

EXCOMMUNICATION RISK

Viganò and Lefebvrians, the illusion of a Tradition without Church

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Two thunderbolts marked the traditionalist sky on 19 and 20 June. The first concerned the summons by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, former Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, titular archbishop of the

suppressed See of Ulpiana.

In a letter dated 11 June last, signed by the Secretary for the Disciplinary Section, Archbishop John J. Kennedy, the Dicastery notified the person concerned of the start of an extra-judicial criminal trial against him for the crime of schism and invited him to appear at the same Dicastery building on 20 June, "so that he may take note of the charges and the evidence". In the same letter, the Dicastery listed the lack of certain "elements necessary to maintain communion with the Catholic Church: denial of the legitimacy of Pope Francis, breaking of communion with him and rejection of the Second Vatican Council". The Dicastery also ensured the necessary right to be defended or represented by a lawyer or prosecutor.

Apart from the generic "rupture of communion", which means everything and nothing, the other two accusations are unfortunately true. And Monsignor Viganò has confirmed them in his reply published on the blog edited by Aldo Maria Valli, who is meanwhile collecting letters of solidarity with the Archbishop and approval of his position. These externals are undoubtedly sincere, but in their tone and content they unfortunately highlight how much we have now gone beyond a legitimate opposition to the errors that are rife everywhere, even within the Dicastery itself. And this 'beyond', in the tradition of the Church, means schism.

In this reply, dated 20 June, therefore the very day on which the Archbishop was due to appear in Rome for his defence, Archbishop Viganò considers the accusations against him "a reason for honour": "I believe that the very wording of the charges confirms the theses that I have argued over and over again in my speeches. It is no coincidence that the accusation against me concerns the questioning of the legitimacy of Jorge Mario Bergoglio and the rejection of Vatican II: the Council represents the ideological, theological, moral and liturgical cancer of which the Bergoglian 'synodal church' is a necessary metastasis".

Viganò's reaction is a copy-paste of that of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, whom he explicitly evokes: "Fifty years ago, in that same Palace of the Holy Office, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre was summoned and accused of schism for having rejected Vatican II. His defence is mine, his words are mine, his arguments are mine, before which the Roman Authorities could not condemn him for heresy, having to wait for him to consecrate bishops to have the pretext to declare him schismatic and revoke his excommunication when he was already dead". A position that would inevitably lead to excommunication.

And the St Pius X Fraternity, founded by Mgr Lefebvre himself, is also making waves, after the Superior of the District of France, Abbé Benoît de Jorna, started warning that new episcopal consecrations are on the horizon. In his *Lettre aux Amis et Bienfaiteurs*, published on 19 June, Abbé de Jorna in fact wrote: "On 30 June 1988, Archbishop Lefebvre performed an 'operation-over' on Catholic Tradition by consecrating four auxiliary bishops. These bishops, who were quite young at the time, are obviously less so thirty-six years later. Since the situation of the Church has not improved since 1988, it has become necessary to consider giving them assistants, who will one day become their replacements. When the Superior General announces this decision, we can expect a media explosion against the 'fundamentalists', 'rebels', 'schismatics', 'disobedients' and so on. At that point, we will have to face contradictions, insults, contempt, rejection, perhaps even ruptures with those close to us".

De Jorna is no 'ordinary priest' in the FSSPX. Ordained in 1984 by Archbishop Lefebvre, he was appointed superior of the French District, before becoming, in 1996, rector of the Écône Seminary, a post he would hold for more than 20 years; in 2018, he again became superior of the District of France, the largest along with that of the United States, replacing Abbé Christian Bouchacourt, who had in the meantime been appointed general councillor of the FSSPX.

De Jorna attributes to the four bishops consecrated in 1988 the title of "auxiliaries", showing in this way one of the many inconsistencies of the FSSPX: each auxiliary bishop must in fact receive from the Holy See an apostolic letter which he must show to his own Ordinary to take possession of his office; and it is normally the Ordinary who constitutes the auxiliary bishop, with the permission of the Holy See, or in any case someone always indicated by the Pope. None of the four bishops were given an apostolic letter, nor can they be considered auxiliaries of a bishop (Lefebvre) who, at the time of the ordinations, had no jurisdiction and was even suspended a divinis.

From the perspective of the FSSPX these ordinations were necessary precisely for the operation "rescue of tradition", a rescue that would be necessary even today and would therefore justify new episcopal consecrations. Abbé de Jorna has the merit of highlighting the true logic of the FSSPX, namely that of being the only true church, which therefore needs 'its' bishops. At the end of the letter, he affirms the need for the virtue of fortitude in order to be faithful "to the true Tradition of the Church (...) and also to the Society of St. Pius X, an ark of salvation raised by Providence in the midst of the flood that threatens to engulf the Church and civilisation". A reference - that to the Ark - that is definitely significant, since the Fathers saw in the Ark of the Patriarch Noah the figure of

the Church, outside of which there is no salvation. The former director of the Écône Seminary, on the other hand, does not seem to have too many scruples in identifying the FSSPX with the ark and therefore with the Church. Therefore, *extra Fraternitatem nulla salus*.

A clearly schismatic attitude, which is also evident in his exhortation, almost a reproach, to those young people "born" into the FSSPX, who fail to fully follow "the line of absolute fidelity to the faith taught to us by Archbishop Lefebvre". "Is it not a tangible reality," de Jorna continues, "that of these young people coming from families fully committed to the battle of the Fraternity of St Pius X, of these young people who have only attended the chapels and schools of the Fraternity of St Pius X, and who discover themselves to be Christians one day, worldlings the next? One day St Pius X Fraternity, one day Ecclesia Dei, or even charismatics; one day traditional Mass, one day new Mass; one day Pentecost pilgrimage in one direction, one day pilgrimage in the opposite direction?" [the FSSPX promotes a Pentecost pilgrimage in the opposite direction to the famous Chartres pilgrimage]. In short, tainted boys.

Words that demonstrate once again that the FSSPX has unfortunately not changed at all in its schismatic attitude, despite the steps taken by Benedict XVI and then Francis for a reconciliation. It remains to be seen what the current Pope's attitude will be in the face of new episcopal consecrations: will he legitimise them as he has legitimised confessions and marriage, thus inaugurating the short circuit of an impossible parallel hierarchy without jurisdiction and subject neither to the Holy See nor to the Ordinary? Or will he pretend nothing has happened? Or will he impose an excommunication? Anything is possible under Francis.