Archbishop Viganò declares this avoidance of New Mass parishes not only a right but also a duty. That means it is not just permissible to do so if one prefers a Latin Mass, but for those who understand what is at stake it constitutes an obligation, a duty. He also makes clear that what the faithful need to find is not simply a place in which they can attend the Traditional Mass. Their duty is to find a place that offers the Ancient Rite together with sound doctrine that does not sink into ("subsidence") the Council.

His Grace underscores this inherent connection that must exist between the Mass and doctrine by the term he uses several times to refer to the Traditional Mass. He calls it simply the "Catholic Rite". He eschews the ambiguous and inaccurate term "extraordinary form of the Roman Rite". He makes clear that priests should offer the Catholic Rite not merely "to preserve the *extraordinary form* of the rite, but to testify to adherence to the *depositum fidei* that finds perfect correspondence only in the Ancient Rite." The adverb

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"only" is extremely significant. The Old Mass is not merely an optional choice among two equal forms (new and old). It is the "only" one that perfectly corresponds to the Deposit of Faith (*depositum fidei*).

What Are Clerics To Do?

His Grace acknowledges the more complex situation of clerics. On one hand, clerics have less agility than the laity in seeking a place in the Church to remain Catholic because they must be subject to ecclesiastical superiors. Yet, they have greater freedom as they can at any time legitimately "celebrate the Mass and administer the Sacraments in the Tridentine Rite and … preach in conformity with sound doctrine." (Again, note the connection between liturgy and doctrine.) His Grace makes clear that clerics must avoid both the mistake of abandoning the visible Church to set up their own church as well as the opposite error of simply conforming to the New Mass and novel doctrine to avoid persecution. Clerics must remain in the Church and remain faithful to the Catholic Rite and the true doctrine, even at the cost of persecution, which he acknowledges they will suffer as did the few faithful clerics in the time of the Arian heresy.

He makes clear that priests must celebrate only "the Tridentine Mass and preach sound doctrine," but explains that truth cannot be preached if a priest never mentions the Council. He acknowledges that fulfilling these three duties (offering only the Catholic Rite, preaching the truth, and calling out the errors of the Council) may result in the priest being thrown out of his parish. But he reminds such persecuted priests: "No one can ever prevent you from renewing the Holy Sacrifice, even if it is on a makeshift altar in a cellar or an attic…." Priests must be willing to suffer such persecution for the Church. He urges faithful priests not to fear being called false names: "Let's stop fearing that the fault of the schism lies with those who denounce it, and not, instead, with those who carry it out: the ones who are schismatics and heretics are those who wound and crucify the Mystical Body of Christ, not those who defend it by denouncing the executioners!"

What Are the Laity To Do?

As noted earlier, His Grace makes clear that the laity have a right and duty to receive the traditional sacraments and true doctrine. They must seek out ministers who will provide them and avoid ministers "contaminated by present errors." Yet, he makes clear that the laity must do more than avail themselves of such good priests for their own spiritual benefit. They also have a "sacred task". They must "comfort good priests and good bishops" and "[g]ive them hospitality, help them, console them in their trials." Just as he put his finger so accurately on the Conciliar errors, His Grace also diagnoses a danger in Traditionalist

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communities that must be avoided, namely, the sowing of division. He calls on the laity to build communities "in which murmuring and division do not predominate, but rather fraternal charity in the bond of Faith."

What About the Society of Saint Pius X?

Perhaps as a more concrete answer to the question about where are we to turn, Archbishop Viganò reveals for the first time his thoughts regarding the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) and its founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. He believes the SSPX "deserves recognition for not having allowed the flame of Tradition to be extinguished…." He reveals that he considers them to be "a healthy thorn in the side" of the Modernist hierarchy and credits them for shining a light on "the contradictions and errors of the *conciliar sect."* He appears to condone the consecration of bishops without a written papal mandate in 1988 when he observes that these consecrations made it possible for the Society "to protect herself from the furious attack of the *Innovators*." His Grace refers to the punishments inflicted upon the Archbishop and his Society (the alleged claim of his excommunication, for example) not as acts of justice but rather those of "persecution." He believes that Archbishop Lefebvre's critique of the Council is "more relevant than ever." Rather than considering Lefebvre a "schismatic" or "excommunicate," Archbishop Viganò calls him "an exemplary confessor of the Faith."

Looking Forward with Hope to the Resurrection of the Church

Like Archbishop Lefebvre before him, Archbishop Viganò combines his clear-sighted diagnosis of the Conciliar disease with a true Catholic peace of soul that trusts firmly in God. After taking note that clerics and laity alike are beginning to see the Conciliar nightmare for what it is, he looks forward to a necessary "*awakening*" that is "almost a *resurrection*". Just as "no son tolerates his mother being outraged by the servants, or his father being tyrannized by the administrators of his goods," so to the Lord "offers us, in these painful situations, the possibility of being His allies in fighting this holy battle under His banner." Rather than becoming discouraged by unjust persecution, His Grace reminds us of the consolation that "the King Who is victorious over error and death" will "permits us to share the honor of triumphal victory and the eternal reward that derives from it, after having endured and suffered with Him." He exhorts us to practice the virtue of fortitude. We must not lose hope. His texts concludes with great confidence that God will rescue us from this crisis: "I am certain, with a certainty that comes to me from Faith, that the Lord will not fail to reward our fidelity … granting us holy priests, holy bishops, holy cardinals, and above all a holy Pope."

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Here follows the complete text of Archbishop Vigano's letter which can also be downloaded as a PDF here.

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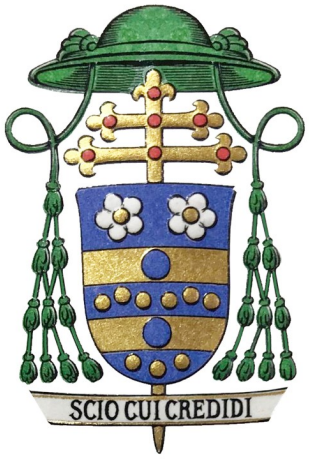

Archbishop Viganò's Episcopal Coat of Arms

Dear Mr. Kokx,

I read with lively interest your article "*Questions for Viganò: His Excellency is Right about Vatican II, But What Does He Think Catholic Should Do Now?*" which was published by *Catholic Family News* on August 22 (here). I am happy to respond to your questions, which address matters that are very important for the faithful.

You ask: "*What would 'separating' from the Conciliar Church look like in Archbishop Viganò's opinion?*" I respond to you with another question: "*What does it mean to separate from the Catholic Church according to the supporters of the Council?*" While it is clear that no admixture is possible with those who propose adulterated doctrines of the *conciliar ideological manifesto*, it should be noted that the simple fact of being baptized and of being living members of the Church of Christ does not imply adherence to the *conciliar team*; this is true above all for the simple faithful and also for secular and regular clerics who, for various reasons, sincerely consider themselves Catholics and recognize the Hierarchy.

Instead, what needs to be clarified is the position of those who, declaring themselves Catholic, embrace the heterodox doctrines that have spread over these decades, with the awareness that these represent a rupture with the preceding Magisterium. In this case it is licit to doubt their real adherence to the Catholic Church, in which however they hold official roles that confer authority on them. It is an illicitly exercised authority, if its purpose

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is to force the faithful to accept the revolution imposed since the Council.

Once this point has been clarified, it is evident that it is not the traditional faithful – that is, true Catholics, in the words of Saint Pius X – that must abandon the Church in which they have the full right to remain and from which it would be unfortunate to separate; but rather the Modernists who usurp the Catholic name, precisely because it is only the *bureaucratic* element that permits them not to be considered on a par with any heretical sect. This claim of theirs serves in fact to prevent them from ending up among the hundreds of heretical movements that over the course of the centuries have believed to be able to reform the Church at their own pleasure, placing their pride ahead of humbly guarding the teaching of Our Lord. But just as it is not possible to claim citizenship in a homeland in which one does not know its language, law, faith and tradition; so it is impossible that those who do not share the faith, morals, liturgy, and discipline of the Catholic Church can arrogate to themselves the right to remain within her and even to ascend the levels of the hierarchy.

Therefore let us not give in to the temptation to abandon – albeit with justified indignation – the Catholic Church, on the pretext that it has been invaded by heretics and fornicators: it is they who must be expelled from the sacred enclosure, in a work of purification and penance that must begin with each one of us.

It is also evident that there are widespread cases in which the faithful encounter serious problems in frequenting their parish church, just as there are ever fewer churches where the Holy Mass is celebrated in the Catholic Rite. The horrors that have been rampant for decades in many our parishes and shrines make it impossible even to assist at a “Eucharist” without being disturbed and putting one’s faith at risk, just as it is very difficult to ensure a Catholic education, Sacraments being worthily celebrated, and solid spiritual guidance for oneself and one’s children. In these cases faithful laity have the right and the duty to find priests, communities, and institutes that are faithful to the perennial Magisterium. And may they know how to accompany the laudable celebration of the liturgy in the Ancient Rite with adherence to sound doctrine and morals, without any subsidence on the front of the Council.

The situation is certainly more complex for clerics, who depend hierarchically on their bishop or religious superior, but who at the same time have the right to remain Catholic and be able to celebrate according to the Catholic Rite. On the one hand laity have more freedom of movement in choosing the community to which they turn for Mass, the Sacraments, and religious instruction, but less autonomy because of the fact that they still have to depend on a priest; on the other hand, clerics have less freedom of movement, since they are incardinated in a diocese or order and are subject to ecclesiastical authority, but they have more autonomy because of the fact that they can legitimately decide to celebrate the Mass and administer the Sacraments in the Tridentine Rite and to preach in conformity

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with sound doctrine. The Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* reaffirmed that faithful and priests have the inalienable right – which cannot be denied – to avail themselves of the liturgy that more perfectly expresses their Catholic Faith. But this right must be used today not only and not so much to preserve the *extraordinary form* of the rite, but to testify to adherence to the *depositum fidei* that finds perfect correspondence only in the Ancient Rite.

I daily receive heartfelt letters from priests and religious who are marginalized or transferred or ostracized because of their fidelity to the Church: the temptation to find an *ubi consistam* [a place to stand] far from the clamor of the Innovators is strong, but we ought to take an example from the persecutions that many saints have undergone, including Saint Athanasius, who offers us a model of how to behave in the face of widespread heresy and persecuting fury. As my venerable brother Bishop Athanasius Schneider has many times recalled, the Arianism that afflicted the Church at the time of the Holy Doctor of Alexandria in Egypt was so widespread among the bishops that it leaves one almost to believe that Catholic orthodoxy had completely disappeared. But it was thanks to the fidelity and heroic testimony of the few bishops who remained faithful that the Church knew how to get back up again. Without this testimony, Arianism would not have been defeated; without our testimony today, Modernism and the globalist apostasy of this pontificate will not be defeated.

It is therefore not a question of working from within the Church or outside it: the winemakers are called to work in the Lord's Vineyard, and it is there that they must remain even at the cost of their lives; the pastors are called to pastor the Lord's Flock, to keep the ravenous wolves at bay and to drive away the mercenaries who are not concerned with the salvation of the sheep and lambs.

This hidden and often silent work has been carried out by the Society of Saint Pius X, which deserves recognition for not having allowed the flame of Tradition to be extinguished at a moment in which celebrating the ancient Mass was considered subversive and a reason for excommunication. Its priests have been a healthy thorn in the side for a hierarchy that has seen in them an unacceptable point of comparison for the faithful, a constant reproach for the betrayal committed against the people of God, an inadmissible alternative to the *new conciliar path*. And if their fidelity made *disobedience* to the pope inevitable with the episcopal consecrations, thanks to them the Society was able to protect herself from the furious attack of the *Innovators* and by its very existence it allowed the possibility of the liberalization of the Ancient Rite, which until then was prohibited. Its presence also allowed the contradictions and errors of the *conciliar sect* to emerge, always winking at heretics and idolaters but implacably rigid and intolerant towards Catholic Truth.

I consider Archbishop Lefebvre an exemplary confessor of the Faith, and I think that by now

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it is obvious that his denunciation of the Council and the modernist apostasy is more relevant than ever. It should not be forgotten that the persecution to which Archbishop Lefebvre was subjected by the Holy See and the world episcopate served above all as a deterrent for Catholics who were refractory toward the *conciliar revolution.*

I also agree with the observation of His Excellency Bishop Bernard Tissier de Mallerais about the co-presence of two entities in Rome: the Church of Christ has been occupied and eclipsed by the modernist conciliar structure, which has established itself in the same hierarchy and uses the authority of its ministers to prevail over the Spouse of Christ and our Mother.

The Church of Christ – which not only *subsists* in the Catholic Church, but *is exclusively* the Catholic Church – is only obscured and eclipsed by *a strange extravagant Church* established in Rome, according to the vision of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich. It coexists, like wheat with the tare, in the Roman Curia, in dioceses, in parishes. We cannot judge our pastors for their intentions, nor suppose that all of them are corrupt in faith and morals; on the contrary, we can hope that many of them, hitherto intimidated and silent, will understand, as confusion and apostasy continue to spread, the deception to which they have been subjected and will finally shake off their slumber. There are many laity who are raising their voice; others will necessarily follow, together with good priests, certainly present in every diocese. This *awakening* of the Church militant – I would dare to call it almost a *resurrection* – is necessary, urgent and inevitable: no son tolerates his mother being outraged by the servants, or his father being tyrannized by the administrators of his goods. The Lord offers us, in these painful situations, the possibility of being His allies in fighting this holy battle under His banner: the King Who is victorious over error and death permits us to share the honor of triumphal victory and the eternal reward that derives from it, after having endured and suffered with Him.

But in order to deserve the immortal glory of Heaven we are called to rediscover – in an emasculated age devoid of values such as honor, faithfulness to one's word, and heroism – a fundamental aspect of the faith of every baptized person: the Christian life is a *militia*, and with the Sacrament of Confirmation we are called to be *soldiers of Christ*, under whose insignia we must fight. Of course, in most cases it is essentially a spiritual battle, but over the course of history we have seen how often, faced with the violation of the sovereign rights of God and the liberty of the Church, it was also necessary to take up arms: we are taught this by the strenuous resistance to repel the Islamic invasions in Lepanto and on the outskirts of Vienna, the persecution of the *Cristeros* in Mexico, of the Catholics in Spain, and even today by the cruel war against Christians throughout the world. Never as today can we understand the theological hatred coming from the enemies of God, inspired by

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Satan. The attack on everything that recalls the Cross of Christ – on Virtue, on the Good and the Beautiful, on purity – must spur us to get up, in a leap of pride, in order to claim our right not only not to be persecuted by our external enemies but also and above all to have strong and courageous pastors, holy and God-fearing, who will do exactly what their predecessors have done for centuries: preach the Gospel of Christ, convert individuals and nations, and expand the Kingdom of the living and true God throughout the world.

We are all called to make an act of Fortitude – a forgotten cardinal virtue, which not by chance in Greek recalls virile strength, ἀνδρεία – in knowing how to resist the Modernists: a resistance that is rooted in Charity and Truth, which are attributes of God.

If you only celebrate the Tridentine Mass and preach sound doctrine without ever mentioning the Council, what can they ever do to you? Throw you out of your churches, perhaps, and then what? No one can ever prevent you from renewing the Holy Sacrifice, even if it is on a makeshift altar in a cellar or an attic, as the *refractory priests* did during the French Revolution, or as happens still today in China. And if they try to distance you, resist: canon law serves to guarantee the government of the Church in the pursuit of its primary purposes, not to demolish it. Let's stop fearing that the fault of the schism lies with those who denounce it, and not, instead, with those who carry it out: the ones who are schismatics and heretics are those who wound and crucify the Mystical Body of Christ, not those who defend it by denouncing the executioners!

The laity can expect their ministers to behave as such, preferring those who prove that they are not contaminated by present errors. If a Mass becomes an occasion of torture for the faithful, if they are forced to assist at sacrileges or to support heresies and ramblings unworthy of the House of the Lord, it is a thousand times preferable to go to a church where the priest celebrates the Holy Sacrifice worthily, in the rite given to us by Tradition, with preaching in conformity with sound doctrine. When parish priests and bishops realize that the Christian people demand the Bread of Faith, and not the stones and scorpions of the neo-church, they will lay aside their fears and comply with the legitimate requests of the faithful. The others, true mercenaries, will show themselves for what they are and will be able to gather around them only those who share their errors and perversions. They will be extinguished by themselves: the Lord dries up the swamp and makes the land on which brambles grow arid; he extinguishes vocations in corrupt seminaries and in convents rebellious to the Rule.

The lay faithful today have a sacred task: to comfort good priests and good bishops, gathering like sheep around their shepherds. Give them hospitality, help them, console them in their trials. Create community in which murmuring and division do not predominate, but rather fraternal charity in the bond of Faith. And since in the order established by God –

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κόσμος – subjects owe obedience to authority and cannot do otherwise than resist it when it abuses its power, no fault will be attributed to them for the infidelity of their leaders, on whom rests the very serious responsibility for the way in which they exercise the vicarious power which has been given to them. We must not rebel, but oppose; we must not be pleased with the errors of our pastors, but pray for them and admonish them respectfully; we must not question their authority but the way in which they use it.

I am certain, with a certainty that comes to me from Faith, that the Lord will not fail to reward our fidelity, after having punished us for the faults of the men of the Church, granting us holy priests, holy bishops, holy cardinals, and above all a holy Pope. But these saints will arise from our families, from our communities, from our churches: families, communities, and churches in which the grace of God must be cultivated with constant prayer, with the frequenting of Holy Mass and the Sacraments, with the offering of sacrifices and penances that the Communion of Saints permits us to offer to the Divine Majesty in order to expiate our sins and those of our brethren, including those who exercise authority. The laity have a fundamental role in this, guarding the Faith within their families, in such a way that our young people who are educated in love and in the fear of God may one day be responsible fathers and mothers, but also worthy ministers of the Lord, His heralds in the male and female religious orders, and His apostles in civil society.

The cure for rebellion is obedience. The cure for heresy is faithfulness to the teaching of Tradition. The cure for schism is filial devotion for the Sacred Pastors. The cure for apostasy is love for God and His Most Holy Mother. The cure for vice is the humble practice of virtue. The cure for the corruption of morals is to live constantly in the presence of God. But obedience cannot be perverted into stolid servility; respect for authority cannot be perverted into the obeisance of the court. And let’s not forget that if it is the duty of the laity to obey their Pastors, it is even a more grave duty of the Pastors to obey God, *usque ad effusionem sanguinis*.

+ Carlo Maria Viganò, *Archbishop*

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Translated by Giuseppe Pellegrino

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