

# Let's get the facts straight

By Father Martin Stépanich, OFM, STD

Fr. Martin was born in Kansas in 1915. Baptized "Francis," he was to become a "son" of St. Francis on September 2, 1934 and was ordained in 1941. Fr. Martin, has given *The Four Marks* readers a wide array of fine writing. A Doctor of Sacred Theology from pre-Vatican II days, Father Martin has been a seminary professor and wrote for other newspapers like *The Wanderer* and the *Remnant*, (as he says, "in their better days.")

September 30, 2008

DEAR BISHOP DOLAN,

On September 22, I received, after much waiting, *The Four Marks* paper, and in it, on page 10, I saw a letter of yours that editor Kathleen Plumb published, as you say, without your permission.

In the same mail, I received also your latest St. Gertrude Sunday Bulletin, in which you had already prominently displayed, before I had even read anything in the September *Four Marks*, your protest and displeasure because of Kathleen Plumb's publication of that letter of yours.

But while protesting the supposedly embarrassing publicity to which you were subjected, should you have gone so hastily to the inexcusable extreme of urging your people to have nothing more to do with *The Four Marks* paper? Don't you see that your uncontrolled reaction is plainly a vengeful action on your part? How could there possibly be any justification for such an enormous indiscretion?

If you insist that Kathleen Plumb owes you an apology for not really doing any damage to your good name, while striving to set the facts straight about what you call "una cum Masses," it is abundantly clear that you owe her an apology, as well as reparation, for the real harm you have done to her and to her truly Catholic *Four Marks* paper, possibly causing the loss of many subscribers.

If there is anything that we as traditional Catholics do not need, it is more division and hostility, but that is exactly what you have brought about with your harsh action against Kathleen Plumb and her paper.

Let us get things straight about what you so carelessly keep calling "una cum Masses," without making the proper distinction in regard to such Masses. You — and others who should know better — have long been telling people not to attend "una cum Masses," making it look as if any and all such Masses were objectionable. To say, simply, that attending "una cum Masses" is a mortal sin is inexcusable.

You know all too well that every Tridentine Latin Mass is an "una cum Mass." Don't you know that you, and all the other priests there, offer "una cum Masses" day after day after day? I myself have been offering "una cum Masses" all through the nearly 68 years of my priestly life. Would you tell people that it is a mortal sin to attend my Masses because they are "una cum Masses"? Of course not.

One big mistake that has so often been made is that of telling people to stay away from "una cum Masses," while leaving out the key word that shows which such Masses are objectionable. And you know that the key word, at this time, is Benedicto. (It was for some distressing 25 years, two words, Joanne Paulo, before Benedict's time.)

Your Excellency, do everyone the favor, from now on, of always saying that the kind of "una cum Masses" that are objectionable are the "una cum Benedicto Masses," and stop making it look as if all "una cum Masses are objectionable.

If, as some wrongly advise you to do, you believe that traditional Catholics should avoid absolutely all Tridentine Latin Masses (like those, for example, of most, if not all, SSPX priests) in which the priest inexcusably adds the name of the scandalous religion-mixer, Benedict XVI Ratzinger, to the words una cum in the Te Igitur prayer at the beginning of the Canon of the Tridentine Latin Mass, you are not following sound advice, even though coming from those who have supposedly "exhaustively researched and studied the question of una cum Masses," but without coming to the correct conclusion.

One thing we must not fail to realize is that Tridentine Latin Masses offered with the insertion of Benedicto after una cum are not in any way vitiated as to their validity and liceity, as well as to their fruitfulness for those attending such Masses. And such Masses can in no way be honestly called "One World Church" Masses. That derogatory term applies to Novus Ordo performances, but never to Tridentine Latin Masses, not even to those with the word Benedicto added to the una cum.

The priest offering a valid Tridentine Latin Mass who adds the word Benedicto to the una cum is, of course, seriously mistaken, whether he realizes it or not. What he does is objectively, in itself, seriously sinful, even if subjectively, in his own mind, he mistakenly thinks he is doing the right thing.

As for traditional Catholics who attend such una cum Benedicto Masses, because they have no other Tridentine Latin Mass within reasonable distance to go to, they must never approve of the priest adding Benedicto to una cum, nor may they be indifferent about the priest doing so, nor may they ever get the idea that it really makes no difference whether they go to a St. Gertrude Church type of una cum Mass or to an SSPX church type of such a Mass, in which Benedicto is added to the una cum.

And let it be clearly understood that, if we concede that traditional Catholics, with no other Mass available to go to than an SSPX una cum Benedicto Mass, may lawfully go to such an SSPX Mass for the sake of the graces needed and desired, we by no means concede that they may also get involved with in any and all SSPX activities that take place in a “B16 is pope” atmosphere. We concede only that, by way of exception, they may legitimately choose to go to SSPX una cum Benedicto Masses instead of being obliged to stay home as home-aloners. But once they are able to go again to the kind of una cum Masses that are offered at true traditional churches, they must stop going to the una cum Benedicto Masses altogether. They must never forget that the name of a pope-pretender, such as the name of the religion-mixer B16, cannot lawfully be given the honorable place reserved only for the names of true Catholic popes after the words una cum at the beginning of the Canon of the Tridentine Latin Mass.

Let us repeat once again, and as often as necessary, that a priest who, whether knowingly or supposedly innocent ignorance, adds Benedicto to the words of the una cum in his offering of the Tridentine Latin Mass does not and cannot, ruin the inherent value and fruitfulness of that Mass, which retains all its God-given holiness, whether the priest is in a state of grace or in the state of mortal sin. We have known from time immemorial that there have been priests who, most unfortunately, have been in the state of mortal sin while offering Holy Mass, yet their lack of personal holiness has not destroyed the infinite holiness of their Masses.

You surely must remember that Canon 2261, of the 1917 *Code of Canon Law*, clearly states that “the Faithful may, for any just reason, ask for the sacraments and sacramentals from an excommunicated person...” As you can readily understand, a priest who knowingly and willfully adds the name Benedicto to the una cum prayer of the Canon of the Mass, while fully aware that religion-mixer B16 cannot possibly be a true Catholic pope, must certainly be *ipso facto* excommunicated. And you know that, by Church law, the faithful may lawfully attend his Masses and receive Communion from his excommunicated hand.

Your Excellency, you may have felt much embarrassment on reading this letter, or you may have even had difficulty suppressing angry thoughts. Still, you know that my aim in writing has been to get right to the point and to set the facts straight. You have no reason to complain that I have thereby shown disrespect towards an “ecce sacerdos magnus, qui in diebus suis placuit Deo ...”

You will probably welcome words of prayer such as these: *Veni, Domine Jesu, veni velociter et salva Ecclesiam Tuam et fidem nostram, et libera nos propter Nomen Tuum. Et Jam noli tardare amplius, Domine, et propitius esto mihi vilissimo peccatori. Hasten the relief of Thy children engendered by Thy Most Precious Blood.*

Pax et Bonum,

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March 2009 issue of The Four Marks:

## Attendance at “*Una Cum Benedicto*” Tridentine Latin Masses

Our Lord’s “Little Flock” of today’s genuine traditional Catholics, scattered about as it is in various places, has the distinction of preserving intact the Tridentine Latin Mass as it was put before the Catholic

world by Pope St. Pius V in 1570, in response to a directive of the Ecumenical Council of Trent (1545-1563). In his *Quo Primum* decree of July 19, 1570, the Holy Father declared that his objective was to “restore”, as he worded it, the ancient “norm and rite of the Mass of the Fathers” – that is, the norm and rite of the Latin Mass as it was offered by popes and bishops and priests since the early years of the Church’s existence.

A strange development of these distressing Vatican II times is the fact that the Tridentine Latin Mass is now being offered by bishops and priests of two conflicting groups. One group of today’s truly traditional bishops and priests offering the Tridentine Latin Mass leaves out completely the name of any pope from the *una cum* phrase that comes up towards the end of the *Te Igitur* prayer with which the Canon of the Tridentine Mass begins. Those who use hand missals, such as Father Lasance’s missal or St. Andrew’s missal, will know right away just where the *una cum* phrase comes up in the Mass, and will know what it means.

The other group, on the contrary, does the untraditional and decidedly un-Catholic thing of inserting into the *una cum* phrase the name of the current modernist occupier of Peter’s Papal Chair (called also the Holy See). At this time, it is the name of modernist Benedict XVI (Ratzinger) that is added to the *una cum* phrase, making it an *una cum Benedicto* phrase. The full wording of that phrase, as it is given in the altar missal used by the priest, is *una cum famulo tuo Papa nostro N.*—that is, “together with Thy servant, our Pope, N.” Before Benedict, it had been the name of modernist John Paul (Wojtyla) that was put into the *una cum* phrase for some almost endless 25 years, and before him it was modernist Paul (Montini) and modernist John (Roncalli).

Both groups are really sedevacantist in regard to the vacancy of the Holy See that is caused by the death of a true Catholic pope, or by a pope’s resignation (which did happen once, many centuries ago). But the vacancy issue that divides the two groups today is the vacancy of Peter’s Chair that is brought about by modernist claimants and occupiers of that Chair who have not been professing nor practicing the traditional and unchangeable Catholic Faith for practically the past 50 years, and who therefore did not really belong on the Papal Chair of infallible truth and supreme authority.

Benedict XVI (B16), the present illegitimate occupier of Peter’s Chair, plainly does not profess nor teach nor defend the complete and unchanged traditional Catholic Faith. In fact, his brand of supposedly “catholic” religion is a mixture of religions. As the whole world has been able to see, B16 has been boldly and brazenly associating and collaborating with leaders of other religions in their kind of manmade religious performances, in open contradiction to the one and only true Christian religion established by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

A man like that cannot possibly be a true Catholic pope, nor can he be honestly addressed as “The Holy Father”. He is not even a genuine Catholic. And that means that the Chair of Peter is in reality vacant, even with B16 all dressed up as a pope occupying it. That is what is meant by that word “sedevacantism” which is used so much today—that is, the vacancy caused by a no-pope illegitimately occupying the Papal Chair.

The first of the two groups mentioned above includes, for example, the famed “Legendary Nine”, that is the nine priests dismissed from the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) by Archbishop Lefebvre long ago, with some of those priests now being bishops. That first group includes also those of the so-called “Thuc line” (after Archbishop Thuc), as well as those of the Spokane-based CMRI—plus others, including even some lone Franciscans.

The second group includes mainly, but not only, those of the SSPX, such as it is today, that is, a mixed confusion of ant-sedevacantism, inasmuch as it mistakenly and stubbornly looks upon B16 as being a legitimate occupier of Peter’s Chair, and at the same time of sedevacantism, inasmuch as it stubbornly persists in disobeying B16 in refusing to go along with all of his aberrations – as if telling him that, for them, he is not really the pope, and therefore, the Papal Chair is really vacant.

Such being the confused and confusing situation facing today’s traditional Catholics, they are in the perplexing position of being obliged to decide whether it is ever lawful for them to attend the otherwise valid Tridentine Latin Masses of the SSPX, despite the presence of no-pope religion-mixer B16’s name in the Canon of those Masses. There are variations of understanding and practice among sedevacantist traditional Catholics as to the lawfulness of them attending *una cum Benedicto* Masses.

Many traditional Catholics are fortunate enough—*Deo gratias!*—to be living within reachable distance of a sedevacantist church, or Mass location, where they can always attend a *Benedicto*-free Tridentine Latin Mass. However, if for some serious reason or other they are unable to get to their own usual sedevacantist church on a given Sunday (for example, because of bad weather conditions), yet are able to get to a near-by anti-sedevacantist SSPX church featuring the *una cum Benedicto* Mass, some of them will decide simply to stay home, not wanting to be part of such a Mass.

Others among them, on the contrary, decide to go anyway to an SSPX *una cum Benedicto* valid Tridentine Latin Mass figuring that in such a case they surely would be justified in so doing provided that they do not consent to the priest adding the name of B16 to the *una cum* phrase. And then there are still others in whose region or country there is no B16-free Tridentine Latin Mass at all to go to, while there is an SSPX *una cum Benedicto* Mass within reach. They, too, would believe that they are justified in attending such a validly offered Mass, as long as they do not approve of the priest giving honorable mention in the Mass to a false pope.

Which is the right decision for sedevacantist traditional Catholics to make on this puzzling headache issue? Is it, as some believe, never lawful to attend any *una cum Benedicto* Mass for any reason whatsoever, no matter how valid and Catholic it may otherwise be? Does the name of a false pope in the Canon of the Mass so vitiate the Mass that it is unfit to be attended by conscientious traditional Catholics? Are the act of offering the Mass by the priest and his act of naming a false pope so closely bound up together that the Mass cannot be spiritually beneficial to those attending the Mass if the name of a false pope is included in the prayers of the Mass? Does the very presence of traditional Catholics at an *una cum Benedicto* Mass automatically and unavoidably mean that they ratify and consent to the naming of B16 in the Mass?

We naturally had to wonder if there is some kind of teaching of popes and theologians of pre-Vatican II times that would help clear up things for us on that thorny *una cum Benedicto* issue.

A determined and well-meaning attempt to settle things on that issue has indeed been made, although the purpose was decidedly one-sided, inasmuch as the idea was to prove that in no way could traditional Catholics ever lawfully attend *una cum Benedicto* Masses. Research, described as “exhaustive research”, has come up with the statement that “various popes and pre-Vatican II theologians taught that the laity who assist actively at mass, in so doing manifest their consent and moral cooperation with the priest as he offers the Sacrifice,” but also to his adding of the name of B16 to the Canon of the Mass.

However, it is as plain as could be that there is no indication whatsoever, in the above quote, that the popes and pre-Vatican II theologians referred to gave any thought at all to Masses with the name of a false pope in the *una cum* phrase of the Canon. They undoubtedly had in mind the kind of Mass they knew, that is, the traditional Latin Mass of the ages, not anything like the *una cum Benedicto* Masses that we know today.

The unquestionable fact is that the popes and theologians of pre-Vatican II times did not see with their own eyes the Modernist popes promoting a plainly new un-Catholic religion, the way we have been doing, nor did they hear with their own ears the false teaching of modernist popes and theologians, nor did they ever get to read their modernist un-Catholic writings. So they did not have occasion to warn against, and condemn, Masses like the *una cum Benedicto* Masses that today’s traditional theologians, as well as informed lay Catholics, have been obliged to condemn repeatedly in these Vatican II times. Pre-Vatican II popes and theologians did not address the *una cum Benedicto* Mass issue, of which they knew nothing first hand the way we have known it.

If we try to use the words of popes and pre-Vatican II theologians, as already quoted above, and make them say that attendance at *una cum Benedicto* Masses is always absolutely forbidden under any and all circumstances, it is we who are really doing that kind of forbidding, not the popes and the pre-Vatican II theologians. Just try to find anything in the popes and pre-Vatican II theologians that totally and absolutely forbids any and all attendance at *una cum Benedicto* Masses by traditional sedevacantist Catholics. It just isn’t there!

A second quote resulting from the afore-mentioned “exhaustive research” tells us that “the Fathers of the Church, as well as Pope Pius XII, in his Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, teach specifically that the faithful who actively assist at Mass ratify, assent to, and participate in the prayers of the Canon that the priest recites.”

What that second quote really does is to stress the fact that the faithful attending Mass are not there merely as spectators watching the priest perform at the altar. No, they are present at Mass to unite themselves with the priest in heart and mind and intention as he offers the Sacrifice. It is not enough for the faithful to be there at Mass only bodily, while maybe saying prayers of their own that have no connection with the Mass.

The faithful attending Mass are there as one with the priest, so that the Mass is being offered by the priest and the faithful together. The priest alone has the power to offer the Mass and to consecrate, but the faithful unite themselves with the priest, as he offers the Mass, though not as he consecrates. The idea that the faithful as closely united with the priest in the offering of the Mass runs all through the various prayers of the Sacrifice. For example, “*offerimus*”, that is, “we offer” – also, “pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable before God the Father Almighty.”

And that is the issue which the second quote given above really addresses –that is, the issue of the union of the attending faithful with the offering priest. And that is why that second quote says that the faithful “ratify, assent to and participate in the prayers of the Canon that the priest recites.” Those prayers of the Canon which the Fathers and Pius XII, were undoubtedly referring to were the traditional fully Catholic prayers of the Mass as they were always recited before Vatican II, without any false pope’s name being mixed into the prayers. The Fathers and Pius XII, as well as the pre-Vatican II theologians, did not have occasion to warn about attendance at Masses giving recognition to a false pope. They did not address an issue like that because such an issue did not as yet exist.

Even if we recognize the fact that sedevacantist traditional Catholics definitely can, for the right reason and with the right attitude, lawfully attend valid SSPX *una cum Benedicto* Tridentine Latin Masses by not consenting to the naming of the pope-pretender B16 in the Canon, we may still have reason to advise caution if we see that some may have the reckless and careless notion that the priest can say what he wants in the prayers of the Mass, just so they have a valid Mass to attend. Such an attitude is inexcusable.

A very disturbing thing about attendance at *una cum Benedicto* Tridentine Latin Masses is the fact that it is an awful sin to give honorable mention in the Holy Sacrifice to a false pope. To put it bluntly, it is a mortal sin—that is, in itself, considered objectively, it is plainly mortally sinful. To what extent SSPX and other priests naming a false pope in the Canon of the Mass are subjectively guilty before God—that is consciously and knowingly—that is something that only God can judge accurately and correctly.

But even though it is in itself and objectively mortally sinful for a priest to add the name of a no-pope to the *una cum* phrase of the Canon, that mortally sinful action can in no way change the nature of the Sacrifice itself, nor nullify its validity, nor lessen its spiritual value for those attending it.

The situation created by naming a false pope in the Mass has been called a “mortal sin situation.” It helps to understand how we should look upon such a “mortal sin situation” if we consider the fact that in this sinful world we are constantly running into “mortal sin situations.” We do so, for example, just by living with mortal sinners, maybe even in our own family circles; or, in dealing with and cooperating with such sinners at work or play or leisure; or, in business deals, in shopping in stores whose owners and managers approve of and promote, for example, abortion and sodomy and other evils; or, owners who are part of some evil secret society. Even such a thing as having to go through store check-outs displaying all those raw flesh mortal sin magazines is plainly an unavoidable “mortal sin situation.” And how could we possibly avoid all the ubiquitous raw flesh mortal sin creatures that infest just about every place on earth, sparing not even Our Lord’s Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

What we cannot fail to understand is that being unavoidably caught in a “mortal sin situation” does not mean that we necessarily “ratify, assent to, and participate in” the mortal sins in question. Similarly, neither are traditional Catholics automatically and necessarily and unavoidably guilty of “ratifying, assenting to, and participating in” the mortal sin of naming a false pope in otherwise valid *una cum Benedicto* Tridentine Latin Masses, if they attend such Masses for a justifiable reason and with the right attitude of mind.

Some might wonder what happens to the two words, *una cum* (“together with”) when there is no pope to be named in the *una cum* phrase. The truth is that those two words are still needed for mentioning the name of the bishop of the diocese in which the priest is offering Mass. Thus: *una cum antistite nostro, N.* (That is, “together with our bishop, N.”). When Pope Pius XII died in 1958, priests living in the

Chicago Archdiocese still had to say when offering Mass, *una cum ... antistite nostro Alberto* (That is, “together with... our Bishop Albert”, meaning Albert Meyer, later Cardinal Meyer).

And when there is neither pope nor bishop to be named in the *una cum* phrase—whether because of death or apostasy from the true catholic Faith—those two *una cum* words are still needed for mentioning all the faithful in general at the end of the *Te Igitur* prayer with which the Canon of the Mass begins. Those using missals at Mass will know that the *Te Igitur* prayer ends up with these words: *una cum ... orthodoxies, atque catholicae et apostolicae fidei cultoribus* (that is: “together with ... all who are orthodox in belief and who profess the Catholic and Apostolic Faith”).

Those who have been thoughtlessly and carelessly making it look as if all *una cum* Masses are objectionable, and are to be avoided, had better get things straight finally and tell their hearers and readers that it is the *una cum Benedicto* Masses that are objectionable, and are normally to be avoided, not the *una cum* Masses.

The plain fact is that all Tridentine Latin Masses are *una cum* Masses. All of my over 24,000 Tridentine Latin Masses offered since May of 1941, the month and year of my ordination, have been *una cum* Masses. None of them were Novus Ordo performances. For that a jubilant *Deo gratias!!!*