

Validity of N.O. Priestly Ordinations and Episcopal Consecrations

Sedevacantism

- To support their claim that the members of the hierarchy have been deprived of their offices on account of heresy point to changes in the sacraments.
- “This new rite is surely invalid. It cannot have been promulgated by a valid pope.”
- And, of course, denying that the man wearing a white cassock and living in the Vatican is really the pope, they will naturally look with suspicion upon rite produced since the supposed eclipse of the papal office.
- Not just sedevacantists, but some other hardliner traditionalists adopt these positions, which come not so much from theological reasoning, even faulty, as from a suspicion and hostility (rather understandable) regarding anything produced since Vatican II.
 - But we need to be thinkers and restorers, not mere reactionaries.

Ignorance

- Some who attack the new rites do not have a good theologian background but they seem convincing to people who also don't know the basic principles of sacramental theology.
- Others, esp. some priests, are clever and well-read, and have accesses to sources that the majority of laymen do not, so these laymen are apt to take them at their word.
- It seems like everyone on the internet is a sacramental theologian – usually weighing in on things well beyond the level of their knowledge.

Basic Principles:

1. Validity
 - a. Does not mean goodness, holiness, desirability, etc.
 - b. Means that sacramental effect takes place.
 - i. In this case, that the ordinand really becomes a priest or a bishop, that his soul receives the character of the sacrament of orders.
 - ii. The so-called Orthodox have valid ordination, but that ordination is not good, not pleasing to God b/c accomplished in the state of schism.
 - c. Requires matter, form, intention, and a minister capable of accomplishing the sacrament in question.
2. Matter
 - a. A physical action or a physical thing, usually, but not always a combination – a physical action performed with some thing – pouring of water for baptism.
 - b. Most of the time, matter is determined by at least apostolic tradition.
 - i. Some leeway for modification, but not a lot.
3. Form
 - a. The words used that specify the matter.
 - b. Makes clear what the action is – lots of reasons you might pour water on someone, the words let us know what is actually being done.
 - c. Form has been determined specifically by OIJC for just two sacraments – baptism and the Holy Eucharist – they are in Holy Scripture – some latitude, but not much
 - i. Outside of these two, the Church has tremendous leeway to in the composition of the form of her sacramental rites.

- ii. It is extremely important to understand this – if you think that the words used throughout the Latin Church in the time of Pius XII were the only form ever recognized by the Church as being valid, you are going to very confused and very wrong when it comes to assessing the new rite.
 - iii. Forms of every sacrament except the two mentioned are going to differ between the Latin Church and the various Eastern Rites
 - 1. Keep in mind the Church always recognized these Eastern rites as perfectly valid.
 - d. The form has to express what is being done – the precise words of the form need not contain everything, but it must be clear in context what is taking place.
- 4. Intention
 - a. What one wills to accomplish in performing the sacramental action.
 - b. God makes it easy to have the right intention – must will to do what the Church does.
 - i. Intention is presumed if the one confecting the sacrament follows the Church’s rite.
 - ii. Of course, we can never know anyone’s intention w/ absolute certainty, but we can make a reasonable presumption.
 - c. Not necessary to know exactly what the Church does. A pagan could baptize, intending only to perform the rite as done by the Catholic Church, w/o knowing why the Church does it or what it accomplishes.
- 5. Minister
 - a. The one who performs the sacrament must be capable of doing so.
 - b. Baptism – anyone.
 - c. Marriage – a man and a woman w/o impediments.
 - d. Every other sacrament requires a priest, and for ordination and (most of the time) confirmation, must be a bishop.

A lot of the sedevacantist arguments are going to be very clever and subtle and make all kinds of curious claims.

- We are not going to get down into the weeds or we this podcast will go on for hours.
- One fundamental difficulty is that they are going to be strongly biased against anything coming from the Church since 1958, b/c whether they intend to or not, they say that the hierarchical Church went out of existence in 1958 or shortly thereafter.
- Theirs is a jaundiced view – and if you don’t agree with their position, don’t give their arguments the benefit of the doubt.
- If the entire Catholic world is following an impostor Church whose episcopacy and priesthood have gone out of existence, what do we say of Our Lord’s promises to the Church?
- For refutation of sedevacantism itself, I refer to Fr. Tranquillo’s podcast on the subject.

Ordination to the Priesthood

- Matter:
 - Old rite: imposition of hands
 - New rite: imposition of hands
- Form:

- Old rite: “Grant we beseech Thee, Almighty Father to these thy servants, the dignity of the Priesthood: renew within them the spirit of holiness so that they may hold from Thee, O God, the office of the second rank in Thy service and by the example of their behavior afford a pattern of holy living.”
- New rite: “Grant we beseech Thee, Almighty Father to these thy servants, the dignity of the Priesthood: renew within them the spirit of holiness. May they hold from Thee, O God, the office of the second rank in Thy service and by the example of their behavior afford a pattern of holy living.”
- Catch the difference?
 - One word in Latin – “ut” “so that” in our translation.
 - Does not alter the sense at of the passage in the slightest.
- You really have to be determined at the outset to declare all the new rites of the sacraments invalid to go after this one. One word of difference...
- Some try to attack the intention – but remember, the intention is not difficult to have and it is presumed if one follows the rite, the words of which clearly express that one is making a priest.
- Minister
 - Still only bishops in the new rite.
 - Most of those who, sedevacantist or otherwise, who claim there are no priests validly ordained in the new rite, will not attack the rite of priestly ordination, b/c w/ the exception of one word, it’s the same matter and form by which the Church formerly ordained.
 - However, their point of attack will be against the rite of episcopal consecration.
 - And if there are no bishops, then there is no one to validly ordain priests.
 - Matter, form, and intention might be just fine.
 - No bishop performing the ceremony, no valid ordination.

Episcopal Consecration

- Matter:
 - Old rite: imposition of hands
 - New rite: imposition of hands
 - A difficulty is raised that at the imposition of hands, the candidate for the episcopacy has the book of the Gospels on his head.
 - Irrelevant – all that is required is moral and not physical union for the sacramental action to take place.
 - The sacramental sign, imposition of hands is still accomplished.
- Form:
 - Here we run into the difficulties b/c they are entirely different btw old and new.
 - Old rite: “Complete in thy priest the fullness of thy ministry, and adorned in the raiment of all glory, sanctify him with the dew of heavenly anointing.”
 - New rite: “and now pour forth on this chosen one the power which is from Thee, the governing Spirit, whom thou gavest to Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ and whom He gave to the holy Apostles, who founded the Church in every place as Thy sanctuary, unto the glory and unceasing praise of Thy name.”

- No direct correlation, the new one is not based on the old.
- The question then becomes does the new rite sufficiently express what is being accomplished.
 - Firstly, it should be noted that this form is based on an ancient text – the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus – that forms the basis of some eastern rites of episcopal consecration.
 - Notably, the Coptic rite of consecration has a similar formulation.
 - Those words “governing spirit” have a tradition in the usage of the Eastern Church of referring to the grace of the episcopal office.
 - Sufficient in itself to establish validity.
 - Second, we can refer to what we call *significatio adjunctis* – signification from what is connected
 - Meaning we take the words in context to determine their meaning.
 - The form even in the old rite is not absolutely, perfectly clear taken out of context – “fullness of the ministry” “dew of heavenly anointing” are expressions that could mean many things.
 - The question is – what does the Church understand by these words, and does she make their meaning clear in the context of the rite?
 - And of course she does.
 - The same is true for the new rite – the rest of the prayer that includes the form is as follows:
 - “Father, you know all hearts. You have chosen your servant for the office of bishop. May he be a shepherd to your holy flock, and a high priest blameless in your sight, ministering to you night and day; may he always gain the blessing of your favor and offer the gifts of your holy Church. Through the Spirit who gives the grace of high priesthood grant him the power to forgive sins as you have commanded, to assign ministries as you have decreed, and to loose every bond by the authority which you gave to your apostles. May he be pleasing to you by his gentleness and purity of heart, presenting a fragrant offering to you, through Jesus Christ, your Son, through whom glory and power and honor are yours with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, now and forever. R. Amen.”
 - office of bishop, shepherd to the flock, high priest, forgiveness of sins, assigning ministries – these spell out those things essential to the office of the bishop.
 - Office of bishop mentioned by name. Duties and powers of the bishop mentioned explicitly. Mirroring of a rite that the Church has always recognized as valid. There is no reasonable supposition of invalidity.
 - Pretending that there is ambiguity in the rite is a matter, again of ignorance about sacramental theology, or trying to make the facts fit a previously established conclusion.

We do not say these rites should have been changed.

- Indeed, what is the point apart from an insatiable desire to do something new?
- The Church's liturgical traditions should be treated with more respect.
- We deplore this perverse obsession with novelty.
- On the other hand, the disordered motivations of the so-called reformers do not make their rite necessarily invalid.
 - And it has everything it needs in order to be valid.

We do not give a pass to any aberrations that may exist either.

- If some bishop makes up his own prayer of consecration or otherwise fails to follow the rite, it may well be invalid and does not get the benefit of the doubt.

SSPX Conditional ordinations?