

The Grain of Incense: Sedevacantists and *Una Cum* Masses

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Should we assist at traditional Masses offered “together with Thy servant Benedict, our Pope”?

“Do not allow your tongue to give utterance to what your heart knows is not true.... To say *Amen* is to subscribe to the truth.”

— St. Augustine, on the Canon

“Our charity is untruthful because it is not severe; and it is unpersuasive, because it is not truthful... Where there is no hatred of heresy, there is no holiness.”

— Father Faber, *The Precious Blood*

IN OUR LIVES as traditional Catholics, we make many judgments that must inevitably produce logical consequences in our actual religious practice. The earliest that I remember making occurred at about age 14. Guitar songs at Mass, I concluded, were irreverent. Thereafter, throughout eight years in the diocesan seminary, I never once opened my mouth to sing one.

For some questions, the practical course of action that follows from a judgment is self-evident: If the Paul VI rite for making priests and bishops is invalid, we should avoid the Masses these priests and bishops offer.

For other questions, how we must act may not be so obvious — or it may be dictated by instinct, because we cannot necessarily explain all the underlying principles.

For some sedevacantists, one issue in particular falls into the latter category: a traditional Latin Mass offered by a validly ordained priest who utters a phrase in the Canon referring to *Benedict, our Pope*. This practice is followed by all priests who offer the recently instituted Motu Masses, as well as by priests of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), its affiliated organizations and the majority of “independent” traditionalist priests.

These Masses are also sometimes referred to as “*una cum* Masses,” from the Latin phrase in the Canon into which the name of a reigning pope is inserted: *una cum famulo tuo Papa nostro N.* (together with Thy servant N., our Pope)

Now, since a sedevacantist is a traditionalist who has concluded that Benedict XVI is a *heretic* and *not* a true pope, his first instinct is to seek out a traditional Latin Mass offered by a sedevacantist priest, and to *avoid* traditional Masses where the priest refers to Benedict XVI as a pope. To act otherwise seems contradictory or somehow “feels” wrong for the sedevacantist, even though he may not necessarily be able to

articulate any theological reasons or arguments for what he does.

He has read or heard the stories of countless early martyrs who chose horrible deaths, rather than offer even *one* grain of incense in tribute to the false, ecumenical religion of the Roman emperor. So better to avoid altogether the Masses of priests who, through the *una cum*, offer a grain of incense to the heresiarch Ratzinger and *his* false ecumenical religion...

In many parts of the world, however, the only traditional Latin Mass available may be one offered by a priest (Motu, SSPX or independent) who puts the false pope’s name in the Canon. Faced with choosing this or nothing, a sedevacantist is then sometimes tempted to assist at the Mass anyway.

The temptation will be much greater now, since Ratzinger has permitted the Motu Mass. In some dioceses, older priests who were validly ordained have come out of retirement to offer Mass according to the ‘62 Missal. Moreover, a substantial number of priests who were validly ordained in SSPX have defected to organizations like the Fraternity of St. Peter and will also offer the Motu Mass. Such Masses will be valid. Why not simply overlook Benedict’s name in the Canon, and “just go for the Mass”? It’s just *one* grain of incense, after all...

Although various arguments have been offered to justify the assistance of sedevacantists at *una cum* Masses, none of them really seems to ring true.

The priests who offer these Masses assert in the Canon that Ratzinger is a *true* pope, while a sedevacantist (by definition) affirms the opposite. By actively assisting at such a Mass, a sedevacantist condones the assertion that the celebrant publicly makes in the name of all present — *Benedict, OUR Pope* — an assertion that the sedevacantist knows and believes to be false.

The inconsistency — a complete disconnect between belief and worship — should be obvious after about 10 seconds of reflection. The theoretical conclusion (Ratzinger is not a true pope), we sense, should dictate the practical conclusion (don’t assist at Masses where the prayers say the opposite).

But what are the underlying *principles* that should dictate our course of action here? *Why* is it wrong for a sedevacantist to assist actively at a traditional Latin Mass in which the priest employs the phrase *Benedict our Pope* in the Canon?

Because I have written much over the years about

sedevacantism, canon law and the sacred liturgy, I am now often asked this question. In this article I will answer it at some length, because I consider the issue crucial for the future of the traditionalist movement.

Moreover, there is a vast amount of material in the writings of popes, dogmatic theologians, canonists, moral theologians, Vatican decrees and liturgical scholars that, taken together, provides us with a very clear answer to this question.

Not everyone will have the patience to slog through a long article. I promise such readers that I will soon produce a brief summary of what follows, much as I offered a short résumé of my study on the 1968 Rite of Episcopal Consecration.

In either version, though, the structure of our inquiry will be fairly straightforward, and we will examine the following points:

(I) The meaning of the *una cum* phrase in the Canon, both linguistically and theologically, and how that meaning must be applied to Ratzinger.

(II) Whether the sedevacantist who actively participates in an *una cum* Mass likewise participates in the prayer that contains that phrase.

(III) Why a sedevacantist should not actively participate in such a Mass.

In this, the long version of the article, we will also present various arguments that have been made to justify assisting at Masses where Ratzinger is offered his grain of incense, and demonstrate how these need to be taken with more than a grain of salt. We will conclude with a summary.

I. The Meaning of the Prayer.

THE PHRASE under discussion (*una cum famulo tuo Papa nostro N.*) appears in the opening prayer of the Canon (the *Te igitur*) that commends the Sacrifice to God. It is indicated below in **bold**:

“..which in the first place we offer up to Thee for Thy holy Catholic Church, that it may please Thee to grant her peace, to protect, unite and govern her throughout the world, **together with Thy servant N. our Pope**, N. our Bishop, and all true believers and professors of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith.”

What does the clause in bold actually mean? And more specifically, what meaning results when the name of Benedict XVI is inserted into the phrase?

To answer these questions, we will look first to the *linguistic* meaning of the phrase, and then to its broader *theological* meaning in the context of the Canon of the Mass.

A. Linguistic Meaning

1. Grammar. In an article written in 1992, Father (now Bishop) Donald Sanborn noted that the rules of Latin grammar permitted at least three possible antecedents for the phrase *una cum* (*together with*), each of which produced a slightly different meaning.¹ Subsequent

writers have suggested additional readings and meanings.

Lest my readers' eyes immediately glaze over at the mere mention of Latin grammar, I will “translate” these grammatical differences into the meanings that the *una cum* phrase conveys if the name *Benedict* (Joseph Ratzinger) is introduced into it:

(1) **Adjective** modifying *Church* = *one with*, or *united with*: “The heretic/false pope Ratzinger is *united to* the Catholic Church and vice versa.”

(2) **Adverb** modifying *we offer* = *we offer together with*: “The heretic/false pope Ratzinger jointly offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass *along with* the priest and the Church.”

(3) **Appositional link** with *Church* = *for thy Church, which includes*. “The heretic/false pope Ratzinger is among the members of the Church *for* whom the priest and the Church *intercede* through the offering of the Mass.”

(4) **Coordinating conjunction** with *Church, bishop, all true believers* = *and for Thy servant, the pope*: “The priest and the Church offer the Mass *for* the servant of God and heretic/false pope Ratzinger.”

Some sedevacantists maintain that the fourth explanation is the only possible meaning for the *una cum* phrase. The petition, they contend, is thus nothing more than a prayer of intercession offered *for* — and they repeatedly emphasize the *for* — the welfare of various members of the Church, rather than some sort of expression of union with a false pope. Thus the mere fact that a priest prays *for* Benedict by name in the Canon should not prevent a sedevacantist from assisting at his Mass. It's a good thing to pray for people, after all...

But this fourth meaning for *una cum* “translates” no better than the first three, because it still places Ratzinger (as its proponents admit) in a prayer offered for the *members of the Church*. And a sedevacantist must reject this fourth proposition as well as the other three, because Ratzinger's heresy removes him not simply from the papacy, but *from the very Church itself*.

The canonists and theologians cited to support the key principle in the sedevacantist case state that it is the *loss of membership in the Church* that produces the loss of the pontificate. Thus the dogmatic theologian Iragui says:

“Theologians commonly concede that the Roman Pontiff, if he should fall into manifest heresy, **would no longer be a member of the Church**, and therefore could neither be called its visible head.”²

So, no matter how you construe it grammatically, the phrase *together with Thy servant, Benedict, our Pope* still produces an affirmation that the heretic Ratzinger is not only a true pope, but also a member of the true Church.

1. D. Sanborn, “Una Cum,” *Sacerdotium* 6 (Winter 1993), 40–1.

2. S. Iragui, *Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Madrid: Ediciones Studium 1959), 371. See also the quotes from Wernz-Vidal, Coronata, St. Antoninus, St. Robert Bellarmine, Badii, Beste and Regatillo in A. Cekada, *Traditionalists, Infallibility and the Pope*.

And this proposition a sedevacantist firmly rejects.

2. Terminology. Obviously, a sedevacantist takes exception to applying the expression *our Pope* to Ratzinger.

But another expression, *Thy servant*, poses a similar problem.

The Latin word that the Canon employs is *famulus*. This does not merely connote someone you employ to perform occasional tasks for you — the cleaning lady, the waiter, or (in California) your pool boy or personal trainer.

Rather, in ecclesiastical Latin its sense is *a servant of God; a Christian*.³ In liturgical prayers, it is applied exclusively to members of the Church.⁴ No heretic can be a *famulus*. He has abandoned the service of God in the household of the faith.

Employed in the Canon with the name Benedict, the expression *famulus tuus*, like *una cum*, produces another affirmation that the heretic Ratzinger is a member of the Church.

Once again, this is a proposition that a sedevacantist rejects.

3. Context. There are two more terms in the context of the phrase that pose problems.

(a) The designation of Ratzinger as *our Pope* occurs in a phrase linking him to — indeed placing him *before* — *all true believers and professors of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith*. (The Latin word is *orthodoxis*.)

While a few liturgical scholars maintained that the phrase refers to all Catholics, lay and clerical, most say that it refers to Catholic bishops. These are by definition *orthodoxi* and, in virtue of their office, what the Latin terms *cultores* (cultivators, protectors, promoters) of the Catholic and apostolic faith.

The sedevacantist knows that Ratzinger, if anything, is the opposite.

(b) St. Robert Bellarmine says that the three prayers that begin our Canon (*Te igitur*, the *Memento* of the Living, and *Communicantes* that contains the names of the saints) are but one prayer. The third, *Communicantes* (*In communion with*) joins “the mortals who are in the Church Militant” with “the saints who reign with Christ in heaven.”⁵

And again, this poses the same problem: If Ratzinger is a heretic, he cannot be *in communion with* either the Church Militant or the Church Triumphant.

3. M. Ellebracht, *Remarks on the Vocabulary of the Ancient Orations in the Missale Romanum* (Nijmegen: Dekker 1963), 30.

4. For examples, see P. Bruylants, *Les Oraisons du Missel Romain* (Louvain: CDIL 1952) 1:236

5. *De Missa*, 6.21, in *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei* (Naples: Guiliano 1858) 3:565. “Prima igitur oratio Canonis, quae incipit: *Te igitur clementissime Pater*, extenditur usque ad illud: *Hanc igitur oblationem*.... [The intervening prayers] non sunt diversae orationes, sed partes sunt primae orationis.... *Communicantes* non haberet ullum sensum, nisi continuaretur cum praecedentibus verbis.... [This one continuous prayer] continet nomina eorum, pro quibus offertur et in quorum honorem offertur sacrificium, id est, mortalium qui sunt in Ecclesia militanti, et etiam sanctorum, qui cum Christo regnant in coelis.”

B. Theological Meaning in the Liturgy

Thus the linguistic considerations. But what of the far more important *theological* meaning that is attached to mentioning the pope by name in the most solemn prayer of the Catholic liturgy?

Here is how various popes and liturgical scholars have explained its significance.

1. Recognition of the Head of the Church. In a Bull addressed to Eastern Rite Catholics, this was one of the meanings that Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) assigned to the mention of the pope’s name in the Sacred Liturgy:

“It suffices Us to be able to state that a commemoration of the supreme pontiff and prayers offered for [the pope] during the sacrifice of the Mass is considered, and really is, an affirmative indication which recognizes him as the head of the Church, the vicar of Christ, and the successor of blessed Peter,...”⁶

2. Recognition of the Principle of Unity. In his lengthy book on the Canon of the Mass, Father Gassner observed of the first prayer in the Canon:

“The unity prayed for is specified with the addition of the names of the Pope and the Bishop as the principle of that unity.”⁷

Further, according to a commentary by Fr. Thalhofer:

“The petition is offered for those instruments through which God guides and governs the Church: first, the Pope as the head of the whole Church and the supreme bearer of ecclesiastical unity.”⁸

One of Cardinal Schuster’s observations lends additional support to this point. He says that older manuscripts of the Canon include only the petition that mentions the Pope, and not the petitions referring to the diocesan bishop and *all true believers*. Thus the expression *una cum* (together with) more clearly refers back to the word *Ecclesia* (Church).⁹

We see this in a 9th-century Missal from the time of Charlemagne. Here the sense of the phrase is clearly:

“for Thy holy Catholic **Church**, that it may please Thee to grant her peace, to protect, unite and govern her throughout the world, **united with** Thy servant N. our Pope.”¹⁰

6. Bull *Ex Quo* (1 March 1756), ¶12 in *S.D.N. Benedicti Papae XIV Bullarium* (Malines: Hanicq 1827) 4:299. “Nobis satis est affirmare posse, commemorationem Romani Pontificis in Missa, fusasque pro eodem in Sacrificio preces, censer, et esse, declarativum quoddam signum, quo idem Pontifex tanquam Ecclesiae Caput, Vicarius Christi, et B. Petri Apostoli Successor agnoscitur.”

7. J. Gassner, *The Canon of the Mass: Its History, Theology, and Art* (St. Louis: Herder 1950), 225-6.

8. V. Thalhofer, *Handbuch der Catholicischen Liturgie* (Freiburg: Herderische Verlagshandlung), 164. “Die sichtbaren Organe, durch welche Gott die Kirche leitet und regiert und für welche daher zuerst gebete wird, sind der Papst als Oberhaupt der ganzen Kirche und oberster Träger der kirchlichen Einheit.”

9. I. Schuster, *The Sacramentary (Liber Sacramentorum)* (London: Burns Oates 1924), 1:273.

10. H.A. Wilson ed., *The Gregorian Sacramentary under Charles the Great, Edited from Three Mss. of the Ninth Century*, (London: 1915), 2.

3. Profession of Communion with the Pope. This was yet another meaning that Pope Benedict XIV attached to the practice of mentioning the name of the pope in the Mass.

"[This commemoration of the pope is, moreover] the profession of a mind and will which firmly espouses Catholic unity. This was rightly noticed by Christianus Lupus in his work on the Councils: 'This commemoration is the chief and most glorious form of communion'...."¹¹

We have mentioned St. Robert Bellarmine's contention that what we now think of as the first *three* prayers of the Canon (*Te igitur*, *Memento* and *Communicantes*) should be thought of as *one* prayer expressing the idea of communion among the members of the Church.

Cardinal Schuster offered a reconstruction of an earlier version of the text of the Canon that reflected this. He maintained that the word that begins what is now the third prayer of the Canon (*communicantes*, meaning *in communion with*) was directly linked without any intervening prayer to the petition in the first prayer that mentioned the name of the pope.

The sense of the text that results is as follows:

"which we offer unto Thee for thy Church... — we who are in communion with and one with Thy servant, our pope, and venerating first of all the glorious and blessed ever-virgin..."¹²

4. Profession of Communion with the True Church. This is the conclusion one draws from the teaching of Pope Pelagius I (556–61) in a letter of rebuke to schismatics:

"How can you believe that you are not separated from communion with the universal church if you do not mention my name within the sacred mysteries, as the custom is?"¹³

And further, according to the commentary on the Mass by Canon Croegaert:

"To pray for the Pope is to give witness that you live in communion with the Head of the true Church."¹⁴

5. A Sign of Orthodoxy. In a lengthy discussion of the first prayer of the Canon, Cardinal Schuster also states:

"pro ecclesia tua sancta catholica quam pacificare custodire adunare et regere digneris toto orbe terrarum una cum famulo tuo papa nostro illo. Memento domine..." A footnote indicates that one of the manuscripts adds the phrase "et antistite nostro illo et omnibus orthodoxis atque catholicae et apostolicae fidei cultoribus," which appears in the Canon of the Missal of Pius V.

11. Bull *Ex Quo*, ¶12, *Bullarium* 4:299. "...ac professio fit animi et voluntatis Catholicae unitati firmiter adhaerentis; ut etiam recte advertit Christianus Lupus, super Conciliis scribens [cite omitted] *Haec commemoratio est suprema et honoratissima Communionis species.*"

12. *Sacramentary*, 1:275, 276–7. "tibi offerimus pro Ecclesia tua... una cum famulo tuo Papa nostro communicantes sed et memoriam venerantes imprimis gloriosae."

13. *Epistola* 5, PL 69:398. "Quomodo vos ab universi orbis communionem separatos esse non creditis, si mei inter sacra mysteria, secundum consuetudinem, cominis memoria reticetis?"

14. A. Croegaert, *Les Rites et les Prières du Saint Sacrifice de la Messe* (Paris: Casterman n.d.) 2:106. "Prier pour le Pape c'est témoigner qu'on vit en communion avec le Chef de la vraie Eglise."

"The mention of the name of the Pope in the Canon is a proof of the orthodoxy of the offerer."¹⁵

6. Authorized Intermediary with God. Dom de Puniet offers this as yet another theological explanation:

"The first name after the universal Church to be commended to God is that of the ruling Pontiff, the visible pastor and the authorized intermediary with almighty God for the various members of his flock."¹⁶

C. Application to Ratzinger

The fundamental problem with applying the *linguistic* meanings of the *una cum* phrase to Ratzinger, as we noted in (A), is that they all place him within the Church, where, as a heretic, he cannot be.

However, when we apply the *theological* meanings given above (1–6) to the phrase: *together with Thy servant Benedict our Pope*, in the Canon, here is what results:

- The heretic/false pope Ratzinger is "the head of the Church, the vicar of Christ, and the successor of blessed Peter."

- The acknowledgment of the heretic/false pope Ratzinger in the Canon is "the chief and most glorious form of communion" with him, "the profession of a mind and will which firmly espouses Catholic unity."

- The inclusion of the name of the heretic/false pope Ratzinger in the Canon specifies him as "the principle of unity."

- Mentioning the name of the heretic/false pope Ratzinger in the Canon is a sign that you "are not separated from communion with the universal church."

- The mention of the name of the heretic/false Pope Ratzinger in the Canon "is a proof of the orthodoxy of the offerer."

- The heretic/false pope Ratzinger is the "ruling Pontiff, the visible pastor and the authorized intermediary with almighty God for the various members of his flock."

A sedevacantist would consider each of these propositions a theological horror or absurdity. Yet these are what results when a priest professes in the Canon that he offers the traditional Mass *una cum* — *together with Thy servant Benedict, our Pope*.

II. Your Participation and Assent

THUS FAR, we have discussed the meaning of what the priest says at the altar.

But what bearing, if any, does all the foregoing information have on the proverbial man in the pew — in this case, a sedevacantist who, for some reason or another, is trying to figure out whether or not he should assist at an *una cum* Mass that is offered in the

15. *Sacramentary* 1:276

16. *The Mass: Its Origin and History* (New York: Longmans 1930), 137.

traditional rite by a validly-ordained priest?

The innate human inclination to act in a way consistent with firmly-held convictions tells the sedevacantist that he should *not* assist at such a Mass. His presence implies consent.

On the other hand, it is the *priest* who utters the heretic's name. The sedevacantist *objects* to the practice. Can he *withhold* his consent from the phrase *together with Thy servant Benedict our Pope*? Some have argued — and rather insistently — that this is possible.¹⁷

But it is not, and the notion is completely ridiculous.

This theory falls into the category of what I call “lay theology error,” because it is based on underlying principles that virtually *any* priest, no matter how dim or poorly educated, would instinctively sense are completely wrong. Other examples in this category are Feeneyism, Liénartism, Sirio-papism and condemnations of NFP.

Here is why a traditional Catholic priest will immediately sense a problem with the “withhold-consent” theory. He spends about one-and-three-quarter hours a day reciting the Church's official public prayers — the Divine Office and the Mass. All of these prayers, virtually without exception, are composed in the first-person plural: *We pray, we offer, we beseech*, etc.

The priest knows that these official prayers are phrased this way for a reason: He, the priest, prays them on behalf of and in union with Our Lord and His Church, including all its lay members — and moreover in the case of the Mass, united with the faithful who are present.

This is the nature of the Church's liturgical prayer. For the laymen so bold as to “disagree” with petitions the priest makes in the various prayers prescribed for Mass, there are no “opt-out” or Country Buffet provisions. It is all of one piece. As Paulina, our long-time cook, says about her menu: You have two choices: take it or leave it.

To understand why the very idea of an *una cum* opt-out is a liturgico-theological impossibility, we now turn to some specific points about how we assist at Mass, what our participation connotes, how the laity present cooperate with the priest in offering the Sacrifice, and specifically, how and why the laity give their assent to the prayers of the Canon in particular.

A. How You Actively Participate at Mass

Traditional Catholics tend to look upon a sacrament as primarily something the priest *gives* and the layman *receives*. The priest is active, the layman passive. The priest *confers* the sacrament; the lay recipient cooperates and *consents* to receive it.

This paradigm does not hold, though, for assistance at Mass. You are not meant merely to *consent* and to *receive* something passively (grace, Holy Communion,

“credit” for fulfilling your Sunday obligation, etc.), but to *participate* and to *give* something. What are you meant to give? Active worship of God, because as a result of your baptism, you are both privileged and obliged to participate, according to your state, in offering up the Holy Sacrifice.

Please note the verb: participate.

Unfortunately, during and after Vatican II, the modernists appropriated this language, corrupted its real meaning, and used it to transform the Mass into an engine for doctrinal revolution throughout the world. Thus, they turned the priest into a president, the “assembly” into the primary agent of worship, and regimented “responses” into the only permissible indicator of participation, with all present pummeled into submission by microphones and speakers that project the Giant Amplified Voice.

Traditionalists, therefore, are understandably skittish about any talk of how they are supposed to assist or participate *actively* in offering the Holy Sacrifice. Nevertheless, active assistance and participation in the Mass, understood in the correct sense, is *required* of every Catholic.

At the traditional Mass, how do members of the laity manifest their active assistance or participation in the Mass? There are several ways, and this list is by no means exhaustive.

- (1) By receiving Holy Communion during the Mass.
- (2) Serving Mass for the priest at the altar.
- (3) Singing in the choir.
- (4) Singing responses as a member of the congregation at High Mass, or singing hymns during Low Mass, where either practice is the custom.
- (5) Using a Missal to follow and pray privately the prayers of the Mass as the priest recites them at the altar.
- (6) Using a book of meditations or prayers that follows the actions of the Mass.
- (7) Reciting the Rosary, while looking at the sacred actions taking place at the altar.
- (8) Attentively following the actions of the priest at the altar while making the customary external signs of devotion appropriate to each part of the Mass (standing, sitting, kneeling, striking your breast, making Signs of the Cross, looking up at the Sacred Host, folding your hands, etc.)
- (9) Physical presence, accompanied by the intention to assist at Mass and fulfill the Sunday obligation, together with a certain degree of attention during the rite.

In one or more of the foregoing, of course, the traditionalist reader will recognize the method he employs every Sunday when he goes to Mass. But whichever of these methods the layman chooses, it does in fact constitute a true and active participation in the Mass.

17. Not only that, but some even *recommend* that sedevacantists assist at *una cum* Masses as a sort of fast lane to fostering back-slapping mateyness among trads.

B. Active Participation = Your Approval

Apart from an exterior manifestation of piety within, what does such active participation in common worship connote in general?

The longer treatises on canon law and moral theology explain that active participation in a religious rite constitutes an *implicit approval of the rite* and a *sign of unity in religion*.

Joint participation (*communicatio*), says the Spanish canonist and theologian Regatillo, consists in “performing an act simultaneously with another person in such a way that both persons morally participate in the same action.” In worship this occurs through “gestures, movements, or ceremonial signs” that are somehow determined by convention.¹⁸ These, says Benedictine canonist Beste, connote “cooperation or common action with another in the prayers and functions of worship.”¹⁹

The Dominican moral theologian Merkelbach says that active religious participation “is rightly considered a sign of religious unity.” It constitutes “implicit approval of an exercise of worship.”²⁰

So even according to general principles of moral theology and canon law, a sedevacantist who actively assists at a Mass in which the priest employs the phrase *together with Thy servant Benedict our Pope* in the Canon is presumed to cooperate with and approve of what takes place.

C. You Join with the Action of the Celebrant.

More than that, however, the laymen who actively assist at the traditional Mass through one of the methods we have described above do not simply *approve* of what the priest does at the altar; they actually *join with him* in offering it.

Various popes and pre-Vatican II theologians have explained how and why:

- **Pope Innocent III (1198–1216):** “Not only do the priests offer the sacrifice, but also all the faithful: for what the priest does personally by virtue of his ministry, **the faithful do collectively by virtue of their intention.**”²¹

- **Maurice de la Taille SJ (1920):** “The Congregation Who Assist at Mass, as Offerers.... Those who assist exert, in a greater degree than those who are not present, their native power to offer as members of the ecclesiastical body, in so far as they are more intimately united with the sacrifice by this outward

expression of actual devotion. **By their presence they indicate that they ratify, as far as in them lies, the offering which is made in their name, and hence by a special title they make it their own and offer it.**”²²

- **Henry Noldin SJ (1920):** “The special and accessory offerers are those faithful who unite themselves in some way by their actions to the priest offering the Mass.... In the second place are **those who are actually present at the Mass, who therefore participate by their will and their presence.**”²³

- **Pope Pius XII (1947):** “The people **unite their hearts in praise, impetration, expiation and thanksgiving with the prayers or intention of the priest**, even of the High Priest himself, so that in the one and the same offering of the victim and according to a visible sacerdotal rite, they may be presented to God the Father.”²⁴

- **Felix Cappello SJ (1954):** “The special offerer (which many call the secondary and accessory offerer) is each and every member of the faithful who (as we have indicated above) **joins in offering the sacrifice through some external assent** [... which Suarez correctly describes as...] ‘**to assist by consenting and by morally cooperating**’.”²⁵

The sedevacantist therefore does indeed manifest consent and moral cooperation with the action of the priest as he offers the sacrifice *together with Thy servant Benedict our Pope*.

D. You Participate in and Ratify the Canon.

And still more to our point, the faithful who actively assist at the traditional Mass ratify, assent to and participate in the prayers of the Canon that the priest recites, even though they do not vocally recite these prayers themselves.

For this point, we draw our proofs from two sources, the Fathers of the Church and Pius XII:

1. **The Church Fathers.** The theologians we have cited to demonstrate that the people join with the priest in offering the sacrifice point to the writings of the Fathers of the Church, who state explicitly that the faithful ratify and affirm the truth of the “prayer of thanksgiving” the celebrant recites, that is, the Canon:

- **St. John Chrysostom:** “The prayer wherein thanksgiving is made [the Canon] **is common to both** [that is, the priest and the people], it is not the priest

18. E.F. Regatillo, *Institutiones Iuris Canonici* (Santander: Sal Terrae 1956) 2:103. “Communicatio in aliqua actione est positio illius cum alio, ita ut actio moraliter eadem ab utroque participetur... Edeger gestus, motus, signa ceremoniarum, quae ex conventionem determinata...”

19. U. Beste, *Introductio in Codicem* (Collegeville: St. Johns 1946), c. 1258. “cooperationem seu communem actionem cum alio in orationibus et functionibus cultus.”

20. B. Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae Moralis* (Montreal: Desclée 1949) 1:753-54. “recte existimaretur ut signum religiosae unitatis.” “implicita approbatio exercitii cultus.”

21. Innocent III, *De Sacro Altaris Mysterio*, 3.6. “Non solum offerunt sacerdotes, sed et universi fideles: nam quod specialiter adimpletur ministerio sacerdotum, hoc universaliter agitur voto fidelium.”

22. M. de la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith* (London: Sheed & Ward 1950) 2:260.

23. H. Noldin, *Summa Theologiae Moralis* (Innsbruck: Rauch 1920) 3:166. “Offerentes speciales et accessorii sunt fideles, qui sacerdoti offerenti aliquo modo actu se adiungunt... secundum locum obtinent, qui missae reipsa intersunt, qui ergo voluntate et praesentia sua participant.”

24. Pius XII, Encyclical *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947), ¶93.

25. F. Cappello *Tractatus Canonico Moralis de Sacramentis* (Rome: Marietti 1954) 1:494. “Offerens specialis — quem nonnulli vocant *secundarium et accessorium* — est omnis et solus fidelis, qui, ut supra innimus, sacrificio offerendo cooperatur per quendam concursum externum.... ‘denique assistere consentiendo, ac moraliter cooperando...’”

alone, but the whole of the people who give thanks to God. For it is only when he [the priest] has taken up their words, **by which they have agreed that it is meetly and justly done**, that he begins the action of thanksgiving or Eucharist."²⁶

• **St. Augustine:** "When you have heard the priest say: *Lift up your hearts* you reply *We have lifted them up to the Lord*. Take pains to answer truthfully, because you are answering in the presence of the action of God. Let it be so, as you say it is; **do not allow your tongue to give utterance to what your heart knows is not true.... To say Amen is to subscribe to the truth. In Latin Amen means It is true.**"²⁷

• **St. Remigius of Auxerre:** "The *Amen*, which is answered by the whole church, means *it is true*. The faithful therefore give this reply to this great mystery, as they do in all legitimate prayer, and they as it were subscribe to its truth by so replying."²⁸

Although in the traditional Mass the choir (at High Mass) or the altar boy (at Low Mass) now make these responses vocally, they do so not only as representatives of the whole Catholic Church, but also as representatives of the faithful present and devoutly assisting at Mass.

2. Pope Pius XII. In *Mediator Dei*, his great encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy, Pius XII treats at great length the role that the laity play in offering the Holy Sacrifice.

"Moreover, **the rites and prayers of the Eucharistic sacrifice signify and show no less clearly that the oblation of the Victim is made by the priests in company with the people.** For not only does the sacred minister, after the offering of the bread and wine when he turns to the people, say the significant prayer: 'Pray brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty;' but also **the prayers by which the divine Victim is offered to God are generally expressed in the plural number: and in these it is indicated more than once that the people also participate in this august sacrifice inasmuch as they offer the same.**"²⁹

He quotes several passages in the Canon to demonstrate this truth:

• "For whom we offer, or who offer up to Thee . . . We therefore beseech thee, O Lord, to be appeased

26. St. John Chrysostom, Homily *In II Cor.*, 18.3, PG 61:527. "Rursus ea oratio, qua Deo gratiae aguntur, utriusque communis est: neque enim ipse solus gratias agit, sed etiam plebs universa. Nam cum prius illorum vocem sumpsit, atque illi assenserunt id digne ac iuste fieri, tum demum gratiarum actionem auspicatur."

27. St. Augustine, Homily *de Sacramento Altaris ad Infantes*, 3, PL 46:836. "...cum audieritis a Sacerdote: *Sursum cor!* Respondetis: *Habemus ad Dominum*. Laborate, ut verum respondeatis. Quia apud acta Dei respondetis, sic sit, quomodo dicitis. Non lingua sonet, et conscientia neget... Ad hoc dicitis: *Amen*. Amen dicere suscribere est. Amen latine interpretatur Verum."

28. Remigius of Auxerre, *De Celebratione Missae et Ejus Significatione*, PL 101: 1265. "*Amen* autem, quod ab omni Ecclesia respondetur, interpretatur, verum. Hoc ergo ad tanti mysterii consummationem, sicut et in omni legitima oratione, et quasi subscribunt respondendo."

29. *Mediator Dei*, ¶84.

and to receive this offering of our bounded duty, as also of thy whole household."

• "We thy servants, as also thy whole people."
• "[We] do offer unto thy most excellent majesty, of thine own gifts bestowed upon us, a pure victim, a holy victim, a spotless victim."

The language of the first prayer of the Canon that the priest at an *una cum* Mass uses to make the common offering — "which we offer up to Thee... together with Thy servant Benedict, our Pope" — is not such, then, that a sedevacantist can "withhold consent" from it. Together with the priest at the altar, he joins in offering the grain of incense to Ratzinger.

III. Why You Should Not Participate

IN THE TWO previous sections we established that: (1) The various linguistic and theological meanings for the phrase *together with Thy servant Benedict, our Pope* all place Ratzinger within the Church and explicitly acknowledge him as a true pope, and (2) a layman who assists or actively participates at a Mass in which a priest employs that phrase in the Canon likewise participates in and ratifies the priest's affirmation that Ratzinger is a true pope.

For a sedevacantist to do so, obviously, would be inconsistent and contradictory. But would it actually be wrong?

The short answer is yes — and for a whole host of reasons. For the most part, however, they are merely the logical consequences of the underlying idea identified above in section II.B: that active participation in a religious rite constitutes an implicit *approval of the rite* and a *sign of unity in religion*.

Positively, the idea is summed up in the famous Latin adage *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of praying is the law of believing). Theologians and liturgical scholars have spent quite a bit of time exploring this interrelationship.

On the negative side, the same idea is also behind Church legislation prohibiting *communicatio in sacris* — active participation in common worship with heretics and schismatics. These laws and pronouncements explain the doctrinal and moral principles that make it wrong for a Catholic to participate in a rite that somehow compromises his faith — "lest faith either be lost or endangered," as an 1859 Decree from the Holy Office explains.

"For this reason, St. John strictly commands: 'If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him: *Ave*. For he that saith unto him: *Ave*, communicateth with his wicked works.' It is clear from these words that **whatever expresses anything equivalent to *Ave* is prohibited, such as liturgical actions that were instituted to signify ecclesiastical unity.** For this reason, we read that the Fathers of the Council of Carthage decreed it forbidden *either to pray or sing*

with heretics.”³⁰

We will turn to these principles here in order to explain why it is wrong for a sedevacantist to assist actively at an *una cum* Mass.

A. A Pernicious Lie

It is best to begin with something obvious: the moral virtue of *truthfulness*, sometimes also called *truth* or *veracity*. By this virtue, we exhibit external signs (either words or deeds) that manifest to others what is in our mind.³¹

Opposed to this, obviously, is the sin of lying. We tend to think of lies only in terms of false statements we knowingly make in words, either in speech or writing. But *any* external sign, including our deeds or actions, can be a false statement and therefore a lie as well.³²

In the case at hand, the sedevacantist believes Ratzinger is not a true pope. Yet when the sedevacantist participates actively in an *una cum* Mass, by that very fact he affirms the *opposite* of what is in his mind. In so doing, he *lies*, because he knows that what he affirms through his actions — his participation — is false.³³

To the affirmation in the Canon that the heretic/imposter Ratzinger is “our Pope,” the sedevacantist, through his participation, says beforehand that *It is right and just*, and afterwards *Amen, it is so*. He gives utterance, as St. Augustine says, to what his heart knows is not true. And that is a lie — and a lie is always wrong.

And here we have not merely the proverbial “little white lie” about something trivial, but rather a *pernicious* lie, so called because of the particular harm it causes. The Dominican theologian Merkelbach explains:

“The gravest of all lies is one that harms God in a matter concerning religion.... The pernicious lie is a **mortal sin by its very nature** due to the evil attached to it, either because of its matter, if it concerns religious doctrine... or because of its end, if it

is uttered to the injury of God or to the notable harm of neighbor.”³⁴

And so, it is alongside this principle — “the gravest of all lies is one that harms God in a matter concerning religion” — that the sedevacantist must line up all the lies about Ratzinger that he affirms by participating in an *una cum* Mass: that the heretic/false pope Ratzinger is a member of the Church, head of the Church, successor of St. Peter, principle of unity in the Church, sign of communion with Christ’s Church, touchstone of orthodoxy, the authorized intermediary with God, and so on.

To participate in this is to ignore St. Augustine’s solemn warning to Catholics about the Canon: “Take pains to answer truthfully, because you are answering in the presence of the action of God. Let it be so, as you say it is.”

B. A Profession of Communion with Heretics

“The Sacrifice of the Mass,” says the theologian Merkelbach, is *directly* offered only for members of the Church.”³⁵

For this reason, the Church does not offer intercessory prayers for heretics and schismatics during the course of the Mass, nor can a heretic or a schismatic be mentioned by name in a liturgical prayer.³⁶ They are outside the communion of the Church.

This principle was strictly observed from the earliest days in the Church. Beginning in the third century, the names of Catholics who were being prayed for (e.g., the pope, bishops, illustrious lay persons, benefactors) were written on pairs of little tablets called “diptychs,” and the lists were read out at Mass. These lists played an important role in the liturgy and in the life of the Church:

“The purpose and chief use of the diptychs was to retain Catholic communion both of the living with one another and of the living with the dead.”³⁷

“To read the name of a living bishop in the diptychs was always a recognized sign of communion with him.”³⁸

Omitting someone’s name from the diptychs, on the other hand, declared that a person was *outside* the communion of the Church:

“The liturgical diptychs admitted only the names of

30. SO Instruction *Communicatio*, 22 June 1859, in *Collectanea S. Cong. de Prop. Fide* 1:1176. “Unde S. Ioannes severe praecepit: Si quis venit ad vos et hanc doctrinam non affert, nolite recipere eum in domum, nec ave dixeritis ei, qui enim dicit illi ave communicat operibus eius malignis. (Ioan. 2. 10). Evidentissime ex his verbis prohibitum iri inferitur quidquid huiusmodi ave exprimit, prout sunt actiones liturgicae quae ad ecclesiasticam unitatem significandum institutae fuere. Quapropter a PP. Concilii Carthaginensi sancitum legimus cum haereticis nec orandum nec psallendum...”

31. Merkebach 2:849. “signa externa (verba aut facta) quibus mentem nostram manifestamus proximo.”

32. Merkebach 2:857. “quocumque signo externo, sive verbo, sive scripto, sive gestu, sive facto;... mendacium stricte dictum quod fit verbis vel signis aequivalentibus...”

33. To commit the sin of lying, it is not necessary to have the *explicit* intention to deceive another. It suffices merely to *know* that something is false and *intend* to say it, for the effect proper to a false statement is to deceive. Merkebach 2:857. “Contra mentem, scil. quae procedit ex intentione falsum enuntiandi... In hac intentione implicite includitur intentio fallendi, quia effectus proprius falsae enuntiationis est ut alius fallatur; quod autem aliquis explicite intendat falsitatem in opinione alterius constitutere, non pertinet ad speciem seu essentiam mendacii, sed ad quamdam perfectionem ejus.”

34. Merkebach 2:859. “specialis nocenti inferendi; ... omnium autem gravissimum est mendacium quod nocet Deo in re religionis.... mendacium autem perniciosum est mortale ex genere suo propter malum adiunctum, sive ex parte materiae, si fiat in doctrina religionis,... sive ex parte finis, si dicatur in iniuriam Dei aut in notabile detrimentum proximi.”

35. Merkebach 2:696. “Sacrificium missae directe offertur tantum pro membris Ecclesiae.”

36. Once a year (on Good Friday) the Church offers a liturgical prayer for their conversion only, and it is recited outside of Mass. See Bruylants, 2:227.

37. *Missale Mixtum*, PL 85:541, note. “Finis est usus praecipuus diptychorum erat ut retineretur catholicum communio tum vivorum inter se, tum vivorum et mortuorum.”

38. A. Fortescue, *The Formula of Hormisdas*, CTS 102 (London: Catholic Truth Society 1913), 12.

persons in communion with the Church; **the names of heretics and of excommunicated members were never inserted.**"³⁹

In an excellent article on the *una cum* problem written in 2002, Patrick Henry Omlor, one of the leading lights from the early days of the U.S. traditionalist movement, explains in detail how Pope St. Hormisdas (514–23) not only refused to admit heretics to communion, but also broke communion with other ecclesiastics in the East who merely *recited the names* of heretics in their diptychs. The pontiff required the bishops of the world to sign a formulary called "The Rule of Faith."

"The main object of the Rule of Faith of Pope St. Hormisdas was to condemn the naming of heretics in the diptychs,... reportedly 2,500 bishops signed the Rule of Faith in order to become restored to communion with the Church. **Until they signed they were denied communion solely and specifically because they had persisted in naming heretics in their diptychs.**"⁴⁰

A sedevacantist who actively participates at a Mass in which the heretic Ratzinger is named in the Canon, therefore, acts against the ancient tradition of the Church and puts himself in communion with someone he knows is a heretic.

C. Recognizing the One-World, Ecumenical Church

In addition to this general problem relating to communion with heretics, there is a more specific danger to the faith posed by the post-Vatican II teachings on the Church

Creating a dogma-less, ecumenical super-church like this has been the goal of Masons, liberals and modernists ever since the early 19th century. We have repeatedly pointed out that Joseph Ratzinger's personal contribution to the long list of Vatican II errors is his Frankenchurch heresy. For him, the Church is a "communion" to which Catholics, schismatics and heretics all belong, each possessing "elements" of the Church of Christ either "fully" or "partially." According to his *Catechism*, all these belong to one and the same People of God.

Since the naming of Ratzinger is indeed a profession of communion with him,⁴¹ it is likewise a profession of communion with the ecumenical, One-World church of which he professes to be the head — an institution which a sedevacantist, obviously, repudiates.

This, in turn, poses another problem...

D. Implicit Profession of a False Religion

Each Catholic is required to make a *profession of faith* — an external manifestation of faith through some appropriate sign.⁴²

Negatively, this precept forbids a Catholic "to

deny the faith exteriorly — whether expressly or tacitly, whether by word, sign or deed (e.g., silence) — or to profess or to simulate a false faith." This can occur:

...*indirectly and implicitly* if without the intention of denying the faith, one performs an action which is understood by others as a denial of the faith... *by actions*,... those who perform an action which either in itself or **from the circumstances signifies the profession of a false religion.**"⁴³

And indeed this is why martyrs went to their deaths rather than place the grain of incense into the fire before the image of the false god.

There was a time when all traditionalists — not just sedevacantists — regarded the religion of Vatican II as nothing less than a false religion, set up in opposition to the Catholic Church. Thus Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre's ringing declaration after his suspension by Paul VI in 1976:

"That Conciliar Church is a schismatic Church, because it breaks with the Catholic Church that has always been. It has its new dogmas, its new priesthood, its new institutions, its new worship, all already condemned by the Church in many a document, official and definitive..."

"The Church that affirms such errors is at once schismatic and heretical. This Conciliar Church is, therefore, not Catholic."⁴⁴

Benedict XVI, of course, is now the head of this entity. For a sedevacantist to participate actively in a Mass offered "together with Thy servant Benedict, our Pope," is to affirm that the entity of which Ratzinger is the head is, before God, the Catholic Church.

Thus, even though he does not intend to deny the faith directly, by his actions the sedevacantist denies it "indirectly and implicitly."⁴⁵

E. A Violation of Church Law

Decrees of the Holy See repeatedly forbade naming heretical or schismatic clergy in liturgical prayers.

Thus, a 1669 decree forbade a deacon to sing out the names of heretics in the liturgy,⁴⁶ and a 1673 decree forbade a priest to name the Patriarch of the Armenians (both a heretic and a schismatic) in the prayers of the Mass.⁴⁷

The general prohibition against naming heretics and schismatics is repeated in the 1756 Bull of Pope

43. Merkelbach 1:712. "... confitendi fidem prohibet, ullo unquam caso vel periculo etiam mortis, expresse vel tacite, verbo vel signo vel facto (silentio v.g.), fidem exterius negare vel falsam profiteri aut simulari.... Quod fieri potest... *indirecte et implicite*, si absque intentione negandi actionem ponit quae ab aliis ut negatio fidei habetur,... *factis*... qui ponunt actionem quae ex se vel ex circumstantiis significat professionem falsae religionis."

44. "Reflections on Suspension *a Divinis*," 29 July 1976.

45. See Merkelbach 1:712. "*indirecte et implicite*."

46. SO Decree *Mesopotamia*, 28 August 1669, *Fontes* 4:740. "Se possa permettersi ai diaconi di proferire ad alta voce nell'Officio divino in chiesa i nomi di Dioscoro, Nestorio, Barsuma ed altri eresiarchi.... R. Negative, facto verbo cum SSmo. Et Sanctitas Sua approbavit."

47. I. Szal, *Communication of Catholics with Schismatics*, CUA Canon Law Studies 264, (Washington: CUA 1948), 182–3.

39. R. Maere, "Diptych," *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: 1913) 5:23.

40. *Sedevacantists and the "Una Cum" Problem* (Verdale WA: Catholic Research Institute 2002), 8–9.

41. See above, section III.B.

42. Merkelbach 1:711. "Confessio fidei est externa eius manifestatio per aliquod signum ad hoc idoneum."

Benedict XIV already cited above:

“...Therefore where commemorations are customarily made in the sacred liturgy, the Roman Pontiff should be first commemorated, then one’s own Bishop and Patriarch, provided they are Catholic. But if either of both of them are schismatics or heretics they should by no means be commemorated.”⁴⁸

My personal favorite on ecumenical grounds is an account of a 1636 decree from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. The Congregation not merely forbade singing an acclamation for the schismatic Patriarchs of Constantinople, but added that since the Patriarchs were also heretics, they deserved to be cursed instead.⁴⁹

In any event, later authors, such as the theologian de la Taille, also speak of the general prohibition:

“Hence were anyone to mention by name an infidel, a heretic, a schismatic, or an excommunicated person (whether a king, or a bishop, or any other) either in the prayer *Te igitur* or in our *commemoratio pro vivis*, he would certainly violate the law of the Church.”⁵⁰

Please note that de la Taille explicitly says that naming a heretic in the *first* prayer of the Canon — the prayer we are discussing — is a violation of Church law. At an *una cum* Mass, the sedevacantist countenances this violation of Church law.

F. Participation in a Sin

More than that, de la Taille maintains that mentioning a heretic by name in any liturgical prayer is also a sin:

“Moreover, since today neither in the *commemoratio pro vivis* nor in any other part of the Mass does the Church commend by name any living person except such a one as is considered to be in communion with her, today it would also appear sinful to mention by name in any liturgical prayer whatever, an infidel, a heretic, a schismatic, or an excommunicated person. This privation of the common suffrages of the Church is by no means confined to the *excommunicati vitandi* alone, as may be seen from the

48. *Ex Quo*, ¶9, *Bullarium* 11:296. He quotes the first admonition from the earlier *Euchologium*: “...‘Cum igitur in sacra Liturgia commemorationes fieri soleant, oportet primum quidem Romani Pontificis commemorationem agi, deinde proprii Episcopi, et Patriarchae, dummodo Catholici sint. Quod si alter eorum, vel ambo sint schismatici, sive haeretici, eorum commemoratio nequaquam fiat.’”

49. Szal, 182. “The Sacred Congregation instructed the bishop to repel from his church the Greeks who sang these acclamations, if indeed he could effectively do so, for the Patriarchs of Constantinople were not only schismatics, but also heretics, and consequently were deserving rather of imprecation.”

50. De la Taille 2:317. He adds in a footnote: “Though there are not a few teachers who think otherwise, through not paying sufficient attention to the force and meaning of our liturgical prayer.” De la Taille does not indicate who these authors are, or precisely what they would allow in the way of naming schismatics or heretics. From Szal (183), though, it seems that the most the *Holy See* occasionally tolerated was a prayer for a *lay* heretic or schismatic in his capacity as a head of state (King, President, etc.) — but never one for a heretical or schismatic cleric.

Code of Canon Law (can. 2262, parag. 1).⁵¹

Nor would it be morally permissible to *assist* at a rite where this is done. In a 1729 the Vatican Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith decreed:

... There is hardly any rite among the heterodox that is not stained with some error in faith... especially where a commemoration is made of living Patriarchs and Bishops — schismatics and heretics — who are proclaimed preachers of the Catholic faith. For this reason, any Catholics who come together under circumstances like this to celebrate a rite of prayer and worship cannot excuse themselves from the sin of evil common worship, or at least, from the sin of pernicious scandal.⁵²

By actively assisting at an *una cum* Mass, the sedevacantist participates in this sin — one made all the worse because it is committed seconds before the Spotless Victim is brought down upon the altar.

G. Offering Mass with Ratzinger

When we discussed the various grammatical meanings possible for the *una cum* phrase,⁵³ we noted that the second meaning was an adverb modifying the phrase *we offer* — i.e., we offer the sacrifice *joined to* or *in union with* our Pope.

This is de la Taille’s understanding of the phrase, and he gives it as another part of his explanation as to why the names of heretics and schismatics are excluded from the prayer:

“... priests gradually became accustomed to commend no living person in these public suffrages of the Church, except such as could be reckoned among those with whom he was considered to be offering the sacrifice.... [n]ote also the saying of St. Isidore: ‘The third prayer [which comes after the announcing of the names in the diptychs] is said for the offerers...’ The same is also clear from the actual formula found in our own Roman Canon at the end of the prayer *Te igitur*, the first prayer of the Canon, where the celebrant says: ‘We offer... together with our Pope N., and our Bishop N. (and our King N. and with all orthodox worshippers of the Catholic and apostolic faith.’... [T]he custom was to mention no names in the list of the living, except of those who were plainly united with the priest in the offering of the sacrifice.”⁵⁴

If therefore you actively participate in a Mass at which Ratzinger is named in the Canon, you are united to him as you participate in Sacrifice. It is as if the sly old heretic himself unexpectedly emerged from the

51. De la Taille 2:318.

52. SC de Prop. Fide, Instruction (*Pro Mission. Orient.*), 1729, *Fontes* 7:4505. “Id ex eo etiam confirmatur magis quod vix ullus sit ritus apud heterodoxos qui aliquo errore in materia fidei non maculetur... vel denique commemoratio fit viventium Patriarcharum, et Episcoporum, schismaticorum, et haeticorum, qui ut *fidei catholicae praedicatores* commendatur. Qua de re, qui in ea ritus et orationis et cultus celebratione conveniunt in his facti circumstantiis catholici quique, reatu perversae communicationis, aut saltem perniciosi scandali purgari non possunt.”

53. See above, section I.A.1.

54. De la Taille 2:316-7.

sacristy in your local traditionalist chapel to offer Mass for you and to give you Holy Communion.

H. Recognition of a Usurper

In prohibiting common worship with heretics and schismatics, one of the Church's motives was to deny recognition to those who had usurped or intruded themselves into Church offices.

Thus in 1791, after the revolutionary government of France established a schismatic Constitutional Church and appointed to diocesan sees and parishes bishops and priests of its choosing, Pope Pius VI forbade Catholics to assist at services conducted by these intruders:

"Keep as far from you as possible all intrusion and schism.... Above all, avoid and condemn the sacrilegious intruders.... **Keep away from all intruders... do not hold communion with them, especially in divine worship.**"⁵⁵

In 1753, when the Holy Office issued a prohibition against common worship with Greek heretics and schismatics, the first reason given was "especially because they commemorate the Patriarch of Constantinople."⁵⁶

In addition to the other dangers to the faith posed by worshipping with heretics and schismatics, Archbishop Francis Kenrick (Archbishop of Baltimore, 1851–1863) likewise pointed to the recognition of a usurper as another reason for avoiding such services:

"It is not allowed to communicate *in divinis* with heretics or schismatics:...all admit it is wrong whenever it carries with it... the **recognition of a usurped office.**"⁵⁷

By the fact that he assists at an *una cum* Mass, the sedevacantist recognizes as pope someone he would otherwise say is a usurper.

I. Sin of Scandal

Scandal is "any conduct that has at least the appearance of evil and that offers to a neighbor an occasion of spiritual ruin."⁵⁸ Scandal may be either *direct* or *indirect*. Indirect scandal occurs when someone "performs an action which has the appearance of evil that is only a probable occasion of sin to one's neighbor, such as bad example."⁵⁹

55. Pius VI, Encyclical *Charitas* (13 April 1791), ¶¶29, 31, 32, in *Fontes* 2:474. "Omnis a vobis invasionem, et schisma, quam longissime potestis, arcete.... sacrilegos invasores vitetis, ac reprobetis.... invasores omnes... ita devitate, ut nihil cum illis sit vobis commune, praesertim in divinis..."

56. Holy Office, Decree *Mission. Tenos In Peloponneseo* (10 May 1753), *Fontes* 4:804. "Non licere: maxime cum Patriarchae Constantinopolitani commemorationem faciant."

57. F. Kenrick, *Theologia Moralis* (Malines: Dessain 1861) 2:366. "Haud tamen licet in divinis cum haereticis vel schismaticis communicare.... fatentur omnes nefas esse, quandocumque falsi dogmatis professionem, vel muneris usurpationem agnitionem secum fert: quod plerumque contingit."

58. McHugh and Callan, *Moral Theology* (New York: Wagner 1929) 1:1447.

59. Merkelbach 2:960 "*Indirectum*, quando quis actionem ponit minus

The Church legislation that forbade Catholics to participate actively in worship with heretics and schismatics invariably mentioned scandal as one of the reasons for the prohibition. Heretics and schismatics would conclude that a Catholic who worshipped with them approved of their errors or rebellion.

Thus the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith warned in 1729:

"When they see Catholics go to their churches, assist at their rites, and participate in their sacraments, should not one believe (or at least fear) that from this fact alone they would be more greatly confirmed in their errors, and also be persuaded by this example that they are walking the straight path to salvation?"

"From this it follows that it is most difficult to avoid the danger of pernicious scandal to heretics and schismatics themselves. Wherefore, a Catholic cannot be safe in his conscience if he worships together with them this way."⁶⁰

In the case at hand, when a sedevacantist who is known as such assists actively at an *una cum* Mass, those present will assume either that he consents to naming Benedict XVI as a true pope, or that he regards the practice of doing so as morally indifferent. They can then draw the general conclusion that the identity of the Roman Pontiff (Is Ratzinger a true pope or not?) or (in the case of SSPX) actual subjection to him is a matter of no practical consequence to a Catholic. ("Not even a sedevacantist acts as if it meant anything!")

Such, obviously, is an occasion of "spiritual ruin."

J. The "Resistance" Clergy

The foregoing nine sections apply to all *una cum* Masses, no matter what auspices they are offered under.

However, *una cum* Masses offered by priests of the Society of St. Pius X, its affiliates, and many independent priests pose an additional problem. On the one hand, these priests affirm in the Canon and in public pronouncements that they recognize Ratzinger as a true pope; on the other, they conduct their sacramental ministry independent from and without any subjection to either Benedict XVI or the diocesan bishops in union with him. They speak of their "resistance" to the pope — and for this reason, we shall here refer to them as the "resistance" clergy.

On the face of it, of course, the resistance position is incoherent. But more than that, it contradicts one of the very reasons why the Church inserted the *una cum*

rectam quae est solum probabilis occasio peccandi pro proximo, uti est pravam exemplum."

60. SC de Prop. Fide, Instruction (*Pro Mission. Orient.*), 1729, *Fontes* 7:4505. "Cum vero videant ad eorum ecclesias accedere, eorum ritibus interesse, de eorum Sacramentis participare catholicos, an non credendum, aut saltem timendum erit, ne ex hoc ipso magis in suis erroribus confirmetur, ac se in recto salutis tramite ambulare sibi etiam hoc exemplo persuadeant? Ex quo sequitur difficillime vitari posse periculum scandali perniciosi schismaticis, et haereticis ipsis: ac proinde catholicum tutum in conscientia non esse, si cum iis in divinis in hac facti specie communicet."

clause into the Canon in the first place: to express the relationship that must exist between the Supreme Pontiff and those who exercise the sacramental ministry of the Church. As Cardinal Bona explained in his commentary on the *una cum*, “The unity of the sacerdotal ministry descends from the throne of Peter.”⁶¹

To be part of this ministry, a priest or bishop must have legitimate deputation (proper authorization) for all the sacraments he confers, because the sacraments belong to the Church. At the beginning of his five-volume treatise on the sacraments, Cappello explains:

“Since the confection and administration of the sacraments is divinely committed to the ministry of the Church, it is self-evident that **sacraments can only be conferred by someone who has been legitimately deputed by that same Church.**”⁶²

On the other hand, priests and bishops who lack this deputation commit sin when they confer the sacraments. In the case of the Mass, moreover, their prayers have no efficacy, because they do not offer it *in the person of the Church*.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that, although priests separated from the unity of the Church validly consecrate the Eucharist:

“they nevertheless do not do this rightly, but rather **sin when they do it**. They therefore do not receive the fruit of the sacrifice, which is a spiritual sacrifice....

“... the sacrifice is offered wrongly outside the Church. Hence **outside the Church there can be no spiritual sacrifice that is a true sacrifice with the truth of its fruit...**

“In the Mass, the priest pronounces the prayers **in the person of the Church**, in whose unity he remains. ... Consequently if a priest who is separated from the unity of the Church celebrates Mass, he consecrates Christ’s true body and blood, because he has not lost the power of Holy Orders; but **because he is severed from the unity of the Church, his prayers have no efficacy.**”⁶³

Please note the last statement: because a priest is sev-

61. G. Card. Bona, *Le Saint Sacrifice de la Messe* (Paris: Vivès 1855) 2:261. “c’est là en effet le pivot, le sceau de l’unité de l’Église.... C’est là un signe d’union entre les membres et leur chef; car... celui-là communie avec l’Église catholique qui communie avec le pape, et de la chaire de Pierre découle l’unité du ministère sacerdotal.” See also: Benedict XIV (P. Lambertini), *De Sacrosancto Missae Sacrificio* (Prato: Aldina 1843) 3:79. “Postquam oravit Sacerdos pro Ecclesia Catholica, orat pro summo Pontifice: *Unitas enim sacerdotalis, ut ait s. Cyprianus, a Petri Cathedra exorta est.*”

62. *De Sacramentis* 1:49. “Cum sacramentorum confectio et administratio Ecclesiae ministerio sit divinitus commissa, sequitur manifeste, sacramenta conferri non posse nisi ab eo qui sit legitime deputatus ab ipsa Ecclesia.”

63. *Summa* III.82.7, corpus, ad 1, et 3. “non tamen recte hoc faciunt, sed peccant facientes. Et ideo fructum sacrificii non percipiunt, quod est sacrificium spirituale.... quod non recte extra Ecclesiam sacrificium offertur. Unde extra Ecclesiam non potest esse spirituale sacrificium, quod est verum veritate fructus, ... sacerdos in Missa in orationibus quidem loquitur in persona Ecclesiae, in cuius unitate consistit. ... Et ideo, si sacerdos ab unitate Ecclesiae praecisus Missam celebret, quia potestatem ordinis non amittit, consecrat verum corpus et sanguinem Christi, sed quia est ab Ecclesiae unitate separatus, orationes eius efficaciam non habent.

ered from the unity of the Church, “his prayers have no efficacy.”

Cappello sums up the point as regards the Mass:

“Priests who are cut off the Church, although they validly sacrifice *in the name of Christ*, nevertheless **do not offer the sacrifice as ministers of the Church nor in the person of the Church**. For the priest has the power to pray, to intercede and to offer in the name of the Church by virtue of his commission from the Church, and with regard to this, the Church can deprive the priest who is cut off from sacrificing in its name.”⁶⁴

Apart from valid ordination, then, some commission from the Church is required if the priest is to offer Mass *in persona Ecclesiae* — in the person not only of Christ, but also *in the person of His Church*.

I have explained elsewhere at some length why sedevacantist clergy — who do not, of course, recognize Paul VI and his successors as true popes — enjoy a legitimate deputation and mission for the sacraments they confer.⁶⁵

But in light of all the foregoing, can a priest of the *resistance* persuasion (SSPX, its affiliates, and various independents) likewise claim to exercise his sacerdotal ministry “in the person of the Church” if he is not in fact subject to the man he regards as the Roman Pontiff?

Well, no — because once you plug the recognition of someone as pope into the standard principles of moral theology, dogmatic theology and canon law, the *una cum* Masses of resistance priests all come out as gravely illicit, if not schismatic.

1. Gravely Illicit Masses. The resisters have, over the years, recognized that they must offer some answer to the charge that they do not act *in persona Ecclesiae* in their sacramental ministry and that their ministrations are illicit as regards ecclesiastical law. In order to resolve the problem of legitimate deputation, the resisters therefore appealed to many of the same general canonical principles as sedevacantists do: epikeia, intrinsic cessation of law, obligation arising from reception of Holy Orders, and necessity (common need).

The most notable attempt to lay out these principles and make the case that they apply to SSPX and other resisters was a lengthy canonical study by “Hirpinus.” This was first published in the SSPX magazine *Courier de Rome*, and later reprinted in *The Remnant*, under the title “On the Doctrine of Necessity: Does the ‘State of Emergency’ Really Exist?”⁶⁹

64. *De Sacramentis*, 1:547. “Sacerdotes praecisi, quamvis valide sacrificent nomine Christi tamen non offerunt sacrificium, ut Ecclesiae ministri et in persona ipsius Ecclesiae. Sacerdos enim habet ex commissione Ecclesiae, ut nomine eius oret, intercedat ac offerat, et, quoad hoc, potest Ecclesia privare sacerdotem praecisum, ne suo nomine sacrificet.”

65. See A. Cekada, “Canon Law and Common Sense,” (1992) and “Traditional Priests, Legitimate Sacraments,” (2003), on traditional-mass.org.

69. *Remnant*, June-July 2004.

However, such arguments, impressive and well documented though they may seem, are completely futile for one obvious reason. In canon law, the principles of epikeia, cessation, obligation of Orders, and necessity (common need) can only be invoked in the *absence of the legislator* and of the clergy to whom the legislator has committed the care of souls (*cura animarum*). And since the resistance clergy all recognize Ratzinger as pope, they necessarily recognize him as the Supreme Legislator as well.

So if there is a question about interpreting the “mind of the legislator” (for the resisters to invoke epikeia), the continued binding force of a law (to invoke cessation), priestly or episcopal duty (to interpret the obligations of Orders) or the need to supply for dereliction of duty on the part of clergy with the *cura animarum* (to invoke state of necessity, common need or “emergency”), all a resistant priest need do is contact Benedict XVI, his Supreme Legislator. Ratzinger will then interpret the law, determine whether it still binds, ascertain the resister’s obligation, and give orders to deal with the emergency. (For 911, dial B16...)

The appeal to general canonical principles for the legitimate deputation to confer sacraments, then, is closed to the “resistance” priest. Without such deputation, his Mass is gravely illicit — he does not offer it *in persona Ecclesiae* — and for that reason, a sedevacantist should not actively participate in it.

2. Sin of Schism. The second major problem for the resistance clergy is that acknowledging someone to be the pope while at the same time obstinately refusing to obey him is virtually the textbook definition of the sin of schism.

Moral theologians place schism among “sins against public peace,” specifically, against the peace of the Church. Schismatics are:

“those who refuse to be subject to the Supreme Pontiff (with rebellion, such that they obstinately refuse to obey his commands) and 2) those who refuse to be in communion with those who are subject to him (in doctrine, worship, sacraments). From this it is obvious that schism is a most grave sin and mortal *ex toto genere*.”⁷⁰

That Ratzinger is not in *reality* a true pope does not excuse the resisters from schism. They profess he *is* a true pope and they resist him as such. Therein lies the malice of the act— just as a man who deliberately steps on an unconsecrated host, thinking it was consecrated, would be formally guilty of the sin of sacrilege.

Canonists such as Szal and Wernz-Vidal⁷¹ flesh out

70. Merkelbach 1:955. “Peccata contra pacem publicam.... Paci ecclesiae, schisma... Et ideo schismatici dicuntur 1) (perfecte) qui subesse renuunt summo Pontifici (cum rebellionem, ita ut obedire praeceptis pertinaciter recusent), et 2) qui membris Ecclesiae ei subjectis communicare recusant (in doctrina, cultu, sacramentis); ex quo patet esse peccatum gravissimum et mortale ex toto genere.”

71. F. Wernz & P. Vidal, *Ius Canonicum* (Rome: Gregorian 1937) 7:398. “Ad constituendum delictum puri schismatis requiritur: I: ut quis aut directe sive expresse aut indirecte sive factis concludentibus ab obedientia Romani Pontificis recedat et a communione ecclesiastica ceterorum fidelium sese separet, licet separatae sectae schismatici-

a bit more the teaching of moral theology on schism when they lay out four requirements for the ecclesiastical crime of schism. Although many independent *una cum* priests meet the criteria in varying degrees, SSPX does so exactly and nearly point-for-point. It is as if canonists in the 1920s and 1940s were granted prophetic visions of SSPX’s entire apostolate, and then wrote a *Schism for Dummies* guide for it.

This can be seen by quoting Szal’s criteria, and then interspersing some of the deeds of SSPX:

Szal: “1) One must withdraw directly (expressly) or indirectly (by means of one’s actions) from obedience to the Roman Pontiff, and separate oneself from ecclesiastical communion with the rest of the faithful, even though one does not join a separate schismatical sect;”⁷²

SSPX: Through word and action, it withdrew from any semblance of obedience to Paul VI and his successors, and it separated from communion with the diocesan bishops who represented them.

Szal: “2) one’s withdrawal must be made with obstinacy and rebellion;”

SSPX: Decade after decade, it stubbornly ignored orders to cease violating ecclesiastical law, and it openly defied putative superiors, eventually characterizing them as “anti-Christ.”

Szal: “3) the withdrawal must be made in relation to those things by which the unity of the Church is constituted;”

SSPX: It set up a world-wide apostolate, governed by its own superiors, laws and tribunals — an apostolate that is parallel to and independent from the hierarchy recognized by the Roman Pontiff, and that confers sacraments without reference to authorization from his duly-designated representatives.

Szal: “4) despite this formal disobedience the schismatic must recognize the Roman Pontiff as the true pastor of the Church, and he must profess as an article of faith that obedience is due the Roman Pontiff.”

SSPX: At the same time, it has repeatedly claimed — indeed, *insisted* — that it recognizes Paul VI and his successors as legitimate popes and true pastors of the Church.

In 2002 Bishop Donald Sanborn concisely summed up the dilemma posed by Masses offered by SSPX and the other resistance clergy:

“Thus the *una cum* Mass ends up as an objectively

cae sese non adiungat; — II. ut recessus coniunctus sit cum pertinacia sive rebellionem; — III. ut recessus fiat quoad illa, quibus unitas Ecclesiae constituitur; — IV. ut non obstante formali inobedientia et denegatione subordinationis schismaticus agnoscat illum Romanum Pontificem verum esse pastorem universalis Ecclesiae et ex doctrina fidei ipsi obedientiam esse praestandum...”

72. Szal, 2. Only one, not both, of the two conditions mentioned — withdrawal from obedience to the pope *or* separation from communion with the rest of the faithful — is required for the delict. See canon 1325.2: “subesse renuit ... *aut* ... communicare recusat.”

schismatic Mass no matter how you slice it:

“(a) If, for the sake of argument, Benedict XVI were the Pope, the unauthorized [i.e., non-Motu, FSSP, etc.] traditional Mass is schismatic, since it is **not said in the person of the Church**.

“(b) If Benedict XVI is **not the Pope**, then the *una cum* Mass is schismatic since it is **said in union with, under the auspices of, a false pope and a false church**.

“In neither case does the priest have any business saying it.”⁷³

The consequences for the sedevacantist who actively participates in *una cum* Masses offered by priests of the “resistance” persuasion should therefore be clear enough: he not only recognizes a *false* pope, but he also implicitly consents to the notion that it is permissible to refuse submission to a *true* pope — the essence of the sin of schism. And for these reasons, a sedevacantist should not assist at it.

IV. Objections and Responses

IN THE FOREGOING section, we have offered at least ten reasons why a sedevacantist should not participate actively in an *una cum* Mass — to wit, it constitutes a pernicious lie, profession of communion with heretics, recognition of the ecumenical church, implicit profession of a false religion, a violation of church law, participation in a sin, offering Mass with a heretic, recognizing a usurper, the sin of scandal, and (where “resistance” clergy are involved) participation in gravely illicit Masses and the sin of schism.

Some of these arguments have already been made elsewhere and prompted several objections, which we will now answer.

A. Pope Martin V and Cardinal de Lugo

Objection: *The Constitution “Ad Evidanda” of Pope Martin V and the teaching of the theologian de Lugo permit Catholics in cases of necessity to assist at Mass with, and receive the sacraments from, undeclared heretics and schismatics when a Catholic rite is used. The priests who offer “una cum” Masses have not been declared heretics and schismatics by the Church, and they use a Catholic rite. Therefore, a sedevacantist is permitted to assist at their Masses.*

The passage in *Ad Evidanda* (1415) that is cited to support the objection reads as follows:

“...no one henceforth shall be bound to abstain from communion with anyone in the administration or reception of the sacraments or in any other religious or non-religious acts whatsoever,... on pretext of any **ecclesiastical sentence or censure** globally promulgated, whether by the law or by an individual; unless the **sentence or censure** in question has been specifically and expressly published or proclaimed by the judge on or against a definite person,

college, university, church, community or place...”⁷⁴

But neither this passage nor de Lugo’s commentary on it defeat any of the arguments against *una cum* Masses made in section III.

1. An Irrelevant Principle. Please note the words in the quote that we have highlighted in bold: “ecclesiastical sentence or censure...” These refer either to judgments pronounced by an ecclesiastical court or censures such as excommunication.

None of our arguments against assisting at *una cum* Masses is based on the effects of ecclesiastical sentences or censures such as excommunication. On the face of it, therefore, *Ad Evidanda*, therefore, is irrelevant to our discussion here.

This becomes even more evident from the historical context in which the document was issued.

Martin V promulgated *Ad Evidanda* at the Council of Constance (1414-1418) that ended the Great Western Schism (1378-1417), a turbulent period in church history with multiple claimants to the papacy.

Before *Ad Evidanda*, canon law forbade a Catholic to communicate in any way whatsoever — either in religious or secular matters — with someone who had been excommunicated. Those who violated this prohibition incurred a censure themselves, minor excommunication, which deprived them of the sacraments. Since the various papal claimants excommunicated each other’s followers, the prospect of incurring the minor excommunication caused great worry to the laity on all sides. *Ad Evidanda* removed this second censure, unless the person you communicated with had been officially declared excommunicated by an ecclesiastical judge.⁷⁵

As regards whether *Ad Evidanda* would still apply, the 1917 Code cites it not as a source for the prohibition against common worship with heretics and schismatics (canon 1258), but merely as a source for the prohibition against receiving sacraments from a clergyman who has been excommunicated *vitandus*⁷⁶ (canon 2261.3). It is ecclesiastical legislation on the *first* question (common worship with heretics and schismatics), not the *second* (receiving sacraments from an excommunicated cleric), that we have used as the basis for some of our arguments in section III.

2. De Lugo’s Requirements. Be that as it may, the Jesuit theologian de Lugo (1583-1660), among others, did

74. Martin V, Constitution *Ad Evidanda* (1415), *Fontes* 1:45. “...quod nemo deinceps a communione alicuius in sacramentorum administratione, vel receptione, aut aliis quibuscumque divinis, vel extra; praetextu cuiuscumque sententiae aut censurae ecclesiasticae, a iure vel ab homine generaliter promulgatae, teneatur abstinere,... Nisi sententia vel censura huiusmodi fuerit in vel contra personam, collegium, universitatem, ecclesiam, communitatem aut locum certum, vel certa, a iudice publicata vel denunciata specialiter et expresse.”

75. J. Bancroft, *Communication in Religious Worship with Non-Catholics*, CUA Studies in Sacred Theology 75, (Washington: CUA 1943), 27-9.

76. *Vitandus* = “to be avoided,” i.e., by fellow Catholics. This is the most severe degree of excommunication, and it is imposed on an offender only through a special decree from the Holy See.

73. “Vatican II, the Pope and SSPX: Questions and Answers,” *Most Holy Trinity Seminary Newsletter* (2002), 8, www.traditionalmass.org

indeed teach that the Constitution of Martin V allowed Catholics to receive sacraments from heretics who had not been declared excommunicated.

De Lugo added two conditions, however: (1) that the rite used by the heretics must be a Catholic rite and (2) that the participation by a Catholic would not be illicit for some other reason, such as scandal or implicit denial of the faith.⁷⁷

Scandal and implicit denial of the faith, of course, are some of the reasons explicitly adduced in section III *against* active participation in *una cum* Masses. Citing de Lugo, therefore, defeats the objection rather than supports it.

3. Rejected by the Holy Office. In any case, the Holy See later dismissed the liberal interpretation that de Lugo and others had given *Ad Evitanda* in the matter of common worship with non-Catholics.

In a 1753 pronouncement that quoted Pope Benedict XIV, the Holy Office stated that *Ad Evitanda* permitted Catholics to communicate “in merely *civil and secular* matters” with heretics who had not been expressly declared as such by name. However:

“Catholics should **not therefore think that it is also permissible to participate** together with these same heretics in acts of divine worship.”

The decree went on to name several theologians who had taught the the opposite, including de Lugo, and stated finally:

“In this matter it is **almost impossible for it to happen that Catholics who would join together in sacred worship with heretics and schismatics would be excused from sin.** For this reason, the Sacred Congregations of the Holy Office and of the Propagation of the Faith **always considered such communion illicit.**”⁷⁸

Please note the strong language: it is “almost impossible... to be excused from *sin*,” and the Holy See “always considered such communion *illicit*.”

For future appeals either to *Ad Evitanda* or to de Lugo on the question of *una cum* Masses, therefore, the 1753 decree is the final nail in the coffin.

77. J. de Lugo, *Disputationes Scholasticae et Morales* (Paris: Vivès 1868) 2:86. “sed quaestio est de rebus sacris nullum errorem continentibus... vel ipsi ritu catholico celebranti adesse,... nisi aliunde sit scandalum vel irreverentia contra fidem, aut aliquid aliud... et constat ex dicta *extravaganti*,... cum ergo ii haeretici non sint excommunicati denunciati, nec notorii clerici percussores, non est cur ratione excommunicationis perhibeamur ab iis sacramenta suscipere; quamvis id aliunde possit saepe illicitum esse...”

78. Decree *Tenos*, *Fontes* 4:804. “Verum quamvis iuxta praesentem disciplinam inductam a Martino V in celebri *Extravagant. Ad evitanda*, de qua nonnulla inferius, liceat catholici cum haereticis, modo non sint expresse et nominatim denunciati libere conversari, et cum iisdem communicare in rebus mere profanis et civilibus; non idcirco tamen arbitrari debent catholici, fas quoque sibi esse cum iisdem haereticis consortium habere etiam in rebus sacris et divinis.... idcirco fere impossibile est usvenire, ut a flagitio excusari valeant catholici sese in rebus sacris cum haereticis et schismaticis admiscerent. Quamobrem Sacrae Urbis Congregationes, Sancti Officii videlicet et de Propaganda Fide, illicitam semper reputarunt communionem, de qua est sermo.”

B. No Official Declaration

Objection: *Anyone who has not been officially declared a heretic or a schismatic may still be mentioned by name in the Canon of the Mass. But Benedict XVI has not been officially declared a heretic or a schismatic. Therefore, Benedict XVI may still be mentioned by name in the Canon of the Mass. Therefore, a sedevacantist is permitted to assist at a Mass where his name is so mentioned.*

(1) The hidden assumption behind the major premise is false. As we have seen above, de la Taille says:

“This privation of the common suffrages of the Church is by no means confined to the *excommunicati vitandi* alone, as may be seen from the *Code of Canon Law* (can. 2262, parag. 1).”⁷⁹

The various Vatican pronouncements quoted above, moreover, made no distinction between “declared” and “undeclared” heretics. The 1729 decree said that Catholics who participated in rites at which heretics and schismatics were commemorated “cannot excuse themselves from the sin of evil common worship.”⁸⁰ It did not then add that *no sin* occurred if “undeclared” heretics and schismatics were commemorated. Nor in 1756, when Pope Benedict XIV forbade commemorating schismatics and heretics in the sacred liturgy, did he limit the prohibition to “declared” heretics and schismatics.⁸¹

(2) Nor by analogy does the major premise make any sense in light of the general rules of canon law and pastoral theology. These norms prohibit offering Mass publicly for a heretic or schismatic, period.⁸² They do not limit the prohibition to one who has been “declared” a heretic — so you can put off planning that Requiem High Mass for your Methodist Uncle Wesley...

C. Prayed for as Material Pope Only

Objection: *According to the Thesis of Cassiacum, Benedict XVI, because he is a heretic, is not pope “formally” (= he lacks papal authority), but is pope “materially” (= he has only the legal designation to occupy the See). One may thus understand the prayer offered for him in the Canon of an una cum Mass as being for Benedict XVI as material pope only. Therefore, a sedevacantist is permitted to assist at a Mass where his name is so mentioned.*

To say (as adherents of the Thesis of Cassiacum do) that Benedict XVI is “material pope only” means that he is in fact a *false pope* and *lacks papal authority* (the “form” of the papal office).

The various linguistic and theological meanings for the *una cum* in the Canon, however, can only be applied to a *true pope* who *possesses papal authority* — e.g., head of the Church, Vicar of Christ, Successor of Peter, principle of unity, visible pastor, etc.

None of these may be attributed to someone who

79. De la Taille 2:318.

80. See above, III.F.

81. See above, III.E.

82. See N. Halligan, *The Administration of the Sacraments* (New York: Alba 1962) 134.

lacks this authority, as according to the Thesis, Ratzinger does. Thus, the *una cum* prayer could not be understood to refer to a material pope only.

D. Can. 2261: Sacraments from Excommunicates

Objection: For the sake of argument, let us assume the worst about the priests who offer “*una cum*” Masses — that the *Motu* clergy are heretics, the “resistance” clergy are schismatics, and that both groups are excommunicated. But according to canon 2261.2 the faithful may, for any just reason, ask for sacraments from an excommunicated cleric (provided he is not a “*vitandus*”), especially if other ministers are lacking, and the excommunicated cleric may administer the sacraments to them. Therefore, a sedevacantist is permitted to participate actively at an “*una cum*” Mass.

(1) The appeal to canon 2261 (made in good faith, no doubt) is in fact an apples-and-oranges argument.

None of the arguments I have adduced against assisting at an *una cum* Mass are based on the notion that the clergy who offer it have incurred the ecclesiastical censure of excommunication.

(2) Canon 2261, in any case, treats exclusively of the reception of a sacrament. It is indeed sometimes permissible to receive a sacrament (e.g., penance) not only from a priest who is an excommunicate, but also, under certain restricted conditions, even from a heretic or a schismatic.

(3) The issue of the reception of a sacrament, however, is distinct from the one I have addressed above: active participation in common public worship, specifically, the Mass.

In this case, as we noted in section II, the layman does not merely receive something (absolution, a sacramental character, etc.), but actively participates according to his state in offering up the Holy Sacrifice.

And therein lies the problem for a sedevacantist who would assist at an *una cum* Mass, for in so doing he participates in a pernicious lie, in communion with heretics, in the profession of a false religion, etc.

E. The Sunday Obligation

Objection: Catholics are bound to assist at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, unless excused for some legitimate reason. Naming a false pope in the Canon of the Mass is not a legitimate reason. Therefore, a sedevacantist is bound to assist at Mass on a Sunday or a Holy Day, even if a false pope is named in the Canon.

As everyone knows, church law and moral theology admit various causes that excuse one from the Sunday Obligation.

We have already demonstrated that it is wrong to participate actively in rites at which the circumstances connote the profession of a false religion,⁸³ at which heretics or schismatics (whether declared or not) are proclaimed teachers of the Catholic faith,⁸⁴ or at which usurpers are recognized as possessing legitimate

authority,⁸⁵ and that these conditions are present at an *una cum* Mass.

These (obviously) would fall under the heading of at least moderately serious reasons involving a “notable spiritual harm,” and according to the general principles of moral theology would thus excuse one from the obligation to assist at Mass.⁸⁶

F. Toleration of Evil for a Greater Good

Objection: An evil may sometimes be tolerated for a greater good. Mentioning the name of Benedict XVI in the Canon is an evil, but assistance at Mass is a greater good. Therefore, one may tolerate the evil mentioning the name of Benedict XVI in order to assist at Mass.

An evil may be tolerated only if it does not entail positing an intrinsically evil act.

In this case, however, we have already demonstrated that the sedevacantist who actively participates in an *una cum* Mass engages in an action that is a pernicious lie — one that “harms God in a matter concerning religion... [a] mortal sin of its nature, due to the evil attached to it”⁸⁷ — that “signifies the profession of a false religion,”⁸⁸ that participates in a sin,⁸⁹ etc.

These are intrinsically evil acts. Hence, they could not be tolerated for a perceived greater good — even that of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

G. The Priest Means Well

Objection: A validly ordained “*Motu*” priest, an SSPX priest or an independent who puts Benedict XVI’s name in the Canon is usually acting in good conscience and means well. As regards the question of the pope, he does not know better. Therefore, a sedevacantist is permitted to assist at his Masses.

(1) The objection that the priest “means well” — Father does not advert to the objective import of what he is doing — is the argument from ignorance.

Such an argument is an implicit admission that the act the priest is performing is evil in itself: “Father [does evil but we should excuse this evil because he] means well...”

(2) In the foregoing sections, we have demonstrated what the *una cum* phrase means and why it is wrong for a sedevacantist to participate actively at an *una cum* Mass. All this has been based on objective principles that can be found in theology books.

The mental state of the celebrant — whether he is in good conscience, means well, does not know better, etc. — is irrelevant. It does not change what *una cum* means liturgically and theologically, nor can it negate the principles that make it wrong for a sedevacantist to assist at such a Mass.

For you, a sedevacantist, the issue is not whether

83. See above, III.D.

84. See above, III.F.

85. See above, III.H.

86. See Merkelbach 2:703. “*quaecumque causa mediocriter gravis involvens notabile incommodum aut damnum, spirituale vel corporale, proprium vel alienum.*”

87. See above, III.A.

88. See above, III.D.

89. See above, III.F.

the *priest* knows better. Spare Father the brain scan — *you* know better...

H. Secret Sedevacantists in SSPX

Objection: *Some priests who offer the traditional Mass under the auspices of SSPX are in fact secret sedevacantists and do not put the name of the false pope into the Canon. Such Masses are not “una cum” the false pope. Therefore, a sedevacantist is free to assist at such a Mass.*

Here, one thinks of the *libellatici* — the Christians during the Decian persecution (ca. 250) who did not actually offer the grain of incense to the gods, but who, in order to avoid persecution, gave the impression that they did by obtaining certificates of conformity (*libelli*).⁹⁰

SSPX publicly recognizes Benedict XVI as a true pope and officially requires that its members pray for him as such in the Canon. SSPX chapels offer pamphlets that clearly enunciate this position, and in most cases, prominently display a photo of Benedict XVI in the vestibule.

This creates a public presumption that an SSPX priest adheres to the position of the organization to which he belongs, and accordingly, puts the name of the false pope into the Canon.

In my opinion, the only way for an SSPX priest to overcome the latter presumption is remove the photo of Ratzinger from the vestibule of his chapel, and announce at the beginning of every Mass that he is not putting Benedict XVI's name in the Canon.

(Since a sudden reassignment will undoubtedly follow, he may also want to learn how to make that announcement in, say, Burmese...)

I. Conflicting Opinions among Priests

Objection: *Some priests who are sedevacantists themselves believe it is permissible for sedevacantists to participate actively in “una cum” Masses if no other Mass is available. Since there is a disagreement even among priests over the issue, there is a “doubt,” and in doubtful matters, St. Augustine says, there is liberty. Therefore, a sedevacantist is free to assist at an “una cum” Mass.*

These priests' conclusions are only as good as their reasons. The typical arguments usually go something like: (1) the laity have nowhere else to go for Mass, (2) the priest who offers the *una cum* Mass means well, or (3) those present are not aware that the Mass is *una cum*.

My impression is that these are off-the-cuff arguments, rather than the result of any extensive research. And heaven knows, we priests all have an awful lot to do, and research consumes great quantities of time.

But since the issue necessarily involves very serious questions — the identity of the Roman Pontiff, participation in evil, communion with heretics, and potential violation of ecclesiastical laws, to name a few — off-the-cuff arguments simply aren't enough.

If a fellow sedevacantist priest does not find the evidence and conclusions presented here to be convincing, he should research the liturgical, historical, canonical and theological issues, and then systematically present his own arguments.

J. No Place for Mass

Objection: *The number of sedevacantist priests is relatively small, compared to the large number of “una cum” Masses (Motu, SSPX and independents). Your argument is logical, but if it were strictly applied in practice, many sedevacantists could only get to Mass occasionally with great difficulty, or would have no place at all to go to Mass. They would deprive themselves and their children of the graces of the Mass, and eventually lose the faith.*

The number of sedevacantist priests is relatively small — but it is far greater than even a decade ago and it is increasing, especially in the United States. These priests, one hopes, will be able to extend their apostolates bit by bit, just as priests ordained in my own generation did, when there was nearly *no one* — sedevacantist or otherwise — who offered the traditional Latin Mass.

As regards depriving yourself of the graces of the Mass, I will be blunt: there are none to be had for you at a Mass where you actively and knowingly participate in a sacrilegious lie.

And as regards your children, my experience tells me that one of two things will happen: either their faith will be corrupted (whether by Motu crypto-modernism or by SSPX's errors on the papacy) or their respect for the Catholic priesthood will be undermined (by your attempts to correct the errors that the clergy have tried to impart to them).

I have been a priest for more than three decades, and I have seen many families that were once solidly traditionalist surrender step by step to the new religion because of a decision to go to a “convenient” *una cum* Mass. Constant exposure to those who teach error — be it devout old Monsignor McGeezer at the Motu Mass, or the zealous Abbé du Fromage-Légrand at the SSPX chapel in Kalamazoo — slowly erodes your faith and all your good resolutions. It's only *one* error they teach, you figure, or it's only *one* phrase in their Mass that's bad — but this gets you ready to swallow a whole lot more.

And it is precisely for this reason that the Church — with her exquisite understanding of fallen human nature — repeatedly forbade Catholics to participate in a rite that would compromise their faith.

But even if such a danger were not present, the sedevacantist would still face the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the weight of all the evidence presented above: active participation in an *una cum* Mass is intrinsically evil.

V. Summary and Conclusion

THE QUESTION we began with was simple: Should a sedevacantist assist actively at an *una cum* Mass — a traditional Latin Mass offered by a validly-ordained

90. See J. Bridge, “Libellatici, Libelli,” in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 9:211–2.

priest who in the first prayer of the Canon recites the phrase: *together with Thy servant Benedict, our Pope*.

Though our question was simple, we covered quite a bit of ground to answer it, so here is a summary.

(I) **The Meaning of the Prayer.** What, first of all, does the prayer mean?

From the perspective of linguistic meaning, putting Ratzinger's name into the *una cum* in the Canon affirms not only that he is a true pope, but also that he is a member of the true Church.

The sedevacantist firmly rejects both propositions, especially because the canonists and theologians cited to support sedevacantism state that the loss of the pontificate in a heretical pope is produced by his *loss of membership in the Church*.

The standard theological meanings attached to the *una cum* produce still more problems for the sedevacantist.

These affirm that the heretic/false pope Ratzinger is head of the Church, Vicar of Christ, Successor of Peter, the principle of unity, and our authorized intermediary with Almighty God. The mention of the heretic's name is "proof of the orthodoxy" of those who offer the Mass, and a sign they "are not separated from communion with the universal Church."

Each and every one of those propositions a sedevacantist would consider a theological horror, if not near-blasphemous.

(II) **Your Participation and Consent.** A sedevacantist who assists at an *una cum* Mass cannot credibly maintain that he "withholds consent" from the odious phrase.

We enumerated at least nine ways in which a Catholic actively participates at a traditional Mass when it is celebrated. Each of these constitutes a true form of active participation, which in turn (according to the theologians we cited) constitutes "cooperation or common action with another in the prayers and functions of worship."

Various popes and pre-Vatican II theologians, moreover, taught that the laity who assist actively at Mass, in so doing, manifest their consent and moral cooperation with the priest as he offers the sacrifice.

Finally, in this section we demonstrated that Fathers of the Church, and indeed Pope Pius XII himself in the Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, teach specifically that the faithful who actively assist at Mass ratify, assent to and participate in the prayers of the Canon that the priest recites, even though they do not vocally recite these prayers themselves.

From this it is clear beyond any doubt that the sedevacantist who actively assists at an *una cum* Mass consents to and morally cooperates with the action of the priest who proclaims that he offers the sacrifice *together with Thy servant Benedict, our Pope* — the arch-heretic and false pope Ratzinger.

(III) **Why You Should Not Participate.** Having established what the *una cum* means and how those present participate in its use, we then explained why a sedevacan-

tist who actively participates at an *una cum* Mass:

- (1) Tells a pernicious lie.
- (2) Professes communion with heretics.
- (3) Recognizes as legitimate the Ecumenical, One-World Church.
- (4) Implicitly professes a false religion.
- (5) Condone a violation of Church law.
- (6) Participates in a sin.
- (7) Offers Mass in union with the heretic/false pope Ratzinger.
- (8) Recognizes the usurper of an ecclesiastical office.
- (9) Offers an occasion for the sin of scandal
- (10) In the case of Masses offered by "resistance" clergy (SSPX, its affiliates and many independent clergy) participates in gravely illicit Masses and condones the sin of schism.

THE ANSWER to our simple question, then, is an equally simple no — a sedevacantist should *not* actively participate in an *una cum* Mass.

In light of the teachings of popes, theologians, canonists, moralists, and liturgists on the issues we have examined, the foregoing conclusion, in my opinion, is the only one possible.

The issue of how, in the absence of regular access to the Mass, sedevacantists can best maintain their faith, religious practice and spiritual lives will be the topic of another article. The task is not impossible.

Naturally, faithful Catholics dearly love the Mass and cherish it as the principal means by which God will lead them to holiness. But the Holy Sacrifice will never bear fruit for us if we purchase it at the price of truth, faith, and holiness itself — at the price of a grain of incense offered to a heretic, a false pope and his false religion. For as Father Faber warned:

"The crowning disloyalty to God is heresy. It is the sin of sins, the very loathsome of things which God looks down upon in this malignant world. Yet how little do we understand of its excessive hatefulness!...

"We look at it, and are calm. We touch it and do not shudder. We mix with it, and have no fear. **We see it touch holy things, and we have no sense of sacrilege...**

"Our charity is untruthful because it is not severe; and it is unpersuasive, because it is not truthful... **Where there is no hatred of heresy, there is no holiness.**"⁹¹

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