

# SHORT EXPLANATION OF WHY WE REJECT THE THESIS OF GUÉRARD DES LAURIERS

The position of the priests and seminarians of St. Gertrude the Great Roman Catholic Church is that John XXIII and his successors in the anti-papacy are public heretics and apostates. They, therefore, are not members of the Catholic Church, and for that reason cannot be legally or validly elected into any office in the Church, nor be designated to receive any office in the Church.

It is the teaching of the Church that in Baptism a person becomes a member of the Mystical Body of Christ (the Church) by adherence to the Catholic Faith.<sup>1</sup> He also is united to the Soul of the Church, which is the Holy Ghost, by receiving sanctifying grace.<sup>2</sup> It is possible to be member of one without being member of the other. A person in the state of mortal sin loses sanctifying grace, and is disunited from the soul of the Church; but he is still member of the Church *externally* as long as he keeps the Catholic faith.<sup>3</sup> Also heretics and schismatics in good faith (i.e. in the state of invincible ignorance) are members of the soul of the Church as long as they don't commit a mortal sin; but they are not members of the *body* of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

We call the Thesis of Bishop Guérard des Lauriers a theological error.<sup>5</sup> We say this because it claims that a heretic and apostate—Bergoglio in our times—can be validly elected to the papacy.<sup>6</sup> This goes against the teaching of the divine law and the Canon Law that public heretics and apostates are not members of the Church externally.<sup>7</sup> The Thesis claims that John XXIII and his successors, Bergoglio included, are members of the Church externally (or we must at least treat them such without the declaration of the Church), while in truth it is only Catholics in a state of mortal sin

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<sup>1</sup> “So, just as in the true community of the faithful of Christ there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one Baptism, so there can be only one faith [cf. Eph. 4:5]; and so he who refuses to hear the Church, as the Lord bids ‘let him be as the heathen and publican’ [cf. Matt. 18:17].” (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, DZ 2286)

<sup>2</sup> “And after Christ was glorified on the Cross, His Spirit is communicated to the Church in the richest effusion, that she and her individual members may more and more daily become like our Savior. It is the Spirit of Christ that has made us God’s adopted sons.” (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, DZ 2288)

<sup>3</sup> “The Church Militant is composed of two kinds of persons, the good and the bad. Both profess the same faith and partake of the same sacraments; but they differ in their manner of life and morality.” (Roman Catechism, The Ninth Article, #7, p. 101)

<sup>4</sup> “The same in its own way must be said of the Church, inasmuch as she is the general help to salvation. Therefore, that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church actually as a member, but it is necessary that he be united to her at least by desire and longing. But this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens, but when a person is under invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit desire, so called because it is included in that good disposition of soul, whereby a person wishes his will to be conformed to the will of God.” (Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston, 1949, DS 3870)

<sup>5</sup> A theological error is the denial of a theological doctrine which is morally certain that the Church considers as either belonging to the integrity of the Faith, or being logically connected with a revealed truth. (Wilhelm & Scannell 1906, 90)

<sup>6</sup> Father Filippo Maroto, professor of Canon Law in the Pontifical College of St. Athanasius, consultant of the Holy Office, who worked in the preparation of the 1917 Code, wrote: “A) The validity of the election, as regards the person elected, depends only upon divine law—in other words, no other impediments except those laid down by divine law, render the election of a Roman Pontiff invalid... Therefore, for valid election of a Roman Pontiff now it is required and suffices that the person elected be:... c) A member of the Church, for he who does not belong to the Church is considered incapable of possessing jurisdiction, especially ordinary jurisdiction, and cannot actually be the head of the Church. For this reason, infidels and the unbaptized can in no way be validly elected. So too, the divine law itself bars heretics and schismatics from the supreme Pontificate. (Maroto 1919, 171-172, #784; Cekada 2021, 248)

<sup>7</sup> Father Conte a Coronata wrote: “No restrictions exist anymore concerning who can be elected to the office of the Roman Pontiff from the part of the human law. ...Precaution of the office of the primacy: what is decreed concerning this precaution by the divine law. ...In the same way for the validity is required, that the elect be a member of the Church; therefore heretics and apostates, at least public ones, are excluded.” (Conte a Coronata 1950, 366; 370) Monsignor Gerard van Noort writes: “By the term *public heretics* at this point we mean all who *externally* deny a truth (for example Mary’s Divine Maternity), or several truths of divine and Catholic faith, regardless of whether the one denying does so ignorantly and innocently (a merely *material* heretic), or willfully and guiltily (a *formal* heretic).” (Van Noort 1959, 241)

who retain the membership of the Church externally but not internally. When a Catholic commits sins of heresy, schism, or apostasy, not only does he lose sanctifying grace in his soul, but he is also cut off from the external membership of the Church; and this happens automatically, without the need of any declaration on the part of the Church.<sup>8</sup>

We also call the Thesis a theological error, because it has invented the idea of an obstacle John XXIII and his successors supposedly posited, so that they were lawfully and validly elected, but did not receive authority. In truth, Canon Law of 1917 and all its commentators teach unanimously, that if person is capable of being elected Pope, he is able also to *become* Pope.<sup>9</sup> This is because the

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<sup>8</sup> Regarding Pope who becomes a heretic, St. Antoninus, Doctor of the Church, writes in his *Summæ Sacræ Theologiæ*, pars III, titulus XXII, caput IV, § 3: “When he falls into heresy, then he for this fact is severed from the Church, and ceases to be her head, and is deposed *de facto*, not *de jure*, because ‘he that doth not believe, is already judged’ [John 3:18] and this *de jure*; but this is before the judgment, because he who himself is a heretic, is severed from the Church; and the head cannot be severed from the body, as long as it be the head of that body from which it is severed. Therefore the Pope for this reason ceases to be the head of the body of the Church; and thus a heretic cannot be or remain Pope, because the keys of the Church cannot be had outside the Church.” (Antoninus 1740, 1208)

Another Saint and Doctor, St. Robert Bellarmine, writes: “The opinion of more recent learned men is the same, like John Driedonus, who in book 4 of his book on Scripture and the dogmas of the Church (in chapter 2, part 2, sentence 2) teaches that only those are separated from the Church, who are either expelled, like the excommunicated, or of themselves depart and oppose the Church, like heretics and schismatics. And in the seventh sentence he says that in those who have departed from the Church absolutely no spiritual power remains over those who are in the Church. Melchior Cano in book 4, chapter 2 on theological locations, teaches that heretics are not parts of the Church, nor members, and in the last chapter at argument 12 he says that it cannot even be thought that someone could be the Head and Pope, who is neither a member or a part of the Church. And in the same place he teaches in clear words that occult heretics are still parts and members of the Church, and so an occult heretical Pope is still Pope. Others have the same opinion and we cited them in book 1 on the Church. The foundation of this opinion is that a manifest heretic in no way is a member of the Church, that is, neither in mind nor in body, neither with internal union nor external. For bad Catholics also are united and are members, in mind through faith, and in body through the confession of faith, and through participation in the visible sacraments. Occult heretics are united and are members, but only with an external union, just as on the other hand, good catechumens belong to the Church with an internal union only, but not external; but manifest heretics belong in no way, as has already been proven.” (Bellarmine 2016, 839-840)

Msgr. van Noort writes: “It is *certain* that public, formal heretics are severed from Church membership. It is the *more common* opinion that public, material heretics are likewise excluded from membership. Theological reasoning for this opinion is quite strong: if public material heretics remained members of the Church, the visibility and unity of Christ’s Church would perish. If these purely material heretics were considered members of the Catholic Church in the strict sense of the term, how would one ever locate the ‘Catholic Church’? How would the Church be one body? How would it profess one faith? Where would be its visibility? Where its unity? For these and other reasons we find it difficult to see any intrinsic probability to the opinion which would allow for *public* heretics, in good faith, remaining members of the Church.” (Van Noort 1959, 241-242)

The Roman Catechism teaches: “It follows that there are but three categories of persons excluded from her pale: first, infidels; secondly, heretics and schismatics; and thirdly, excommunicated persons. ...Heretics and schismatics, because they have separated from the Church and belong to her only as deserters belong to the army from which they have deserted. It is not, however, to be denied that they are still subject to the jurisdiction of the Church, inasmuch as they are liable to have judgment passed on their opinions, to be visited with spiritual punishments, and to be denounced with anathema. Finally, excommunicated persons, because excluded by her sentence from the number of her children, they do not belong to her communion until restored by repentance.” (Roman Catechism 1984, 103)

Finally, Pope Pius XII teaches in *Mystici Corporis*: “Nor must one think that the Body of the Church...is made up during the days of its earthly pilgrimage only of members conspicuous for their holiness, or that it consists only of those whom God has predestined to eternal happiness. ...For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature to sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.” (DS 3803) He also says: “Actually only those are to be numbered among the members of the Church who have received the laver of regeneration and profess the true faith, and have not, to their misfortune, separated themselves from the structure of the Body, or for very serious sins have not been excluded by lawful authority.” (DZ 2286; DS 3802) Notice that from these quotes we see that the Church, in no unclear words, teaches that separation from the Catholic Church can happen **either** by excommunication from the part of the Church **or** by one separating himself from her by committing a sin of schism, heresy, or apostasy.

<sup>9</sup> The Code of Canon Law (CCL), canon 219: “The Roman Pontiff, legitimately elected, immediately upon accepting the election, obtains by divine law the full power of supreme jurisdiction.” Pius XII also taught in his *Vacantis Apostolicæ Sedis* 1945, #101: “Having obtained this consent within the time limit, insofar as it is necessary, determined by the prudent judgment of the cardinals, the one who is elected through the greater number of votes, is immediately the true Pope, and actually acquires and can exercise full and absolute jurisdiction over the whole world.” (AAS 3/1946, p. 97) Furthermore, Father John Berthram O’Connell writes in his *The Celebration of Mass*, that the priest is to mention the name of the Pope in the Canon “once his election has been announced.” (O’Connell 1940, 87)

Church does not, and indeed could not, make decisions about the internal state or intentions of a person; what she looks at is if her members are Catholic or not, i.e. do they have the Catholic faith and belong to the Mystical Body of Christ externally.<sup>10</sup>

We also hold the Thesis of Guérard des Lauriers to be illogical and erroneous, because it teaches that through material apostolic succession Bergoglio legally designates and upholds the apostolicity of the Church. But the very notion of material apostolic succession is that it is valid but *illegal*. It is not possible to have apostolic succession which is merely material but still legal. And this is because the *very thing* which makes the succession material is illegality; and what makes it formal is legality.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it is downright absurd to think that a person who does not hold the faith handed down from the Apostles, could be a successor of the Apostles.

Since we also hold that Novus Ordo ordinations and consecrations are invalid, we truly say, that when it comes to upholding the apostolicity of the true Church of Christ, Bergoglio has nothing to give and nothing to lose.<sup>12</sup>

Also, since the Thesis holds that Bergoglio and his bishops receive legal designation to maintain the apostolicity from the part of the Church, then the only logical conclusion would be that we, the Traditional Bishops and priests, have *not* received legal designation. Just like it is impossible there be two heads in a family, two presidents in a state, or two gods in heaven, it is intrinsically impossible that if Bergoglio and his bishops have been legally sent, there could exist some other legal line of succession besides them. Furthermore, the Novus Ordo church excommunicated Abp. Thuc, Bp. Guérard, and Bp. Carmona, and declared their orders illegal.<sup>13</sup> If the post-Vatican II Church has power to designate, it must also have power to non-designate. By upholding to the legality of Bergoglio, the only logical conclusion would be that the traditional clergy is *illegal*, that is, outside the true Church and true apostolicity. And indeed, this is a position which is defended by the Novus Ordo and the R&R position; but it must be rejected by the Sedevacantists.

Lastly, one cannot see these differences among the traditional clergy as something one can just express his opinion about, like a debate about the working of God's grace in a soul. These questions pertain to where is the true Church of Christ, which obviously affects the salvation of souls.<sup>14</sup> It is to

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<sup>10</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas writes in *Summa Theologiae* (Second Part of the Second Part, Question 60, article 2, reply to Objection 1): "In these words our Lord forbids rash judgment which is about the inward intention, or other uncertain things, as Augustine states." Msgr. van Noort also states: "Once again, it makes no difference whether a person who breaks the bonds of Catholic Communion does so in good faith or in bad; in either case he ceases to be a member of the Church. The innocence or guilt of the parties involved is purely an internal matter, purely a matter of conscience; it has no direct bearing on the question of one of the external and social bonds requisite for membership." (Van Noort 1959, 244)

<sup>11</sup> Material apostolicity means that a bishop possesses valid orders, but since he has separated himself from the unity of the Church, his mission is illegal. For legality, i.e. to make a bishop a Catholic bishop and successor of Apostles, material apostolicity is *not* enough. What is required for true apostolic succession is that it is both valid (material) and legal (formal). In order that a church be the true Church, the mark also of true, i.e. valid and legal apostolicity is necessary. (Dorsch 1928, 608-609) Therefore the idea that there might be what the Thesis calls "legal material succession" is impossible; it is a same kind of oxymoron like "a squared circle" or "a living corpse."

<sup>12</sup> See Fr. Anthony Cekada, "Bergoglio's Got Nothing to Lose..." (Cekada 244-255)

<sup>13</sup> "1) Bishops who ordained other bishops, as well as the bishops ordained, besides the sanctions mentioned in canons 2370 and 2373, 1 and 3, of the Code of Canon Law, incurred also, *ipso facto*, excommunication most specially reserved to the Apostolic See as stated in the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office of 9 April 1951 (AAS XLIII, 1951, p. 217 f.) The penalty contained in canon 2370 applies also to assisting priests, should any have been present.

2) In accordance with canon 2374 priests **illicitly ordained** in this way are *ipso facto* suspended from the order received, and they are also **irregular** should they exercise the order (canon 985, 7).

3) Finally, as regards those who have already received ordination in this illicit manner, or who will perhaps receive ordination from them, whatever about the validity of the orders, the Church does not nor shall it recognize their ordination, and as regards all juridical effects, it considers them in the state which each one had previously, and the above-mentioned penal sanctions remain in force until repentance." (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 18 April 1983, p. 12)

<sup>14</sup> "Therefore, those who are divided from one another in faith or in government cannot live in the unity of such a body, and in its one divine spirit." (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, DZ 2286; DS 3802) "It was to this Mystical Body, the Church, into which Christ commanded all nations to enter; and He decreed her to be a means of salvation without which no one can enter heaven, and that whoever refuses to submit to this divinely established Church will not be saved." (Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston, 1949, DS 3867-3868)

this true Church to which the traditional Bishops and priests are obliged to guide the true flock of Christ on earth to enter. While it is true that one can err in good faith *where* the true Church is, no one can remain in the state of doubt about it. Bergoglio either is a member of the Church of Christ, or he is not. If he is a Catholic, then he can, according to the divine law and the Canon Law, not just be *elected* Pope, but also *become* Pope. But if he is not a member, then not only his papacy, but also his supposed election to the office is, according to both Canon and divine law, invalid. And Bergoglio's organization (the Novus Ordo church) either has the Holy Ghost as its soul, or it does not. If it has, it is the true Church of Christ; and it is treated as such by Novus Ordo and R&R. But if it doesn't, it is a false sect, and must be completely and totally rejected by Catholics.

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