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MODERNISM: THE SYNTHESIS OF ALL HERESIES

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Introduction

Participants complete handout titled, “*Pop Quiz*.”

- About 50% of Catholics who go to Mass every Sunday believe the Eucharist is just a symbol.
- About 80% of Catholics believe contraception is not a sin.
- Over 50% of Catholics believe women could be ordained priests.
- About 80% of Catholics believe they are not bound by the Magisterium on matters of morality.
- About 75% of Catholics support a married priesthood.
- About 50% of Catholics who go to Mass every Sunday reject the Church’s teaching on abortion.
- Between 1965 and 2002 the total number of seminarians in the U.S. fell by 90%, and the number of religious seminarians fell by 95%.
- In 1968, 338 declarations of nullity were issued in the United States. By 1983, that number had risen to 66,417.

But the crisis of faith in the Church is not limited to the laity. We have all seen certain Bishops and Cardinals give us evidence of this crisis over the past several years, especially surrounding marriage and sexual ethics. As Cardinal Burke recently said in Rome,

Today, the Church is beset by confusion and error about even some of her most fundamental and constant teachings. As a secular agenda continues to advance in the world, promoting the attack upon innocent and defenseless human life, upon the

integrity of marriage and its incomparable fruit, the family, and upon the very freedom of man to worship God ‘in spirit and truth,’ the Church herself seems confused and even at times indulgent toward a mundanity which rebels against God and His law.

The Illness and the Remedies

The Church is suffering from a terrible illness, and its symptoms are many: indifference towards the natural law concerning marriage and the family, abandonment of the transcendent in the sacred liturgy, man-centered preaching that does not call sinners to repentance but for social action, the disappearance of the zeal of missions and the need for non-Catholics to convert to Catholic faith, and so on. But a doctor who treats only the symptoms and not the underlying illness is a bad doctor. And so we will be ineffective catechists and teachers if we run from one doctrinal fire to another, attempting to stamp out this and that error as it attempts to enter the Church, without looking for the source of the fire, the illness, the error. Of course, we must treat the symptoms so that they do not overwhelm the patient, but we must also diagnose and treat the underlying illness. We must seek to find and eliminate the root cause of all of these errors that so many in the Church, even in the hierarchy, have embraced.

From where did these errors come? Are they part of a heresy? If so, what is the name of this heresy? Have we ever seen it before? These are the questions we will seek to answer, because if we can diagnose the current illness, we can prescribe the correct remedies, but if we remain ignorant of the illness, the Church will continue to suffer.

Movements against the Church: Protestantism, Freemasonry, French Revolution

Exactly five hundred years ago, in 1517, Martin Luther began his rebellion against the Catholic Church and opened a Pandora’s Box the consequences of which he did not anticipate. By dethroning the Pope from his authority in the minds of men, he made each man his own pope.

Each might look at the Bible and come to his own conclusions about its meaning. At first, this simply meant the rise of Protestantism and the creation of a new heresy and schism, but within two centuries, Protestantism began to devolve in many intellectual circles into apostasy – a total rejection of the Christian Faith. Sometimes, this took the form of outright atheism or pantheism. Other times, this took the form of a liberal Protestantism that denied the divinity of Christ. During this age of the so-called Enlightenment in the late 16 and 1700s, Christendom saw break upon its shores a threat never yet seen – the outright denial of the entirety of the Christian faith. It was during this time that Voltaire wrote such things as:

The Christian religion is an infamous religion, an abominable hydra which must be destroyed by a thousand invisible hands. It is necessary that the philosophers should course through the streets to destroy it as missionaries course over the earth to propagate it. They ought to dare all things, risk all things, even to be burned, in order to destroy it. Let us crush the wretch!
Crush the wretch!

And the wretch to Voltaire was Jesus Christ.

And exactly 300 years ago, in 1717, the first lodge of Freemasonry was founded in London. During the course of the following centuries, the Freemasons would seek to undermine Christianity throughout Europe and even infiltrate the Catholic Church.

The radical 1700s finally erupted in the French Revolution, when countless lay faithful and clergy were martyred for fidelity to the Roman Catholic Church. In the Vendee, General Westermann slaughtered 300,000 Catholics who refused to lay down their arms in defense of God and King. In the Cathedral of Notre Dame, a profligate woman symbolizing Reason was enthroned and venerated in the sanctuary. And in Rome, Pope Pius VI was arrested and exiled to France, where he died a martyr. Denied Christian burial, he was buried as “*Citizen Bramschi, exercising the profession of Pontiff.*”

Eventually, the French Revolution would begin to eat its own, and the First Republic ended with the rise of Napoleon. But this was not the end of the Modern revolt against the Church; it was only the beginning. Over the course of the 19th century, even darker philosophies would take rise, especially in Germany, as relativism, nihilism, and Marxism took to the scene. While the full political realization of these ideas would have to wait until World War 1 and the Russian Revolution in 1917, the influence of what Pope St. Pius X would call the enemies of the Church made itself known within the Catholic Church even from the beginnings of the 1800s.

Of this age, Pope Gregory XVI wrote in 1832,

Depravity exults; science is impudent; liberty, dissolute. The holiness of the sacred is despised; the majesty of divine worship is not only disapproved by evil men, but defiled and held up to ridicule. Hence sound doctrine is perverted and errors of all kinds spread boldly....We see the destruction of public order, the fall of principalities and the overturning of all legitimate power approaching. Indeed this great mass of calamities had its inception in the heretical societies and sects in which all that is sacrilegious, infamous and blasphemous has gathered as bilge water in a ship's hold, a congealed mass of all filth.

He is talking about heretical societies and sects, things like Freemasonry.

He especially condemned and fought against the errors of liberalism and the separation of Church and State.

Pius IX and Compromise

In 1846, Gregory XVI died and the conclave elected the “liberal” candidate, who would take the name Pius IX. Initially making compromise after compromise with the liberals and radicals in central Italy, where he governed over the Papal States. He eventually was forced to flee Rome in a carriage, and in February, 1849, a Roman Republic was declared in Italy. The Leftists lit

fireworks on Good Friday and staged a victory celebration over St. Peter's grave on Easter Sunday. Churches were seized and turned into dance halls and stables, and priests were murdered. After France helped to end the revolutionary government, and Pius IX returned to Rome, he returned a changed man, a changed Pope. There would be no more compromise, because he understood that compromise with the spirit of the French Revolution is compromise with the Devil.

Syllabus of Errors

Bl. Pius IX's firm, Magisterial rejection of modern errors is best summarized by the final condemned proposition of the *Syllabus of Errors*, promulgated in 1864: "The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization." Other errors condemned in the *Syllabus of Errors* include:

1. pantheism (which identifies God with nature, especially with man),
2. naturalism (which denies the existence of the supernatural),
3. rationalism (which denies the possibility of faith),
4. indifferentism (which teaches that all religions are paths to God),
5. communism,
6. secret societies (especially Freemasonry),
7. rejection of the authority of the Pope,
8. divorce, and
9. liberalism (the separation of Church and State).

Let's look at the Pop Quiz. Tally up all the propositions that you said were "true." All twelve statements are false. They were taken from the *Syllabus of Errors*. These are Modernist errors but the term "Modernism" is not yet used; it is first used by Pius X, two Pontificates later.

First Vatican Council – Convened to Condemn Modern Errors

In 1869, he convened the First Vatican Council, whose purpose was to be what the Council of

Trent was to Protestantism. Vatican I was supposed to be the Ecumenical Council condemning modern errors that were seizing hold of the minds of laity and clerics alike. Fifty-one draft decrees were prepared to systematically condemn modern errors, but the day after the second decree of the fifty-one was promulgated (defining papal infallibility), Prussia declared war on France, which would lead quickly to the premature end of the Council. Napoleon III had troops in Rome to protect the Pope from the radicals in Italy; he now had to remove his troops. Rome was no longer protected against the radicals therefore, Pius IX sent all the Bishops home. The great Council against modernity was cut short, barely making it out of the gate. And the waves would continue to batter the Church.

The First Target – Sacred Scripture, historical truth doubted

In 1878, Bl. Pius IX died, after having served Christ as the second-longest reigning Pope in history, after St. Peter himself. His successor Pope Leo XIII would be the fourth longest reigning Pope. Between the two of them, they will reign from 1846 to 1903, thus, they had a huge influence over the governance of the Church.

Pope Leo XIII continued the work of Pius IX, turning especially to defend the Faith against a movement within scriptural studies that would doubt the inspiration and infallibility of the Sacred Scriptures. The collected assortment of modern errors that Pius IX so completely condemned was beginning to congeal into a heretical movement within the Catholic Church, and the first target of this movement were the Scriptures. Their historical truth was doubted in the name of science and reason, and Our Lord was beginning to be portrayed as a mere man. While condemning these trends in the realm of Sacred Scripture, he was promoting Thomism (theology taught in the tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas) in the seminaries. He also wrote his famous encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, warning both against the unbridled greed during the Industrial Revolution

and the inherent evil of socialism and communism.

Pius X – He names and fights against the Heresy of Modernism

In 1903, Leo XIII died, even while the storm within the Church continued to gain strength. After his elevation to the see of St. Peter, Pope St. Pius X in 1903 promulgated his opening encyclical, *E Supremi*, in which he diagnosed the evils of his day. He says,

Then again, to omit other motives, We were terrified beyond all else by the disastrous state of human society today. For who can fail to see that society is at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and deep rooted malady which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is dragging it to destruction? You understand, Venerable Brethren, what this disease is - apostasy from God... When all this is considered there is good reason to fear lest this great perversity may be as it were a foretaste, and perhaps the beginning of those evils which are reserved for the last days; and that there may be already in the world the "Son of Perdition" [the Antichrist] of whom the Apostle speaks (II. *Thess.* ii., 3). Such, in truth, is the audacity and the wrath employed everywhere in persecuting religion, in combating the dogmas of the faith, in brazen effort to uproot and destroy all relations between man and the Divinity! While, on the other hand, and this according to the same apostle is the distinguishing mark of Antichrist, man has with infinite temerity put himself in the place of God, raising himself above all that is called God; in such wise that although he cannot utterly extinguish in himself all knowledge of God, he has contemned God's majesty and, as it were, made of the universe a temple wherein he himself is to be adored. "He sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God" (II. *Thess.* ii., 2).

With this opening shot, Pope St. Pius X declared war on a heresy he would call *Modernism*, the synthesis of all heresies. He explicitly identifies it with the same errors condemned by Pius IX (in the *Syllabus of Errors*) and Leo XIII (especially those errors in Scripture studies). During his pontificate, he excommunicated leaders of Modernism and placed their books on the *Index of Forbidden Books*. He required all priests and teachers to take the *Oath Against Modernism*, and he set up diocesan vigilance committees to watch for Modernist tendencies within the dioceses. He also promulgated perhaps the most important encyclical of modern times: *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, a systematic presentation and condemnation of the heresy of Modernism. It is to this document that we will now turn to understand the nature of this heresy.

He opens his encyclical with an explanation of the urgency of Catholic response. He writes,

That we should act without delay in this matter is made imperative especially by the fact that the partisans of error are to be sought not only among the Church's open enemies; but, what is to be most dreaded and deplored, in her very bosom, and are the more mischievous the less they keep in the open. We allude, Venerable Brethren, to many who belong to the Catholic laity, and what is much more sad, to the ranks of the priesthood itself, who, animated by a false zeal for the Church, lacking the solid safeguards of philosophy and theology, nay more, thoroughly imbued with the poisonous doctrines taught by the enemies of the Church, and lost to all sense of modesty, put themselves forward as reformers of the Church... (2)

He continues,

Hence, the danger is present almost in the very veins and heart of the Church, whose injury is the more certain from the very fact that their knowledge of her is more intimate. Moreover, they lay the ax not to the branches and shoots, but to the very

root, that is, to the Faith and its deepest fibers. And once having struck the root of immortality, they proceed to diffuse poison through the whole tree, so that there is no part of Catholic truth which they leave untouched, none that they do not strive to corrupt.

So unlike other heresies this heresy will leave nothing alone. Think of the Arian heresy or the Nestorian heresy, heresies in the early Church, they denied certain things about Christ. There are other heresies that followed but they did not touch every single doctrine and aspect of Christianity. Protestantism did not do that, it left intact many things. Modernism leaves nothing intact.

He continues,

Further, none is more skillful, none more astute than they, in the employment of a thousand noxious devices; for they play the double part of rationalist and Catholic, and this so craftily that they easily lead the unwary into error; and audacity is their chief characteristic, there is no conclusion of any kind from which they shrink or which they do not thrust forward with pertinacity and assurance. (3)

Tenets of Modernism: Relativism, Progressivism and Pantheism

The heresy of Modernism can be reduced to three tenets: *Relativism*, *Progressivism*, and *Pantheism*. First, we will turn to *Relativism*. For the Modernist, it is impossible to know God by divine revelation in the way we understand it. The Modernist believes that no one can truly know God Himself, only his impression of God. Thus, all the different religions of the world are looking at the same God, and seeing different aspects of Him. So, the Christian sees especially the mercy of God. Thus, the Christian religion is true for Christians. The Muslim sees especially the unity of God. Thus the Islamic religion is true for Muslims. The Hindu sees the plurality and diversity within God. Thus, the Hindu religion is true for Hindus. No religion is false, as long as it

speaks to its adherents. All religions are therefore true and are paths to God-this is what the Modernists taught. In this vision, divine revelation of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church and the Faith that that Church teaches, which is revealed by God, which alone can save us from our sins holds no place. Truth, including religious truth, according to the Modernist, is relative to each individual. There is, therefore, no such thing as infallible dogma, because the Catholic Church has no unique hold on the truth. Now, I have to ask: Does this sound familiar? Do many Catholics today think of Catholicism as just one religion among many? Do many Catholics today believe they can dissent from the teachings of the Magisterium? Do many Catholics today think of the Church's teaching on contraception as a "ban" or a "policy" that can be changed, rather than a precept of the natural law? Do many Catholics succumb to sentimentalism concerning hard truths like the indissolubility of marriage? Do many Catholics today believe that all religions are true and are paths to God?

However, there is one condition, according to the Modernists, for a religion to be true, and that is for it to speak to and be relevant to its adherents. This is the second tenet – we might call it *progressivism*, or the need for modernization within the Church. This is where Modernism acquires its name. Now, according to the Modernists, a religion attached to hierarchy, the supernatural, miracles, and anything ancient or medieval cannot speak to modern man. Modern man requires a modern religion, infused with modern philosophy, and therefore, Catholicism must be modernized – changed, to suit the desires of modern man. I'll ask it again: Does this sound familiar? Do many Catholics believe that the Church must get with the times? Do we often hear that the Church is backwards and medieval? That it is authoritarian? That it is behind the times with regard to women's ordination, a married priesthood, contraception, divorce, and so on?

The third tenet is *pantheism*, the identification of the world, and especially of man, with God.

According to Modernism, God is not the transcendent other, but man's spirit is one with the divine nature. According to Modernism, Christ was divine, because he was most in touch with this divine spirit within-the divine spirit that we all have to one degree or another. There is thus a dismantling of the distinction between God and man, (which Pius X reminded us is the mark of the Antichrist, so in a way, it is the theology of the Antichrist) between the supernatural and the natural, between the divine and the human, between the Church and the World. All these things get blended in Modernism. The Catholic religion therefore becomes less God-centered and more man-centered. And in becoming more man-centered, the Church flings its windows open to the world. Again, I will ask: Does this sound familiar? Do we sometimes find ourselves at a liturgy that seems to be more about man than about God? Do many Catholics today want the Church to become more tolerant of the modern world and accommodate its teachings to modern men—to change them so that modern man will accept them?

We must now turn to Pius X's final verdict on this heresy. He writes,

And now with Our eyes fixed upon the whole system, no one will be surprised that We should define it to be the synthesis of all heresies. Undoubtedly, were anyone to attempt the task of collecting together all the errors that have been broached against the faith and to concentrate into one the sap and substance of them all, he could not succeed in doing so better than the Modernists have done. (39)

Why Modernism is the Worst of all Heresies

So what makes Modernism the worst of all heresies? First of all, its *relativism*. At least a Calvinist or a Muslim believes that dogma matters, and what we believe will determine where we spend our eternity. But a Modernist does not believe dogma matters, because he does not believe that there is one truth to which we must all submit. The basic assumption of religion – *that*

there is one truth, and it is knowable by the human mind – is denied right off the bat. It is for this reason that St. Pius X wrote, “Modernism leads to the annihilation of all religion.” In fact, in giving a history of revolution in Western thought, he says the first step is Protestantism, the second step is Modernism, and the next step will be atheism.

Secondly, its *progressivism*. If the Church had thrown its windows open to the world in the fourth or the fourteenth century, surely she would have suffered. But modernism wants to throw open the windows of the Church and let in the spirit of the world in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries: the era of Marxism, relativism, nihilism, gender ideology, abortion, and all the rest. The evils of this age exist on a monstrous scale, so the damage that a worldly spirit would do in the Church is great.

Thirdly, its *pantheism*. In *Second Thessalonians*, St. Paul tells us that the Antichrist will be “lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself as if he were God.” The Modernist tendency to dethrone the transcendent God and replace him with Man is perhaps a “foretaste” (in the words of Pius X) of the religion of the Antichrist. The Antichrist will not be an atheist; he will demand the worship of Man, culminating in his own worship as man's false savior. Modernism is the theology of the antichrist.

Is this not strange? This is the worst heresy, the synthesis of all heresies, and most of us have either never heard of it, or if we have, do not know what it is. Not only that, but it is the most recent heresy, and we are unaware of its existence. Scariest still, most of us, to some extent, are influenced by it. How this happened – how we caught this illness – is a story for another day. Today, our task is to find the remedies for the illness now that we have diagnosed it.

Tools to Save Souls – Three Chief Enemies of Modernism

The present crisis of the Church goes by many names – liberalism, dissent, cafeteria Catholicism – but the best name, the most accurate name, is “Modernism.” We are living through the great Modernist crisis in the Catholic Church. We are all here as teachers and catechists. If you lived during the Arian Crisis, you would, as a teacher or a catechist, be obliged to defend the divinity of Christ with St. Athanasius and the remnant faithful. If you lived during the Protestant Revolution, you would be obliged to defend Holy Mother Church with St. Thomas Moore. If you lived during the French Revolution, you would be obliged to defend God and King with the saint of the Anjou, leader of the Vendee resistance, Jacques Cathalineau. It is no different today. This is our apostolate: the defense of the Faith, and there are now generations of Catholics whose souls are in danger because they were taught not the doctrines of Christ but those of the Modernists.

But in the face of a crisis so large, confusion so pervasive, and contradiction so certain, what can we do? What tools do we have to save souls in this battle? This is where we benefit from having diagnosed the disease and named it – Modernism.

In *Pascendi*, Pius X not only explains and condemns Modernism, he also identifies its three chief enemies. He writes,

They recognize that the three chief difficulties which stand in their way are:

1. the scholastic method of philosophy,
2. the authority and Tradition of the Fathers and
3. the Magisterium of the Church.

We can summarize these three as: Thomism, Tradition, and the Magisterium. The remainder of this lecture will look at each of these three enemies of Modernism, and why they oppose Modernism so strongly.

Scholastic Method of Philosophy, Thomism – A Chief Enemy of Modernism

Before the Second Vatican Council, the method of seminary education was nearly the same no matter the institution. Scholastic philosophy and theology, done in the tradition of the medieval and modern theologians, held pride of place. Deeply rational and rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, scholastic philosophy found its greatest expression in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, which the Popes had mandated to be taught in Catholic seminaries and universities. Pope Leo XIII was particularly devoted to restoring the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas to its rightful place. He wrote in *Aeterni Patris*,

Among the Scholastic Doctors, the chief and master of all towers Thomas Aquinas, who, as Cajetan [a commentator on Aquinas] observes, because "he most venerated the ancient doctors of the Church, in a certain way seems to have inherited the intellect of all." The doctrines of those illustrious men, like the scattered members of a body, Thomas collected together and cemented, distributed in wonderful order, and so increased with important additions that he is rightly and deservedly esteemed **the special bulwark and glory of the Catholic faith**. With his spirit at once humble and swift, his memory ready and tenacious, his life spotless throughout, a lover of truth for its own sake, richly endowed with human and divine science, like the sun he heated the world with the warmth of his virtues and filled it with the splendor of his teaching." He elaborates, "...reason, borne on the wings of Thomas to its human height, can scarcely rise higher, while faith could scarcely expect more or stronger aids from reason than those which she has already obtained through Thomas. (AE 18)

While the Modernists were calling for Aquinas to be cast into the trash bin of history and replaced with modern philosophies, St. Pius X held firm:

In the first place, with regard to studies, We will and ordain that scholastic philosophy be made the basis of the sacred sciences. ... And let it be clearly understood above all things that the scholastic philosophy We prescribe is that which the Angelic Doctor has bequeathed to us, and We, therefore, declare that all the ordinances of Our Predecessor on this subject continue fully in force, and, as far as may be necessary, We do decree anew, and confirm, and ordain that they be by all strictly observed. In seminaries where they may have been neglected let the Bishops impose them and require their observance, and let this apply also to the Superiors of religious institutions. Further let Professors remember that they cannot set St. Thomas aside, especially in metaphysical questions, without grave detriment. (45)

So what is it that makes St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy and theology so important for the refutation of Modernism? Firstly, there is simply a precision of thought that allows one to reason very clearly in order to both know the truth and refute error. Anyone who spends a significant time immersed in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas will discover his mind moving more quickly and precisely than it has before. More specifically, however, St. Thomas Aquinas beautifully set forth the distinction between God and man, between the supernatural and the natural. While the details of this theology are too much to discuss today, it is important to note it, and to note that St. Pius X seemed to have had this aspect of his theology in mind. In a *Motu Proprio* promulgated in 1914, St. Pius X wrote,

...the principles of philosophy laid down by St. Thomas Aquinas are to be religiously and inviolably observed, because they are the means of acquiring such a knowledge of creation as is most congruent with the Faith (*Contra Gentiles*, II, 2, 3); of refuting all the errors of all the ages, and of enabling man to distinguish clearly what things are to be attributed to

God and to God alone (*ibid.*, iii; and *Sum. Theol.*, 1, xii, 4: and liv, 1).

If we want to acquire the intellectual strength to defend the Faith against Modernism, we must return to the Angelic Doctor and the study of his works. In our seminaries, universities, and high schools, St. Thomas Aquinas must once again take pride of place. Defending the Faith without the aid of St. Thomas is like fighting with one arm tied behind our back.

The Magisterium of the Church – A Chief Enemy of Modernism

The next enemy of Modernism is the Magisterium, that is, the teaching authority of the Church that rests in the Pope and Bishops. At the time of St. Pius X's *Pascendi*, the Modernists entirely minimized the authority of the Magisterium. Because they did not believe in the divine institution of the Church, they did not believe the Church could teach authoritatively and infallibly through its Magisterium. And while this error remains with us today in what is often called "dissent," another opposite error exists as well, one that views the Pope as a sort of dictator whose every word is authoritative and whose teaching can supersede and overturn all precedent and tradition. This second error is especially popular today as erring members of the Church attempt to impose Modernist teachings and disciplines on the Church. A proper understanding of the Magisterium, however, will rule out both of these errors.

The Magisterium can be divided into the Extraordinary and the Ordinary Magisterium. The Extraordinary Magisterium is exercised on occasions of grave crisis or need, and is done somewhat infrequently. It is also infallible in its teachings. One expression of this Extraordinary Magisterium is an Ecumenical Council, which is infallible when it defines dogma or condemns errors, which was done by every Ecumenical Council except Vatican II. The other expression of the Extraordinary Magisterium is a papal definition, like Pius IX's definition of the

Immaculate Conception. For this infallible, Extraordinary Magisterium to be invoked, the language of the document must make the intention to define doctrine very clear. Here is Pius IX's definition of the Immaculate Conception for reference:

We declare, pronounce, and define: that the doctrine that maintains that *the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved immune from all stain of original sin* is revealed by God and therefore, firmly and constantly to be believed by all the faithful.

So how does a proper understanding of the Extraordinary Magisterium defend the Church against Modernism? First, it excludes dissent. It means that we are bound by Faith to believe all that the Ecumenical Councils and Popes have taught in an extraordinary manner as certainly true. Just because a Council is old or un-modern, it does not mean we can ignore it. Second, it excludes a view that would see the Pope and Bishops as infallible in their every word. Unless the Pope solemnly defines a doctrine or pronounces "*anathema sit*" on its detractors, we are not looking at an infallible teaching. In other words, the extraordinary Magisterium is not exercised on an airplane or in a footnote.

The Ordinary Magisterium is the teaching of the Popes and Bishops over the course of their normal pastoral duties. It includes such acts as encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, catechisms, and even homilies. The authority of an act of the Ordinary Magisterium is in proportion to its continuity in Tradition. If a Pope is repeating a teaching that has been constant in the Tradition of the Church, then the Ordinary Magisterium is actually infallible. One recent example of this was Pope St. John Paul II's condemnation of female ordination. If a teaching has some roots in the Tradition, it still retains an authority to which we must submit even if it is not infallible. If a

teaching of a Bishop or Pope's Ordinary Magisterium contradicts the entire Tradition of the Church, then it is one's duty to assent to the Magisterial Tradition, and not to the novelty. The clearest historical example of this was when Pope John XXII attempted to impose upon the Church the error that a soul cannot receive the Beatific Vision until the final judgment. He was heroically resisted by Dominicans, Franciscans, members of the hierarchy, and even the King of France. Eventually, he repented and his successor infallibly defined the dogma that souls may receive the Beatific Vision before the final judgment.

So how does a proper understanding of the Ordinary Magisterium defend the Church against Modernism? First, it means that we are bound by Tradition, not just by what has been infallibly defined by a Pope or Ecumenical Council. There is a tendency in the Church today, even among faithful Catholics, to believe that one must only submit to what has been defined by the Extraordinary Magisterium. This, however, is quite false because it ignores the authority of the Ordinary Magisterium – the authority of Tradition. When we have a theological question, the answer is always found by asking: What has the Church always taught? When we have a pastoral question, the answer is always found by asking: What has the Church always done? In the words of Pope St. Stephen in the 3rd century, "Let nothing be innovated beyond what is traditional." Second, it means that the authority of a statement of the Ordinary Magisterium is in proportion to its continuity with Tradition. Therefore, no Bishop or Pope can use the Ordinary Magisterium to overturn Tradition. If a teaching by an erring member of the Magisterium contradicts the Tradition, and if the Tradition is of greater weight, one must submit to the Tradition, and not to the new teaching. We find this duty expressed by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians:

But though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you beside that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema. As we said before, so I say now

again: If any one preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema. (*Gal.* 1:8-9)

For this reason, he “withstood [Peter] to his face” in Antioch, when St. Peter was to be blamed in his ministry.

Tradition of the Fathers – A Chief Enemy of Modernism

The final enemy of Modernism is, according to St. Pius X, *Tradition*. He explains,

[The Modernists] exercise all their ingenuity in diminishing the force and falsifying the character of tradition, so as to rob it of all its weight. But for Catholics the second Council of Nicea will always have the force of law, where it condemns those “who dare, after the impious fashion of heretics, to deride the ecclesiastical traditions, to invent novelties of some kind . . . or endeavour by malice or craft to overthrow any one of the legitimate traditions of the Catholic Church”... (42)

The Law of Prayer is the Law of Belief

In particular, we are going to look at *liturgical* tradition as an enemy of Modernism. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*: the law of prayer is the law of belief. If we pray and worship in a traditional manner, we will be inoculated against Modernism. If we pray and worship in a modern manner, we will be inoculated against Tradition.

The worship of God is the most important duty of every Catholic; if we are offering Him sub-par worship, this will make itself manifest in the beliefs of Catholics. To survive and respond to the Modernist crisis of the Church, there are many things we must put aright, but at the center must be the liturgy, because nothing is more important than our worship of God.

I am going to speak in particular of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, also known as the Tridentine Mass or Traditional Latin Mass. This is our connection to the liturgical tradition of the West. It is prayed today according

to the 1962 *Roman Missal*, but in essentials it dates back to the Early Church. There are even rumors in Tradition that parts of the Roman Canon, which surrounds the words of Consecration, dates back to Peter himself.

To look at how the Traditional Latin Mass stands so strongly against the errors of Modernism, we will look at some of its most visible and notable characteristics. Some of these characteristics it may share with a more traditionally-celebrated *Novus Ordo* Mass. Still, not everything we will discuss can be accomplished outside of the Traditional liturgy.

We must first remind ourselves of what lies at the core of Modernism: the confusion of God and man. Modernism destroys the distinction between the supernatural and the natural. It destroys the distinction between God and man. It destroys the distinction between the Church and the World. Thus, to look at God, one does not look “out,” but “in,” to yourself or to your neighbor. One doesn’t look towards the God who creates and rules the universe apart from it, but to God who is identical to the spirit of man. Thus, there is a turning towards man, a man-centeredness to the Modernist religion.

Position of Ad Orientem

The *Ad Orientem* liturgy, that is – Mass celebrated towards the liturgical East, is the most perfect attack against this pantheism, and I think, in part, this is why it has been rejected. By turning the liturgy towards God, and not man; the object of our worship becomes very clear and very distinct from man. In the Traditional Latin Mass, the priest does not even make eye contact with the laity (except in the homily). He is busy offering perfect worship to God, and not man. The laity hardly see the face of the priest, but this is fitting, since they are not concerned with the personality of the priest, but worshipping God with Him.

Even the spatial symbolism of the Old Mass reinforces that great divide between God and man. As the priest ascends the altar, he is moving

upwards and outwards towards the liturgical East, from whence Christ is supposed to return. When he elevates the Eucharist, he holds it far above his head. This does not eliminate the fact that Christ bridged the great divide between God and man; we still approach the sanctuary to receive Holy Communion. But the point is that Christ built a bridge over the chasm, he did not eliminate the chasm. And if we symbolically pretend, through our liturgical action, that the chasm between God and man does not exist, then we will be less amazed by the bridge, and less impressed when we receive Holy Communion and taste the happiness of God. To put it simply, *Ad Orientem* liturgy restores a sense of the transcendence, the other-ness of God, and reminds us that the liturgy is not about human community but divine worship.

The Language of Latin

Again, the use of Latin reminds us that God is not our buddy, to be treated and spoken to like we would treat and speak to an equal. If we could transport ourselves back to saner times for a moment, imagine being a peasant and speaking to your king. You would understand that you could not use your everyday language. You would ask around to see with what title you should address him; you would practice what you would say; you would learn what vocabulary to use. You wouldn't say, "Good king sir, could I have a bit of a favor." You would say, "Your worship, deign to grant a request of your humble servant." You would modify your language because you are speaking to someone of higher rank. The inequality between the two of you would demand reverence on your part, and your reverence would express itself in the language you use. We could give more mundane examples than that. Children do not speak to adults the same way they speak to each other. We do not speak to priests the same way we speak to each other. Thus, if we modify our language when we speak to our human superiors, how much more must we modify our language when we speak to God, who is infinitely greater than us. In the Traditional Latin Mass, He is spoken to in a sacred tongue, the ancient tongue of

the Church, which at this point, is spoken only by the Church. He is often spoken to in hushed tones, but sometimes the priest speaks to Him in chant.

If God is just one of the guys, then it makes sense to have a casual liturgy, with adlibbing, jokes, and vernacular language. But if God is not one of us, if God is infinitely greater than us, if this is the God who judges souls – rewarding the just with His own happiness and condemning the wicked into everlasting torment – then, perhaps, we might speak to Him with greater solemnity, perhaps even – like that peasant before his king – learning to speak a language that will be quite foreign. And if the liturgy really is Heaven on earth, and if we recognize the vast chasm between Heaven and earth, perhaps it would make sense to recognize that when we are at Mass, we are pilgrims in a foreign land. When we pray in the Latin tongue, we are recognizing these two facts: that God is infinitely greater than us, and so we must speak to Him differently, and that Heaven is infinitely foreign to us, and so to come to learn of its delights we must speak a foreign tongue. The very strangeness of Latin is the case for Latin.

Altar Rail

The Altar Rail stands as a boundary between Heaven (the sanctuary) and earth (the nave). It represents the chasm between God and man, between the supernatural and the natural. In the traditional liturgy, this boundary is held firm. The only person you will ever see cross from one side to the other might be the priest. Now, for Modernism, the altar rail is intolerable, because Modernism is all about smashing down the divide between God and man, Heaven and earth. For Modernism, God is the spirit with man's own history. He is not "out there," but "in here." Thus, for the Modernist, the altar rail is a lie. It makes God transcendent and "other." It says; you may come this far and no further, since beyond this gate is Heaven, which you have yet to attain. So, it is no surprise, that after the Council, one of the first things to go was altar rails.

The Ministerial Priesthood and Common Priesthood of the Laity

Parallel to this is the tendency to blend together the active priesthood of a sacramental priest and the passive priesthood of the laity. We are so entirely used to things like Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion that we do not bat an eye. But a well-catechized Catholic from any time before the 1960s would be utterly shocked. He would say, "That's the job of someone with Holy Orders! That is a right only given with ordination!" It is true that lay persons have a sort of priesthood, but it is a passive priesthood. Our priesthood means that we can receive the Sacraments. It means we hear the Word of God. It means we are given Holy Communion. The priesthood of a member of Holy Orders is active. It means that he can cause the Sacraments. It means he can read the Word of God. It means he can dispense the Sacraments. When we start breaking down this barrier between the sanctuary and the nave, between the priesthood and the laity, we are subtly breaking down the barrier between Heaven and earth, breaking down the barrier between God and man.

In the Classical Roman liturgy, there is a beautiful balance of God as transcendent and God as intimate. The boundary between the sanctuary and the nave highlights God's utter transcendence. But when we approach the altar rail, Christ passes over from Heaven to earth and into our souls. Thus, we experience the intimacy of God. The paradox is that the more transcendent we make God in the liturgy, the more intimate He becomes when we receive Him.

Sin and Hell

Another effect of pantheism and the resultant humanist worship of man is that sin and Hell are downplayed or rejected. If God is within man's own nature, then man's tendency is towards good. And if man's tendency is towards good, then we have far over-estimated the prevalence of sin and the possibility of Hell. We know, however, that man's tendency is not towards good but towards evil. This is not due to his nature, which is good,

but due to Original Sin. Indeed even after Baptism, concupiscence remains, and so this tendency towards sin must continue to be fought.

The Traditional Liturgy is not soft about the real existence of sin, the real danger of Hell, and our real enemy, Satan. For example, the old baptismal rite contained three solemn exorcisms, one of which reads:

Priest: I exorcise thee, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father + and of the Son, + and of the Holy + Spirit, that thou goest out and depart from this servant of God, N. For He commands Thee, accursed one, Who walked upon the sea, and stretched out His right hand to Peter about to sink. Therefore, accursed devil, acknowledge thy sentence, and give honor to the living and true God: give honor to Jesus Christ His Son, and to the Holy Spirit; and depart from this servant of God, N. because God and our Lord Jesus Christ hath vouchsafed to call him (her) to His holy grace and benediction and to the font of Baptism.

The Old Mass is very clear on the need to be in the state of grace to receive Holy Communion For example, the old rite contains the following prayer before Communion that the laity would have witnessed at every Mass:

Let not the partaking of Thy Body, Lord Jesus Christ, which I, though unworthy, presume to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation; but through Thy loving kindness, may it be to me a safeguard and a remedy for soul and body, Who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, forever and ever. Amen.

The following famous passage from St. Paul was read three times in the liturgy every year:

Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink of the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that

eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord. (1 *Cor* 11:27–29)

Previously, this passage, which warns of the danger of damnation for receiving Holy Communion in a state of sin, was read once on Holy Thursday and twice on *Corpus Christi*. It still is in the old rite, but if someone has only been attending the new rite, they would not have heard this passage for almost 50 years.

Silence and the Interior Life

For many people, one of the most attractive things about the old rite is its silence. “Active participation” in this liturgy consists not in a dialogue with the priest, mandatory singing, handshaking, or the like. It consists in the approach of a soul towards God that is only possible with silence. One may pray the prayers of the priest using a hand missal, turning over the familiar and ancient phrases in the interior of one’s soul. Or one can do what Western Catholics have done for over a millennium, and let the priest say the prayers he was ordained to say, while we enter into our soul and join our will with that of the priest through private meditation.

At the Traditional Latin Mass, you are given an hour or so to prepare yourself for Holy Communion, and you can do whatever best accomplishes that. You can pray every word the priest prays. You can meditate on how Christ laid down his life to be the bridge across the infinite chasm between you and God. You can meditate on the glory of Our Lady in Heaven. You can pray about, meditate about, or concern yourself with whatever you think will be most fruitful.

Why is this specifically opposed to Modernism? Because Modernism hates the interior life. Modernism wants you to be focused first and foremost with everyone around you, with service to man. But Christ wants you to be focused first and foremost with God, with service to God.

Modernism wants the liturgy to be about community-building. Christ wants the liturgy to be about the worship of God.

Modernism wants action. Christ wants contemplation, from which action can flow. And contemplation can only take place through dedication to the interior life, and especially to mental prayer. And a condition of mental prayer is silence; it cannot be done without silence. The silence of a Latin Mass enables the soul to free itself from constant stimulation from without and turn to God.

According to Modernism, the spirit of God is the spirit of history, driving the development of mankind towards its future pinnacle. Moreover, since religion is part of the human experience, religion also must always evolve and change. The Catholic Church, therefore, must not cling to its past, rigid in its traditions. Instead, it must change itself to meet the needs and reflect the philosophy of modern man. It needs to modernize, and it is from this tenet that Modernism takes its name. The Old Mass, on the contrary, refuses to Modernize. There are obvious ways in which this is clear. For example, it refuses to let go of the Ancient Roman Canon, once considered the very essence of the Roman Rite. This means that at every Mass the martyrs and Popes of the Early Church are prayed to. We are not allowed to forget about our roots. But even more importantly, the whole atmosphere of the old rite stands in contradiction to modernity. Everywhere, we see the effects of Ockham, Descartes, Luther, Calvin, Kant, Sartre, Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, and the rest of the messengers of modernity. All has been affected; even the Church has not survived unscathed from the twentieth century.

But, this Old Mass is like a miracle, preserved against all odds out of a shipwreck. One can smell the incense and breathe like saints breathed. One can read the beautiful introits and think like the saints thought. One can bow one’s head during the silent Canon and pray like the saints prayed. One can forget for a short time the horrors that have

assaulted the West and have destroyed Christendom, for during these solemn minutes one prays with St. Benedict even as night closes once more on Christendom.

Our Lady – Conqueror of all Heresies

But there is one more enemy of Modernism, and it is certainly the most important: the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. Pope Pius IX published his *Syllabus of Errors* on the 10th anniversary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception because he knew it was Mary who would conquer all heresies, especially modern ones. Pope St. Pius X said that the Immaculate Conception would be the antidote to the “confluence of errors” then swirling. Pius X, like so many of his age, hoped for the intercession of Our Lady to triumph over the works of the devil. He spoke of,

a sort of secret instinct which leads Us to regard as not far distant the fulfillment of those great hopes to which, certainly not rashly, the solemn promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception opened the minds of Pius, Our predecessor, and of all the Bishops of the universe.

St. Maximilian Kolbe had the same vision of the future: “We live in an epoch which could be called the beginning of the era of the Immaculate.” And “Under her banner a great battle will be fought and we will raise her flags upon the fortresses of the prince of darkness.”

These prophetic hopes were fulfilled on July 13, 1917. Our Lady of Fatima did not announce the immediate triumph over error and sin, but instead promised much suffering if we did not follow her guidance. She did promise, however, that in the end, her Immaculate Heart would triumph. The crisis that the Church has experienced since the 1960’s was, even before it took place, connected with Fatima by Cardinal Pacelli, who would later become Pope Pius XII. In 1933, he said,

I am concerned about the confidences of the Virgin to the little Lucia of Fatima. This persistence of the Good Lady in face

of the danger that threatens the Church is a divine warning against the suicide that the alteration of the Faith, in its liturgy, its theology, and its soul, would represent.

I hear around me innovators who wish to dismantle the Sacred Chapel, destroy the universal flame of the Church, reject her ornaments, and make her remorseful for her historical past. Well, my dear friend, I am convinced that the Church of Peter must affirm her past, or else she will dig her own grave. [...]

A day will come when the civilized world will deny its God, when the Church will doubt as Peter doubted. She will be tempted to believe that man has become God, that His Son is only a symbol, a philosophy like so many others. And in churches, Christians will search for the red lamp where Jesus awaits them, like the sinful woman crying out before the empty tomb: “Where have they taken Him?”

Then, priests will rise up from Africa [one thinks of Cardinal Sarah], from Asia [Bishop Athanasius Schneider], from America [perhaps Cardinal Burke], formed here in this seminary of the Missions, who will say and who will proclaim that the “bread of life” is not ordinary bread, that the mother of the God-man is not a mother like others. And they will be cut to pieces to testify that Christianity is not a religion like others, since her head is the Son of God, and the Church is His Church.

Indeed, Cardinal Burke recently expressed the same sentiments in Rome, quoting Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité:

In short, the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary undoubtedly refers much more to the third Secret than even the second. For the recovery of peace will be a gift from Heaven, but it is not, properly speaking, *the triumph* of the Immaculate

Heart of Mary. Her victory is of another order, supernatural, and then temporal by addition. It will first be the victory of the Faith, which will put an end to the time of apostasy, and the great shortcomings of the Church's pastors.

Conclusion – Arm Yourself

The first step to the renewal of the Church is getting our terms correct. This is a war between Catholic Tradition and heretical Modernism. This is what Bishop Athanasius Schneider has called “the fourth great crisis” of the Church. This must be on the forefront of our minds as we are growing our apostolate within the Church. We are seeking to save souls from the deadly errors of Modernism, errors which destroy the virtue of Faith and send souls to Hell.

To arm ourselves against this heresy, we must study the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church, acquaint ourselves with the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, and immerse ourselves in the liturgical tradition of the West, especially as it exists in the Traditional Latin Mass. Finally, we must turn to Our Lady, of whom the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary says: “Thou alone hast destroyed all heresies.”

In 1712, St. Louis de Montfort wrote,

My dear friend, when will that happy time come, that age of Mary, when many souls, chosen by Mary and given her by the most High God, will hide themselves completely in the depths of her soul, becoming living copies of her, loving and glorifying Jesus? That day will dawn only when the devotion I teach is understood and put into practice.

The devotion he taught was Marian consecration, the sign of which is the Brown Scapular, and the fulfillment of which is the Rosary. Our Lady of Fatima called us to both of these practices. When the Church is restored to her former splendor, and when Modernism is finally suppressed, it will have been Our Lady's doing. Our apostolate –

especially, the recovery of Catholic Tradition – will only be fruitful if its foundation is in the *interior life*, a divine friendship with Jesus Christ that is formed in the womb of Mary.

Thank you for the opportunity of speaking to you today, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Q&A Session

QUESTION:

Are you telling us that the *Novus Ordo* Mass contains errors of Modernism? It seems to be what you are implying.

ANSWER:

No. What I am saying is that the things that are contained in the Traditional Latin Mass are bulwarks against Modernism. Things like the silence, the *ad orientem* position of the priest, the Latin language, but all three of these can be incorporated into a *Novus Ordo* Mass as well. I'm not degrading the *Novus Ordo* Mass; I am saying that there are powerful tools that the Latin Mass has, that, like Pope Benedict XVI said in *Summorum Pontificum*, could easily enrich the new rite as well.

The Traditional Latin Mass has many strong barriers against Modernism and some of those can be done in the *Novus Ordo* Mass. *A reform of the reform* as Pope Benedict XVI has stated.

The reason I highlight the Traditional Latin Mass is because many of us are not nearly as familiar with it as we are with the *Novus Ordo* Mass.

HANDOUTS:

1. See also the handout titled, “**Sourcebook of Key Magisterial Texts.**” The magisterial texts sampled are from the heroic Popes (1830-1958) who taught clearly, frequently, and profoundly against modern errors that threatened to undermine the Church. They constitute an antidote for the present crisis in the Church.
2. “Pop Quiz” on the next page.

Pop Quiz: True or False?

Note: Please do not consult with your neighbor. Write "T" or "F" to the left of each statement.

1. In the present day, it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship.
2. Divine revelation is imperfect, and therefore subject to a continual and indefinite progress, corresponding with the advancement of human reason.
3. The Church not only ought never to pass judgment on philosophy, but ought to tolerate the errors of philosophy, leaving it to correct itself.
4. Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true.
5. Man may, in the observance of any religion whatever, find the way of eternal salvation, and arrive at eternal salvation.
6. Good hope at least is to be entertained of the eternal salvation of all those who are not at all in the true Church of Christ.
7. The Church has not the power of using force, nor has she any temporal power, direct or indirect.
8. The Roman pontiffs have, by their too arbitrary conduct, contributed to the division of the Church into Eastern and Western.
9. The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.
10. It is lawful to refuse obedience to legitimate princes, and even to rebel against them.
11. [It] has been wisely decided by law, in some Catholic countries, that persons coming to reside therein shall enjoy the public exercise of their own peculiar worship.
12. The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.