

EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS

Viganò excommunicates himself rejecting the visible Church

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As was to be expected, following Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò summons by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the ex-Nuncio responded with a heavy J'accuse, evoking Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre's well-known J'accuse le Concileche written in 1976.

Viganò began with a statement that automatically places him outside the Catholic Church, regardless of the judgment that may come from the Holy See: "I do not recognize the authority of either the tribunal that claims to judge me, or of its Prefect, or of those who appointed him." Which means his readiness not to be in communion with the Catholic Church with its current hierarchy. Which however shabby, however inclusive of people objectively not up to the mark and probably even unworthy, remains the only hierarchy in existence. And without the hierarchy there is no Church, at least as Jesus Christ founded it.

Without detracting from the importance of the issues related to the Second Vatican Council, the liturgical reform, the problems of this pontificate, the fundamental question remains: where is the Church? If the Church is not where that Pope is that the bishops have unanimously recognised, if the Church is not where these bishops are in communion with the See of Peter, then the Catholic Church no longer exists. Which is, by the will of its Founder, a visible, hierarchical society founded on the rock of Peter.

Bishop Viganò finds the foundational argument for his own position in the Bull Cum ex apostolatus officio of Pope Paul IV, who was pontiff from 1555 to 1559. This Bull, Viganò explains, "establishes in perpetuity the nullity of the appointment or election of any Prelate-including the Pope-who had fallen into heresy before his promotion to Cardinal or elevation to Roman Pontiff. It calls the promotion or elevation null, irrita et inanis, that is, null, invalid and worthless (...). Paul IV adds that all acts performed by this person are to be considered equally null and void and that his subjects, both clerics and laity, are freed from obedience to him." By virtue of this justification, Viganò "with serenity of conscience" believes "that the errors and heresies to which Bergoglio adhered before, during and after his election and the intention placed in the alleged acceptance of the Papacy render his elevation to the Throne null and void."

Viganò thus joins the flow of the great sedevacantist river, essentially embracing its position about the nullity of the appointment or ipso facto deprivation of office of a heretical prelate, including the pope. But the real issue is the disambiguation of the term "heretic": which heretics are we talking about?

Let us begin with a preliminary clarification: what is heresy? Canon 751, condensing

theological and canonistic reflection, defines it as "the obstinate denial, after having received baptism, of some truth which must be believed by divine and catholic faith, or obstinate doubt about it." Heresy therefore requires a specific object, which is not error concerning any truth of faith, but the denial of what the Church has infallibly proposed as revealed dogma, that is, as the direct content of Sacred Revelation, for which it requires an assent properly of faith. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the existence and eternity of Hell, the existence of Angels are precisely truths *de fide tenenda*; while the impossibility for women to enter the priesthood or the condemnation of euthanasia are instead doctrines taught infallibly by the Church and certainly connected to the revealed datum, but not defined (at least for now) as divinely revealed. Therefore, the denial of them does not formally constitute heresy.

Having clarified, then, that heresy is not just any error, even a serious one, about the Church's teaching, we see that in the cited canon the adjective "obstinate" recurs twice. Let us then enter into the clarification of who the heretic is as understood by the canonical texts. The classic distinction is between "occult heretic" and "manifest heretic," but the latter term has generated many misunderstandings, and it therefore seems appropriate to replace it with another more precise one found in the literature, namely that of "notorious heretic."

Let us start with the covert heretic: this is one who commits the serious formal sin of heresy-in the restrictive sense explained above-but does so either exclusively in the internal forum or also through words and deeds. Therefore, when we speak of an occult heretic, we must not make the mistake of understanding this expression as excluding in itself a manifest dimension, because - and this is the capital point - the heretic remains occult until he is declared a heretic by the competent ecclesiastical authorities, or he does not admit his heresy before them, or again his heresy is proved without there being any reasonable doubt to the contrary, as is the case, for example, with a prelate who should himself leave the Catholic Church. Only in this way can both the heresy in its formal content and the obstinacy of the subject be effectively proved, which thus becomes imputable; and it is only in this way that the heretic becomes notorious.

Why is this distinction so important? Because the occult heretic does indeed commit a sin of heresy, by which he loses grace and faith, but he legally remains in the Church. It is only the notorious heretic, on the other hand, who ceases to be legally a member of the Church. Please note: legal and juridical membership in the Church is not a secondary issue, but a substantive one. As stated at the beginning, that the Church is (also) a visible society, to which one belongs through legal bonds, is a dogma of faith. So,

while the occult heretic separates himself "only" spiritually from the Church, but not juridically, the notorious heretic separates himself from it in both dimensions.

Now, the statements of Pope Paul IV, as well as of all theologians who claim that the heretical prelate ipso facto loses his office, refer to the notorious heretic, not the occult heretic. If this were not so, the judgment of heresy would be left to each person's free examination, causing inevitable internal divisions between those who believe that Titius is a heretic and those who do not, and thus between those who believe that Caius is still a bishop or pope and those who do not. And this is indeed what has been happening in the variegated sedevacantist world for decades.

Now, while it is already a rather arduous task to prove the actual (occult) heresy of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, before and after his election, given the precise subject matter of heresy, at present it is certainly not possible to prove that he was or is a notorious heretic. Here a long discussion would be opened as to whether it is possible for a Pope, while in office, to become a notorious heretic (to the possibility of becoming an occult heretic there is no serious objection), because the Pope cannot be judged by anyone. But that is another issue. It is enough for us to have shown that, unfortunately, Archbishop Viganò is dragging hundreds of people into the schism, which he himself claims, since he has repeatedly and publicly stated that he does not recognise the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, with whom all Catholic bishops are in communion, on the basis of a false step.

Embracing Archbishop Viganò's position necessarily entails admitting that the Catholic Church, as a visible and hierarchically ordered society (and there is no other), has in fact failed, that the Church, in the form that Jesus Christ gave it, is therefore not indefectible. That the gates of hell have prevailed against it. Which is a heresy.