

# Vatican II is Obligatory

(2006)

by Rev. Anthony Cekada

## And... it it heresy

**Note:** *The following is a letter to the editor of The Remnant, written in response to Christopher Ferrara's attempt to refute my article "Resisting the Pope, Sedevacantism and Frankenchurch" (November 2005). The Editor, Michael Matt, refused to print it.*

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To the Editor, *The Remnant*:

A few comments are in order on Christopher's Ferrara's November 30, 2005 "Closing Arguments" against sedevacantism in general and my "Frankenchurch" article in particular:

### I. Is Vatican II Obligatory?

Mr. Ferrara maintains that Vatican II's teachings are not binding where they contain "novelties" not conforming to what was taught "everywhere, always, and by everyone" (St. Vincent of Lerin's formula). This principle, he says, demonstrates that they are **not** universal ordinary magisterium. Paul VI, Mr. Ferrara adds, "expressly" excluded Vatican II's teaching from falling under "the charism of infallibility."

(a) We are back to Mr. Ferrara's (and SSPX's) cardboard pope theology. The (supposed) Vicar of Christ and the bishops of the world promulgate teachings and laws. Jersey lawyers (that word again!), excommunicated bishops and, well, anyone at all, get to pick which teachings and which laws are binding. Welcome to the magisterium as Country Buffet.

(b) The reading of St. Vincent's dictum that Mr. Ferrara and SSPX promote — you're not bound by **anything** a live pope or council teaches, unless it conforms to "tradition" (as understood by lawyers, excommunicates and sundry layfolk) — is dead wrong.

In a lengthy article, the pre-Vatican II theologian G. Bardy demolished this theory, because the right "to fix and define authentic tradition... **belongs to the Church**, as inheritor of apostolic succession." Without this, St. Vincent's dictum "**appears to leave each individual free to seek out which dogmas are accepted everywhere, always and by everyone,**" thus leaving "**to personal choice the right to judge in the last resort.**"

This, Canon Bardy noted, was the error of the Gallicans and of the proto-modernist Döllinger (later excommunicated), who opposed papal infallibility at Vatican I. (*Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 15:3051)

(c) To support his contention that the "novelties" of Vatican II are not universal ordinary magisterium and therefore not

binding, Mr. Ferrara quotes Paul VI's January 12, 1966 audience: "In view of the pastoral nature of the Council, it avoided proclaiming in an extraordinary manner any dogma carrying the mark of infallibility."

This proves nothing. "Extraordinary" refers to **solemn** dogmatic definitions, which everyone agrees Vatican II did not make.

But then we discover that Mr. Ferrara (whether through dishonesty or carelessness) has left out the rest of the sentence:

**"but it [Vatican II] nevertheless endowed its teachings with the authority of the supreme ordinary magisterium, which ordinary (and therefore obviously authentic) magisterium must be docilely and sincerely received by all the faithful,** according to the mind of the Council regarding the nature and scope of the respective documents."

Ahem!

If you accept Paul VI as a true pope, therefore, Vatican II is part of the *universal ordinary magisterium*. As a Catholic, you are then **bound** to adhere to it. And that was my point.

Still not convinced? Here is the typical formula at the end of each Vatican II document:

"Each and every matter declared in this Dogmatic Constitution the Fathers of this Sacred Council have approved. And We by the Apostolic Authority handed down to Us from Christ, together with all the Venerable Fathers, in the Holy Ghost approve, decree and establish these things; and all things thus synodally established, We order to be promulgated unto the glory of God...I, Paul, Bishop of the Catholic Church. There follow the signatures of the rest of the Fathers." (AAS 57 [1965], 71)

What part of "Apostolic Authority," "Holy Ghost" and "rest of the Fathers" don't you understand?

Bottom line: The doctrinal buffet is now closed. If Paul VI was a true pope, there's only one dish on your menu: Vatican II.

## II. Is Frankenchurch Heresy?

In part II of his series, Mr. Ferrara challenged me: "Show us the heresy!"

Well, I showed him the definition for heresy (canon 1325), its three-fold distinction (citing Michel), the type of doctrine that must be denied (Michel), how such a doctrine must have been proposed (Michel), the types of terms and propositions that constitute a denial (Schultes, Michel), the requirements for pertinacity (Michel), sample propositions of the Frankenchurch heresy (nineteen examples, including ones from the JP2 Code and Catechism), the article of the Creed Frankenchurch denies (I believe in *one* Church), how the Magisterium understands this article (nine papal texts, one from de Groot), and finally, how the principles on pertinacity apply to the post-Conciliar popes (Michel, Cardinal Billot).

Against this, the best Mr. Ferrara comes up with is a footnote from *Dominus Jesus* giving a supposedly "authentic" interpreta-

tion of the word "subsists" in *Lumen Gentium*. Very interesting. However:

(a) Why should we suddenly be bound by a *footnote* in a curial declaration if, under the Ferrara hermeneutic, even all that a *Council* teaches is up for grabs?

(b) This leaves Mr. Ferrara eighteen remaining Frankenchurch propositions to reconcile with nine quotes from pre-Vatican II popes (the tip of the iceberg) and just about any pre-Vatican II ecclesiology treatise picked randomly off the shelf. Good luck.

I showed you the heresy, Mr. Ferrara. Now show me the orthodoxy.

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Finally, Mr. Ferrara is annoyed that I mentioned he is a lawyer — a "below-the-belt" debating tactic, he says.

Hardly. There are honorable lawyers and there are shifty ones. But the glib tricks of the latter are the essence of Mr. Ferrara's method: The endless stream of words, a near-total absence of serious research, shoddy citations, dozens of "questions" intended to overwhelm, red herring issues, and here, several disingenuous claims that I "failed to mention" or "prove" points. Right. And Mr. Ferrara failed to mention I was given a 3000-word limit.

So, to Mr. Ferrara's statement that I "promoted" him from windbag to scrappy lawyer, my response is: Hey, who said it was a promotion?

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