

Bishop's House

12 June 1984

Dear Roman Catholics of Our Lady of the Rosary:

The lamentable and sad display of the recent illegal consecrations in Muckwonogo make us recall similar instances in the history of the Church when in 1791 the directive, wise and good, came down from the highest authority addressing itself in a way which can only be repeated in our day.

Although we lack the Highest Authority, namely, the intervention of a Pope, nevertheless, we are not helpless against those who would destroy the Catholic Church by pretending to save it. With the same conviction shared by all men of good will and sound judgment, we can only apply to the present situation the remedy of other times.

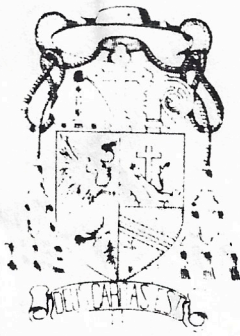
Just as a Pope once encouraged the faithful to avoid intruder priests and bishops, we humbly borrow the words of Pope Pius VI and address them not to the Catholics of Strasbourg, April 16, 1791 but we address them to the Catholics of Milwaukee, June 12, 1984.

These words are meant to approve and to justify your pastor and your bishop "to whom alone you must remain united, the only one whose voice you are permitted to listen to. Any other, whoever he may be, since he owes his title to an illegal election (in the case of these bishops), to violence and to fraud, you must reject and resist."

Indeed, the exemplary conduct of our faithful Catholics only proves that according to the very words of Christ Himself: "the sheep follow him because they know his voice." That is to say, the faithful, inspired by the grace of God, know their shepherd and follow him, while refusing to follow the voice of those who have made themselves strangers to them.

Rev. Dominic Savio, your pastor, is a Roman Catholic priest. It is only further testimony to the perversity of those who would subject both this good priest and the good people he sincerely serves to needless doubts. On the contrary, those priests who have been imprudently and unlawfully introduced into our territory against explicit warnings of grave sin are like the thieves that have come in only to steal. Regarding this matter which binds in conscience the imprudent man who was consecrated for the benefit of his wisdom, as we were told, let us hear what Rome of old would have to say: "For, since the intruded pastor is certainly schismatic and his schism is obvious, it follows that the action of a Catholic who addresses himself to the intruded cleric for the administration of baptism from every point of view, vicious, evil, and forbidden; in effect, this would be to communicate with schismatics in divine matters and in the very wickedness of the schism, which is by nature an evil, and hence forbidden by the natural law as well as by the divine. For what is the sin of schism, committed by the intruded priest, if it is not to usurp by his own action the pastoral ministry, without any authorization, and even in contempt of the authority of the bishop whom he rejects?"

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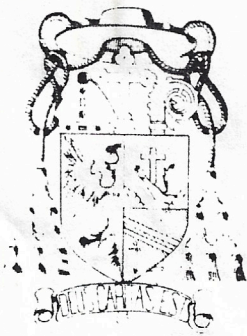
And what else is the Catholic doing who receives baptism from the intruder priest, except to commit the crime of schism with him, since one, in administering baptism, and the other, in receiving it, consummates a premeditated offense, which neither one could have committed without the concurrence of the other. So when a Catholic cooperates in the schism by his conduct, it is impossible for him not to assent by that very fact to the sin of schism, and not to recognize and treat the intruder as a legitimate priest." (Laudabilem majorum, September 26, 1791).

What conclusion can be drawn when explicit warnings have been given to the former Vicar General of our territory regarding such serious matters? What conclusion regarding the seriousness of pastoral solicitude can be drawn when these clear warnings of moral culpability and gravity were dismissed with gross negligence? You have heard the sentiments expressed by the Roman Catholic Church regarding such matters: Pope Pius VI clearly condemns such conduct as being a participation with schismatics in divine matters.

As if to add to the crime of schism, the same schismatic clergy were in the sanctuary participating in the ceremonies of consecration. How is it that there is a new "ecumenical" spirit that permits communication in divine matters with schismatics while at the same time vigorously denounces the Modernists? One is prompted to inquire: which sin of schism is more serious? Can there be a "little schism" a "medium schism" and a "great schism"? Certainly, there can be numerical differences in the extent of a schism, but there can never be any doubt that schism of any magnitude always remains schism.

It is certainly sad and painful to treat with severity those whom we cherish as fellow-workers in the Lord's vineyard. Yet, this is sometimes necessary as a duty for those who labor for the salvation of others and their holiness. A greater severity becomes necessary when there is reason to believe that the evil only increases with the passage of time and is working harm to souls. Lest the brazen mistake kindness for weakness; lest the bold confuse charity with cowardice, it is necessary to affirm, with the courage and strength of that office conferred upon me and for the peace of mind of our good Catholics that they should cast aside any and all doubts that are designed to undermine the good order of the Roman Catholic Church and the efforts of their pastor, Rev. Dominic Savio, for the proper education of the children and the sanctification of all.

Led by misguided zeal, there are those to whom the words of Pope Leo XIII may be directed for their spiritual good: "Not only must those be held to fail in their duty who openly and brazenly repudiate the authority of their leaders, but those, too, who give evidence of a hostile and contrary disposition by their clever tergiversations and their oblique and devious dealings. The true and sincere virtue of obedience is not satisfied with wo



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it consists above all in submission of mind and heart."

There may be some misconceptions regarding the question of territories that have been expressed by the uninformed. It is a principle of ethics and therefore a moral matter, that only those can dissolve an agreement who were a party to it. A bilateral agreement cannot be dissolved unilaterally. This would constitute a violation of the agreement.

As a practical consequence, it should be clearly understood that in the light of recent occurrences, those who in any way support the imprudent attempts to intrude either bishops or priests in this territory are fostering a peculiar kind of ambition foreign to the Church.

May the organic unity of our faithful Roman Catholics in Milwaukee, members of Our Lady of the Rosary church, so well summed up by the ancient in the well-known formula: "A people united to their shepherd" continue so that others may witness this bond of unity built on sincerity and true charity and be drawn to you. In fact, docility to shepherds of a lower grade is the first link in the necessary submission to those of a higher grade.

May the trials of the present time serve to strengthen our resolve and fidelity to the One, True, Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church.

+ Fr. Louis Vezelis
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Bishop