

Catholics Forever

*Our Lady of the Rosary Chapel*

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April 20, 1986

Dear Nicolaas,

Thank you for renewing your subscription to our newsletter, and I shall be glad to see to the Mass for your departed mother.

Besides sending to Dr. Heller his own copy of the enclosed material I originally received from Brian Champlin regarding the proposed manner for electing a pope, I am presuming to send him a carbon of this letter also, the reason being that, if the pope-proposal was not the bombshell I anticipated, though I'm sure it must have been with Mgr. des Lauriers (my Dominican confrere), this letter itself, I regret, will be one for the two of you.

I have been convinced by the arguments of His Excellency! About the time we published the article on Brian's suggestion, I received from an anonymous source a copy of a book in French recently published - perhaps you are familiar with it - under the title (translated) of "The Actual State of Authority in the Church," detailing his "thesis" of the "material" pope, in-between ours on the one hand of Sede vacante and, on the other, that of Mgr. Lefebvre and the one of Abbé de Nantes (both of whom recognize in JP II a pope in the full sense). (Besides your own letter to Mgr. Guérard I have received another from one Michel Mottet in Switzerland also addressed to the Bishop, taking issue with his position in even stronger terms.)

Until now, regrettably, I had not read of his stand nor ever seen any of his own writings, though I had heard of his formal-material distinction without knowing just what he meant by it. Now that I've seen it explained and studied it, including a subsequently received copy of the essay you and Mr. Mottet attacked, I have seen, through the labyrinth of necessary distinctions he makes, the flaws in the opposing ones, including mine. I shall be acknowledging this in our next newsletter.

Everything that Mgr. Guerard writes seems to hold together and dispel the confusion that has enveloped Catholics ever since Vatican II, providing of course one understands all the distinctions - not only theological but philosophical and canonical as well - he makes. Behind the ill-understood form-matter distinction, so fundamental to Scholastic Philosophy and Theology, and necessitating it is the even "thinner" distinction between "manifest heresy" and "manifest heretic." The second involves the first but not the reverse. JP II

and the Establishment bishops (on the whole) are manifestly heretical. Bishop Guerard insists on this no less than anyone - but since the essence or "form" of heresy is pertinacity or obstinacy, a matter of conscience which not even the Church presumes to judge until it has forced it to be externalized by two official or canonical warnings to those suspected - something yet to be done by any representative group of diocesan bishops (themselves revived by repentance) - we can conclude no more safely and juridically than that JP and company are at best (but at least) materially in office, not formally so as having the power (divine Authority) by right belonging to the Church's offices. They are reduced to being mere "functionaries" sustaining (Providentially) the hierarchical visibility of the Church (naturally necessary to it as a human, and not only divine, institution). This "functioning" or, if you will, officiating, carries with it no jurisdiction, of which they have deprived themselves by "habitually preferring heresy" and otherwise opposing the (traditional) Magisterium of the Church. The SESSIO they retain is itself restricted under the circumstances to a mere seat-warming, until such time as God in His mercy will either see to their (automatic) deposition by the two (Pauline based) remonstrances (unheeded) or by (presumably) some universal, incontestable miracle. But the MISSIO is with the traditionalist priests and bishops. (The formal SESSIO involving (divine) Authority and jurisdiction is itself "vacant." The Church, as Mgr. Guerard, says is in a state of privation. (We are suffering for our sins!))

All in practice the thesis (poor word) of Bishop des Lauriers seems to involve is that we traditionalists cannot on the one hand presume to elect a pope or, on the other, claim (Ordinary) jurisdiction for our own extra-canonical bishops. I for my part can "live" with that!

In Christ,



Fr. Robert Fidelis McKenna, O.P.

P.S. Oh yes, regarding our own stand on Bellarmine's teaching about manifest heresy automatically excommunicating one, Mgr. Guerard shows that the Saint was speaking of manifest heresy juridically or canonically understood (with official notifications). Then as regards the Cum ex Apostolatu decree, it is not applicable (as it stands) under the last (1917) Code of Canon Law, nor on the other hand by reason of it merely "pertaining to" Divine law. (Ecclesiastical laws are all based on (pertain to) the higher Divine Law without themselves necessarily being Divine Law formally.)