



APOSTOLIC LETTER
from Metropolitan Filippo of Rome
of the Italian Orthodox Church



**Position of the
Italian Orthodox Church
on the Society of St. Pius X**

Pro Unitate in Veritate



Position of the Italian Orthodox Church on the Society of Saint Pius X

The position of the Italian Orthodox Church regarding the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X is based on a clear theological and canonical discernment, which must not be confused with any contingent affinities on ethical or cultural issues. It is well known that the Society, founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1970,[1] has consistently maintained an attitude of radical criticism toward the reforms of the Second Vatican Council,[2] to the point of creating a genuine rupture with the Roman Magisterium. This rupture became dramatically evident on 1 July 2026, when the F.S.S.P.X. proceeded with the ordination of four new bishops without the prior consent of the Pope,[3] an act that the Roman Catholic Church considers gravely illicit and punishable by *latae sententiae* excommunication.[4] In the face of this event, our Church acted with prudence and firmness, denying authorization to one of our bishops who had been invited to participate, because taking part in an episcopal ordination celebrated outside canonical communion would have constituted an ambiguous gesture and one potentially harmful to Orthodox unity. However, beyond this specific episode, it is necessary to clarify that the Italian Orthodox Church does not at all share the doctrinal approach of the Society of Saint Pius X, even though certain practical convergences may be observed in the defense of Europe's Christian roots, in concern over the advance of Islamization in the West, and in criticism of gender and woke ideologies. These common causes, however legitimate and urgent they may be on the social level, are not sufficient to establish a communion of faith, because the F.S.S.P.X. remains internally bound to a vision of the Church and the papacy that is typically Western and post-Tridentine,[5] with a juridical and centralizing conception of the Petrine primacy that is unacceptable to us Orthodox.[6]

Another fundamental point of divergence concerns the theology of grace, the sacraments, and salvation. The spirituality of the F.S.S.P.X. is marked by a devotional rigorism and by an emphasis on the Tridentine Mass[7] which, however beautiful and solemn, is the expression of a Latin tradition that does not coincide with our understanding of the Eucharist as the mystery of the whole Church, celebrated in the diversity of the Eastern rites.[8] For us Orthodox, the unity of the Church is not realized through liturgical uniformity or through submission to a universal authority of a monarchical type, but through concord in faith and the sacraments, preserved in the local synods and in the universal consensus of the bishops.[9] The F.S.S.P.X., on the contrary, appears to have made resistance to the Pope a defining characteristic of its identity, yet without ever abandoning the Roman juridical framework, thus remaining in a kind of canonical limbo that we cannot recognize as ecclesial.[10] For this reason, while appreciating their zeal for tradition and their steadfastness in the face of contemporary trends, the Italian Orthodox Church cannot regard the Society as a privileged interlocutor on the doctrinal level, much less as an ally in the search for Christian unity, since their ecclesiological vision is too deeply marked by antagonism toward the Second Vatican Council and by a partial reading of the history of salvation, which ultimately isolates the Church in a fortress besieged by the world, forgetting that true Orthodoxy is always catholic—that is, universal—and is expressed in the fullness of communion with all the sister Churches that preserve the faith of the Apostles.[11]

Our distance from the F.S.S.P.X. is not merely disciplinary, but substantial and theological, and no convergence on social or moral issues can bridge this divide, because the truth of the faith is not measured by the urgencies of the moment, but by uninterrupted fidelity to the depositum fidei handed down by the Fathers and the Ecumenical Councils,[12] to which the Orthodox Church remains unwaveringly anchored, without any need to set itself against anyone, but simply by bearing witness, in joy and in suffering, to the Gospel of Christ in its fullness.

Marriage

The question of the marriage of clergy and the discipline of clerical celibacy constitutes a further and profound point of divergence between the Italian Orthodox Church and the Society of Saint Pius X, which, fully aligning itself with the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church, does not admit married clergy and requires all its priests and bishops to observe celibacy, considering it not merely a disciplinary norm but almost an essential requirement for the holiness of the ordained ministry.[13] It is historically established, and the texts of the New Testament confirm it beyond any doubt, that the apostles, with few exceptions, were all married men: Saint Andrew, Judas Iscariot, and Saint John the Evangelist—the latter because he was too young at the time of his calling, though according to some traditions he later married the widow of his brother James—were probably the only members of the Twelve who did not have a wife, whereas Saint Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, was married and had a mother-in-law whom Jesus Himself healed,[14] and the other apostles led ordinary family lives, as was customary among the Jews of the time, who regarded marriage as an honorable state of life blessed by God. This historical and scriptural evidence, which no serious scholar can dispute, demonstrates that priestly celibacy is neither of apostolic nor of divine origin, but rather a canonical discipline gradually introduced into the Western Church for historical, pastoral, and disciplinary reasons,[15] and as such it may be modified or dispensed with, as the Catholic Church itself has done in certain particular cases by granting dispensations for converted Protestant pastors who wished to be ordained as priests despite already being married.[16]

The Italian Orthodox Church, by contrast, has always preserved the ancient and apostolic discipline, allowing priests and deacons to marry both before and after ordination, and regarding marriage as a state of life fully compatible with the sacred ministry.[17] This practice of ours, which may appear surprising or even scandalous to Western Christians, is in fact the fruit of a long theological and pastoral tradition that has consistently recognized the goodness of marriage as a divine institution and as a path to holiness. It has never sought to impose upon the clergy a burden that the Apostles themselves did not bear, but has instead preferred to respect the freedom of candidates and the pastoral needs of local communities. [18]

However, the difference between Orthodox discipline and that of the FSSPX does not end with celibacy, because another aspect that radically distinguishes us is our attitude toward second and third marriages, which the Italian Orthodox Church, for reasons of mercy and *oikonomia*, permits under certain circumstances,[19] whereas the Catholic Church and the Society categorically exclude them, considering marriage to be absolutely indissoluble and admitting no exceptions. We Orthodox, while firmly affirming that marriage is a sacrament reflecting the union of Christ with His Church and that it must be lived in fidelity and love until death,[20] recognize that human frailty and the tragedies of life may lead to the collapse of a marital union. In such cases, the Church, as a merciful mother, grants the faithful who have experienced divorce or who have been widowed the possibility of entering into a second or even a third marriage, accompanied by a period of penance and a process of spiritual discernment, so that no one may be left alone in sorrow and hardship.[21] This practice, which appears to traditionalist Catholics as a dangerous concession to relativism and a betrayal of the indissolubility of the marital bond, is instead, for us, an expression of *oikonomia*,[22] founded upon the conviction that the salvation of souls is the ultimate purpose of every law and every discipline, and that the mercy of God is greater than every sin and every human failure. The FSSPX, on the contrary, faithfully follows the Catholic doctrine of the

absolute indissolubility of marriage,[23] and for this reason rejects every form of second marriage, even when the first was contracted under tragic circumstances or failed through the fault of the other spouse. It regards divorced and remarried persons as living in a state of sin and therefore unable to be admitted to Holy Communion until they regularize their situation or undertake to live as brother and sister.[24] This position, while internally coherent and rooted in a particular interpretation of the Gospel, nevertheless appears to us excessively rigid and too far removed from the reality of concrete human lives, and it risks alienating from the Church many people who sincerely desire to live the faith but find themselves in complex and painful family situations, for which the only truly adequate response is merciful pastoral accompaniment rather than a severe and irrevocable judgment.

The different treatment of marriage and celibacy by the Italian Orthodox Church and the Society of Saint Pius X is not merely a question of canonical discipline, but reflects two different conceptions of human nature, grace, and the relationship between law and mercy. While we Orthodox choose the path of balance and compassion, aware that the human person is fragile and in need of help, the Lefebvrists embrace a more austere and uncompromising interpretation of the Gospel, one that privileges the letter of the law over the spirit of charity. [25] While we respect their choice and their consistency, we cannot help but believe that our discipline is closer to the spirit of Christ, who always showed a special concern for sinners and for those wounded by life, and who taught that mercy is more important than sacrifice, and that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.[26] For this reason, we shall continue to walk the path of *oikonomia*, confident that it does not weaken marriage but rather honors it, demonstrating that the Church is not a fortress of immutable laws, but a community of brothers and sisters who support one another on the journey toward holiness, and who know that forgiveness and restoration are always possible, because the God whom we have encountered in Christ is a God of tenderness and reconciliation, who never grows weary of reaching out His hand to us and offering us a new opportunity, even when we have sinned and failed in our most sacred commitments.

Admission to the Sacraments

The discipline concerning the admission to the sacraments of separated and divorced faithful represents one of the most delicate and significant chapters in the comparison between the different Christian traditions, and on this subject the distance between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church has for centuries been very pronounced, albeit with recent signs of rapprochement.[27] Historically, the Catholic Church maintained an extremely strict and severe position, characterized by what, in Eastern terms, would be called *akribia*, that is, the full and inflexible application of the canonical norm.[28] According to this interpretation, both the spouse responsible for the breakdown of the marital bond and the innocent spouse who suffered abandonment were subject to excommunication, or at least excluded from Eucharistic communion, because sacramental marriage was regarded as absolutely indissoluble and any new union, even if merely civil, was equated with a state of public sin. [29] This severity, rooted in Western theology and codified in canon law, was intended to reaffirm the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage, but it often ended up placing an unequal burden upon individuals, without adequately distinguishing between differing responsibilities and circumstances. Faced with this rigorism, the Orthodox Church, from the earliest centuries of its history, adopted a profoundly different approach, inspired by the principle of *oikonomia*, that is, the law of the household or pastoral mercy, which does not deny the truth of dogma but applies it with flexibility so as not to lose souls.[30] Orthodox *oikonomia* is not a concession to relativism, but rather an exercise of spiritual discernment that takes into

account human frailty, mitigating circumstances, and the supreme good of the *salus animarum*, the salvation of the person,[31] and for this reason our Church has always, in many cases, permitted the celebration of a second marriage in church and has always admitted to Holy Communion divorced faithful who manifest repentance and a desire for reconciliation, without creating insurmountable barriers. This pastoral approach, far from being a modern innovation, has its roots in the patristic tradition and in the canons of the ancient councils, which already provided for exceptions on account of human weakness,[32] and reflects the conviction that the Church is not a tribunal that judges, but a hospital that heals.[33]

In recent years, the Catholic Church, especially under the pontificate of Francis, has taken a significant step toward this Orthodox sensitivity through the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*,[34] which has provoked extensive debate within the Catholic world and beyond.[35] In this document, the Argentine Pope opened the door to a case-by-case evaluation of the situation of divorced and remarried persons, suggesting that, under certain conditions and with an appropriate path of spiritual accompaniment, admission to the sacraments might be possible, at least for those spouses who were not at fault, that is, those who did not seek the separation but suffered it because of the abandonment or betrayal of the other spouse.[36] This is not a dogmatic modification, but a profound pastoral change that recognizes the complexity of human lives and the necessity of not closing the door of mercy to those who suffer. In this openness, it is undeniable that there is an echo of the Orthodox concept of *oikonomia*, almost as though the Eastern tradition had positively influenced the juridical rigor of the West.[37] We Orthodox welcome this rapprochement, because it bears witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit blows even beyond canonical boundaries and that the care of souls can transcend historical barriers. At the same time, however, we observe that the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X and other Catholic traditionalist groups have sharply criticized this position, judging it to be inconsistent with the centuries-old rigorist tradition of the Church of Rome, which for centuries taught and applied a strict discipline without exceptions.[38] According to the FSSPX, the openness of *Amoris Laetitia* represents a dangerous rupture with the previous Magisterium, a concession to the spirit of the world that threatens the purity of doctrine, and precisely on this point they stand in clear opposition not only to Pope Francis but also to what we regard as a healthy and necessary pastoral development.[39]

For the Italian Orthodox Church, by contrast, absolute rigidity has never been a virtue, because the law was made for man, not man for the law, and mercy, when it is authentic, does not betray the truth but fulfills it, as taught by the Desert Fathers and as witnessed by our sacraments, which are celebrated not to condemn but to heal.[40] We therefore recognize that the traditionalist Catholic position, although motivated by zeal for doctrinal orthodoxy, risks forgetting that the Church is a mother and not a judge, and that every soul wounded by marital failure deserves pastoral accompaniment that gradually and respectfully leads it back to the fullness of Eucharistic life, without being crushed by a burden that perhaps even the ancient law did not impose. For this reason, while appreciating the theological rigor of some, we Orthodox continue to follow the path of *oikonomia*, convinced that it does not diminish marriage but elevates it, demonstrating that fidelity to Christ is expressed also in the ability to welcome those who have fallen and to raise them up with love. We also look with hope upon the fact that, even within the Church of Rome, despite controversies and resistance, a more humane and more evangelical understanding is gradually emerging—one that brings us closer together not in formal doctrine but in pastoral spirit, which is ultimately the same spirit that has always animated our Orthodox communities throughout the centuries.[41]

Religious Freedom

The question of religious freedom constitutes another profound point of division between the Italian Orthodox Church and the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, while at the same time revealing an unexpected and significant rapprochement between Orthodoxy and the post-conciliar Catholic Magisterium.[42] The Orthodox Church, by historical vocation and through painful experience, has always been firmly committed to the defense of religious freedom, and this commitment does not arise from an Enlightenment principle but from the harsh and daily witness of entire generations of faithful who experienced firsthand the burden of discrimination and persecution. The vast majority of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches—from Bulgaria to Greece, from Serbia to Romania, as well as the long-suffering communities of Syria, Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq—endured centuries of Islamic domination under the Ottoman Empire, a system that, although it theoretically granted Christians protected status as "People of the Book," in practice reduced them to second-class citizens, burdened with special taxes, deprived of full civil rights, and constantly exposed to humiliation, forced conversions, and even periodic massacres.[43] This historical memory, still vivid and painful, has shaped within the Orthodox Churches a profound sensitivity toward the value of freedom of conscience, understood not as a concession of the State but as an inalienable gift of God to humanity, which no earthly authority may legitimately violate.[44]

It is important to note, however, that even where a strong Orthodox state existed, such as the Russian Empire, religious freedom was practiced with a degree of tolerance that surprises many Western observers, who are accustomed to identifying the alliance of throne and altar with intolerance. In the Tsarist Empire, indeed, the Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Tengrist religious minorities inhabiting the vast Eurasian steppes enjoyed broad spheres of cultural and legal autonomy,[45] and were never subjected to repressive measures comparable to the tribunals of the Inquisition that operated in the Catholic states of Southern and Central Europe.[46] Although the Russian Empire upheld the preeminent role of the Orthodox Church as the state religion, it never established a permanent inquisitorial apparatus to suppress Christian dissenters or non-believers, and indeed, during many historical periods, it fostered peaceful coexistence among different religious communities, recognizing the right of the Muslims of the Volga region and the Buddhists of Siberia to follow their own religious laws in matters of family and inheritance. By contrast, in the Catholic states of the West, religious freedom was not only prohibited but actively suppressed through crusades of extermination against Christians accused of heresy, as in the cases of the Cathars in southern France, the Arnaldists in Italy, the Dulcinians in the Piedmontese valleys, the Patarines in Milan, and the Huguenots in France, all massacred in the name of a supposed orthodoxy that tolerated no deviation from the Roman creed.[47] This long and bloody history of intolerance, which shaped the face of Catholic Europe for centuries, has made the Orthodox Church profoundly distrustful of any model of Christendom that seeks to impose the faith by force, and has strengthened within us the conviction that the true faith spreads through attraction and witness, not through coercion and fear.[48]

It is precisely on this point that the position of the Society of Saint Pius X proves to be diametrically opposed not only to Orthodox sensibilities but also to the doctrinal development of the contemporary Catholic Church itself. The Lefebvrists fully embrace the rigid and intolerant position that was characteristic of pre-conciliar Western Christendom,[49] and dream of the restoration of a *Res Publica Catholica* in which every other Christian faith, such

as Protestantism and Orthodoxy itself, as well as every non-Christian religion, such as Islam and Judaism, would be severely prohibited and suppressed, if not altogether eliminated from public life.[50] For them, religious freedom is a modernist error, a concession to relativism, and a betrayal of the social kingship of Christ, which according to their theology must reign not only over consciences but also over civil institutions. For this reason, they strongly reject the conciliar declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council,[51] which recognized the right of every human being to civil religious freedom, affirming that no one should be compelled to embrace the faith against his or her will and that the State must guarantee to all citizens the freedom to profess and practice their religion.[52] With this document, the Catholic Church carried out a genuine Copernican revolution, aligning itself with a position that is, in many respects, closer to the Orthodox tradition than to its own inquisitorial past, and opening the way to respectful dialogue with other religions and with the modern world, without renouncing its identity but interpreting it in terms of service rather than domination.[53]

We Orthodox, who have always experienced religious freedom as a precious good that has often been denied, cannot but look favorably upon this Catholic development, because it recognizes that faith is not imposed by the sword but proposed through love, and that the Church must be a sign of contradiction not through violence but through prophecy and martyrdom.[54] By contrast, the theocratic vision of the Society of Saint Pius X appears to us not only anachronistic but profoundly foreign to the spirit of the Gospel, which taught us to distinguish the Kingdom of God from the kingdom of Caesar and to respect the freedom of every human being, even of the one who is mistaken or who does not believe, because only in freedom can one truly encounter the God who is Love and who never forces open the door of the human heart.[55] For this reason, while sharing with the Lefebvrists certain concerns regarding secularization and the erosion of Christian values, we Orthodox cannot accept their coercive vision of society, and we find ourselves much more in agreement with the conciliar declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, which, in our view, represents a step forward in the maturity of Christian conscience, even though it originated within a Church with which we are not in communion, but which, at least on this point, has succeeded in listening to the Spirit who blows where He wills and who calls us to bear witness to the truth without ever imposing it through violence.

Ecumenism

The question of ecumenism represents another decisive point of contention between the Society of Saint Pius X and those Churches which, despite their differences, have chosen the path of dialogue and fraternal cooperation. On this issue, the Italian Orthodox Church once again finds itself in a position diametrically opposed to that of the Lefebvrists, albeit with some significant exceptions within the Orthodox world itself.[56] Ecumenism, understood as the movement for inter-Christian dialogue aimed at cooperating in all that unites us, beginning with our common faith in Christ the Savior, beyond legitimate liturgical, canonical, and doctrinal differences, is an aspiration that has taken shape especially over the past few centuries and found its most fertile ground in the United States of America. From its very foundation, that nation witnessed the peaceful coexistence of a wide variety of Christian denominations—Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Quakers, and many others—without engaging in the wars that had so tragically devastated Europe, where the Wars of Religion were predominantly inter-Christian conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, and at times among different Protestant groups, exacting a terrible toll of bloodshed and hatred that permanently marked the history of the Old Continent.[57] In the United States, by contrast,

the practical necessity of living together and building a new society encouraged Christians of different traditions to rediscover what they held in common, to pray together, and to undertake joint charitable and missionary endeavors, thereby sowing the seeds of what, after the Second World War, would develop into an organized and structured ecumenical movement, culminating in the establishment of the World Council of Churches, an organization defined as a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[58]

This Christian body, founded upon Trinitarian faith and therefore excluding denominations that reject the dogma of the Holy Trinity, such as Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons, has been joined by the overwhelming majority of Evangelical, Episcopal, and Orthodox Churches. The Catholic Church, while not formally a member, has chosen to participate as an observer and to collaborate actively in many ecumenical initiatives, marking an epoch-making change from its previous position.[59] This change was formally established and theologically justified by the Second Vatican Council through the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which recognized the value of the elements of sanctification and truth present also in the Churches and ecclesial communities separated from Rome, and invited all Catholics to commit themselves seriously to the restoration of Christian unity, not through an easy and superficial uniformity but through a sincere and profound dialogue that respects diversity while seeking full communion in the truth.[60]

This ecumenical openness, however, has been sharply opposed by the Society of Saint Pius X and other Catholic traditionalist groups, which continue to uphold the ancient doctrine *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, according to which there can be no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church.[61] For this reason, they regard ecumenism not merely as a pastoral deviation but as a genuine heresy that betrays the constant Magisterium of the Church throughout the centuries. The Lefebvrists frequently point out that the Catholic Church, especially during the Counter-Reformation, condemned as *irenicism* the efforts of Catholic jurists and theologians who, like Francesco Pucci, sought to heal the rupture with the Protestants by means of doctrinal compromise or by seeking areas of common agreement. Such attempts were viewed with extreme suspicion and were often brought before the Inquisition, because it was believed that softening theological disputes amounted to relativizing revealed truth and betraying the integrity of the faith.[62] According to the traditionalist interpretation, contemporary ecumenism is nothing more than a revival of those same errors condemned in the past. Consequently, the FSSPX rejects any participation in common prayers, doctrinal dialogues, or joint initiatives with other Christian denominations, considering them all tainted by a dangerous religious indifferentism that calls into question the one true Church founded by Christ.[63]

What is particularly noteworthy is that positions similar to those of the Society of Saint Pius X also exist within the Orthodox world, where certain small but highly active groups, known as the Paleoimerologites or Old Calendarists, share the same rejection of ecumenism and the same doctrinal rigorism toward other Christian Churches.[64] The largest body representing this orientation is the schismatic Greek Orthodox Church of the Old Calendar, particularly the so-called Synod of Resistance, which broke communion with the canonical Orthodox Churches precisely because of their participation in the World Council of Churches and their dialogue with Catholics and Protestants. They hold that any form of cooperation with the non-Orthodox constitutes a betrayal of the purity of the faith and a surrender to modernism.[65] Although these groups are numerically limited and are not recognized by the autocephalous Orthodox

Churches, they exercise a certain influence over some monastic and lay circles that perceive ecumenism as a threat to Orthodox identity. In this respect, they come very close to the position of the Lefebvrists, even though their theological premises differ and are rooted in the particular Eastern tradition.[66]

The Italian Orthodox Church, on the other hand, while not sharing certain ecumenical naïvetés and while remaining fully aware of the dogmatic differences that separate us from Rome and from Protestantism, has long chosen the path of dialogue and common witness,[67] convinced that the Holy Spirit also acts beyond the visible boundaries of our Church and that prayer for unity is an evangelical duty rather than an optional undertaking.[68] For us Orthodox, ecumenism does not mean renouncing our identity or reducing the truth to the lowest common denominator, but rather recognizing that within all Christian traditions there exist treasures of grace and holiness that can also enrich us, and that the division among Christians is a wound in the Body of Christ which must be healed with humility, patience, and love, without ever sacrificing the apostolic and patristic doctrine entrusted to our care.[69] By contrast, the rigidly exclusivist vision of the FSSPX and the Paleoimperialists appears to us short-sighted and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, because it forgets that the new commandment of mutual love is the distinguishing mark of Christ's disciples, and that truth, when it is authentic, does not fear dialogue but offers itself freely and respectfully to everyone, in the hope that dialogue may one day lead, by the grace of God, to that full unity for which the Lord Himself prayed to the Father: that they all may be one, just as He and the Father are one.[70]

Interreligious Dialogue

Within the broad and complex landscape of interreligious dialogue, the Orthodox Church follows a path shaped both by historical necessity and by a profound evangelical awareness, since the overwhelming majority of the autocephalous Churches have lived for centuries in close contact with adherents of other religions, whether in Muslim-majority countries such as Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, or in traditionally Orthodox states such as Bulgaria and Russia, which are home to significant Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Tengrist minorities.[71] This daily proximity, far from being a matter of theoretical choice, has been a practical necessity that has taught the Fathers and bishops to seek, with pragmatism and in a genuinely Christian spirit, forms of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect with members of other religious traditions, never denying their own faith but likewise avoiding unnecessary conflicts or contempt.[72] For the Italian Orthodox Church, dialogue with non-Christians has never been an act of syncretism or doctrinal indifference, but rather an exercise of charity and witness, recognizing in every human being, created in the image of God, the dignity of being heard and respected, even when his or her religious convictions differ radically from our own.[73] This approach, rooted in the patristic tradition and in the missionary practice of the Christian East, has enabled our communities to survive and at times even to flourish under difficult circumstances, providing an example of meekness and openness that stands in contrast to the memory of the Crusades and the holy wars that marked the history of the West.[74]

The Catholic Church likewise, especially since the Second Vatican Council, has undertaken a significant journey in this direction, promoting interreligious dialogue as an integral part of its mission and organizing, often in the city of Assisi, historic gatherings and moments of prayer with representatives of the world's major religions, including Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and the traditional religions of Africa and Asia.[75] This change of direction, formally established through documents such as the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, has given rise to considerable

reservations and sharp criticism from the Society of Saint Pius X and other Catholic traditionalists, who reject interreligious dialogue as a genuine heresy, arguing that the Church cannot place itself on the same level as false or imperfect religions and that any form of cooperation with non-Christians amounts to a betrayal of the saving mission of Christ, the one Mediator between God and humanity.[76] According to the Lefebvrists, interreligious dialogue constitutes a dangerous concession to modern relativism, obscuring revealed truth and opening the way to destructive syncretism. For this reason, they view with extreme suspicion every meeting, every joint declaration, and every gesture of fraternity with leaders of other religions, preferring instead an attitude of clear separation and unequivocal proclamation of the one Christian faith.[77] Nevertheless, it is undeniable that certain expressions of Catholic dialogue, however well-intentioned, have at times gone beyond the limits of prudent and respectful coexistence, resulting in statements that even we Orthodox find difficult to endorse and that raise legitimate theological concerns.[78]

A particularly notable example is the statement found in Chapter 16 of Pope Paul VI's Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, which declares that Muslims, together with Catholics, adore the one and merciful God,[79] a position later reaffirmed by Pope Francis during his historic visit to Abu Dhabi, when, together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, he signed a document stating that Christians and Muslims worship the same God.[80] As Orthodox Christians, we have serious reservations concerning such formulations, because while it is true that Muslims profess a rigorous monotheism and believe in one God, Creator and Judge, it is equally true that their conception of God does not include the Trinitarian revelation, which is the very heart of the Christian faith. Therefore, we cannot affirm that they worship the God whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because the worship of the one Triune God is the distinctive and indispensable element of Christianity, without which the very notions of salvation and grace are fundamentally transformed.[81] Another concern that we share with many critical observers, while not wishing to judge the intentions of particular individuals, concerns the episode of the Amazon Synod, when cardinals and bishops carried into Saint Peter's Basilica a statue representing Pachamama, the Incan goddess of fertility, nature, and agriculture, and subsequently placed it in the Roman church of Santa Maria in Traspontina, where it was venerated by some of the faithful as though it were the Blessed Virgin Mary,[82] provoking scandal and confusion among Catholics themselves and even more so among us Orthodox, who see in such gestures a dangerous concession to forms of idolatry and religious syncretism that have nothing in common with the purity of the apostolic tradition.[83] These episodes, although limited in scope and not representative of the Catholic Church as a whole, demonstrate that interreligious dialogue, if not properly guided and firmly anchored in sound doctrine, can indeed degenerate into ambiguity and unacceptable compromise. On this point, we may find ourselves in agreement with certain criticisms advanced by traditionalists, who rightly warn against the danger of trivializing the faith and equating what cannot be equated.

Nevertheless, our agreement with the FSSPX ends at this point, because whereas they draw from these criticisms the radical conclusion that every form of dialogue with non-Christians should be rejected, we Orthodox believe that interreligious dialogue, despite all its difficulties and risks, remains both a moral duty and a practical necessity for promoting peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among peoples and religions, especially in an increasingly globalized and multireligious world.[84] We do not engage in dialogue in order to discover a common doctrinal denominator, for we know that the truth of Christ is unique and complete. Rather, we engage in dialogue in order to know one another better, to overcome prejudice, to cooperate on ethical and social concerns such as the defense of life, the dignity of the human

person, and the care of creation, and to bear witness, through both our lives and our words, that the Christian faith is not a religion of hatred or exclusion, but one of love and hospitality. [85] Our position is therefore balanced and realistic: on the one hand, we firmly reject every form of syncretism and relativism that could obscure the uniqueness of Christ and the truth of the Holy Trinity; on the other hand, we recognize that dialogue with Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and followers of other religious traditions is not only possible but also fruitful, provided that it is conducted with clarity, intellectual honesty, and that charity which never renounces the truth but always proposes it with respect and humility.[86] The Italian Orthodox Church therefore continues to walk the path of interreligious dialogue, looking with both interest and critical discernment upon the initiatives of the Catholic Church, in the hope that it may find the proper balance between openness to the world and fidelity to the deposit of faith, without falling either into the sterile intransigence of the traditionalists or into the enthusiastic naïveté of those who would dissolve genuine differences in a universal embrace that ultimately risks eroding Christian identity.

The Eucharist

The celebration of the Eucharist represents the heart of Christian life and, at the same time, one of the greatest practical and theological points of divergence among the various Christian traditions. On this sacrament, the Italian Orthodox Church maintains a position of openness and recognition that stands in sharp contrast to the restrictive and distrustful attitude of the Society of Saint Pius X. In our Church, the Eucharist is consecrated under both species of bread and wine, according to the ancient Eastern practice of using leavened bread, known as *prosphora*, to signify the Resurrection of Christ and the newness of the new life,[87] and the wine is administered to all the faithful, both clergy and laity, as a sign of unity and of full participation in the Eucharistic mystery.[88] The Catholic Church, by contrast, has adopted the use of unleavened bread, the so-called hosts, in accordance with the Latin tradition that recalls the Jewish Passover meal, and in ordinary practice the wine is generally consumed only by the celebrant, while the faithful receive only the consecrated host, although the Second Vatican Council encouraged more frequent Communion under both kinds.[89] This ritual difference, however significant on the symbolic and disciplinary level, does not constitute for us Orthodox an insurmountable obstacle to recognizing the essential validity of the sacrament. Indeed, within the Italian Orthodox Church, for reasons of pastoral *oikonomia* and in order to meet the needs of certain communities, especially religious communities living in the diaspora or in conditions of limited resources, the use of hosts is permitted, and consecrated bread is recognized not only in the Eucharistic celebrations of the other canonical Orthodox Churches, but also in those celebrated within the Old Catholic Churches and even in the Roman Catholic Church, provided that the essential matter and form of the sacrament are respected and that there is the intention to do what the Church does.[90]

This attitude of broad and generous recognition toward Eucharistic consecrations celebrated outside our own canonical boundaries is founded upon a solid theological tradition that distinguishes between the validity of a sacrament and the lawfulness of its celebration, and that does not make the action of Christ dependent upon the complete orthodoxy of the minister or upon perfect ecclesial communion.[91] By contrast, it appears that within the Society of Saint Pius X there exists a climate of profound distrust and extreme rigorism, to the point that certain representatives of Écône, such as Abbé Puga, urge their priests and faithful to avoid carefully mixing hosts consecrated according to the traditional Tridentine rite with those consecrated according to the *Novus Ordo Missae*, regarding the latter as invalid.[92] This practice, which may appear surprising and unjustified to us Orthodox, manifests itself most

clearly when members of the Society celebrate Mass in diocesan churches: they often bring with them hosts already consecrated according to their own rite, or, at the conclusion of the celebration, consume them immediately so that they will not be reserved together with those consecrated according to the reformed rite, as though there existed a danger of spiritual contamination. According to reports published by the French conservative Catholic blog *Disputationes Theologicae*, this practice reflects a genuine doubt concerning the validity of Eucharistic consecrations performed outside the Society of Saint Pius X, a doubt that may derive from the conviction that apostolic succession within the Catholic Church was interrupted by the new episcopal consecration rites introduced after the Second Vatican Council, or, more radically, from the thesis that the Church of Rome, having become heretical because of the conciliar reforms, has lost the power validly to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ.[93]

This position, which echoes the ancient and already condemned doctrine of the invalidity of the sacraments administered by heretics, revives a controversy dating back to the earliest centuries of the Church, when Pope Stephen I (254–257) had to oppose firmly those who maintained that baptism conferred by heretics was null and void, affirming instead the validity of the sacrament by virtue of the faith of the Church rather than the personal holiness of the minister.[94] The same controversy was later revisited and definitively clarified by the Fathers of the Church and by the Ecumenical Councils, which taught that the sacraments, when celebrated with the prescribed matter and form and with the intention of doing what the Church does, are valid even if the minister is unworthy or if the community administering them is in a state of sin or separation, because the efficacy of the sacraments derives directly from Christ and not from the moral qualities or canonical status of the celebrant.[95] We Orthodox, faithful to this patristic doctrine, regard as fully valid the Eucharistic consecrations performed not only by the sister Orthodox Churches but also by the Roman Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Churches, and even the Society of Saint Pius X itself, because in all these communities the sacrament is celebrated with bread and wine, with the words and with the intention of doing what Christ commanded, and the grace of God is not limited by juridical boundaries or human divisions.[96] We therefore recognize that the Eucharist celebrated by the FSSPX is true and valid, and we harbor no doubt concerning the Real Presence of Christ in their consecrated hosts, even though we do not share their attitude of closure and suspicion toward other celebrations, which appears to us to be a manifestation of theological pride and of insufficient trust in the mercy and power of God, who acts even beyond our own understanding and our divisions.[97]

In this respect, our position differs sharply from that of the Lefebvrists. Whereas they tend to restrict the scope of grace and to question the validity of what exists outside their own enclosure, we broaden our vision and gratefully acknowledge that the Holy Spirit blows where He wills, and that the bread broken in every legitimate Eucharistic assembly is always the Bread of Life, nourishing the faithful and uniting them with the Risen Christ, even when the communities celebrating it remain divided by centuries of misunderstandings and sins. [98] This openness, however, does not signify indifference or relativism, but is the fruit of a mature theology and of pastoral experience that has always known how to distinguish between the essential and the secondary, between the objective validity of the sacrament and the full ecclesial communion that remains our ultimate goal, to be pursued with humility and patience, without ever yielding to temptations of exclusivism or self-sufficiency that betray the very spirit of the Gospel and Christ's prayer for the unity of all His disciples.[99]

The Liturgy of the Mass

The question of liturgical language and the structure of the Eucharistic celebration represents one of the principal causes championed by the Society of Saint Pius X, which has made the defense of Latin and the Tridentine Rite a cornerstone of its identity and a primary reason for its dissent from the post-conciliar Catholic Church.[100] The Lefebvrists strongly criticize the decision of the Second Vatican Council to permit the celebration of the Mass in the vernacular rather than exclusively in Latin,[101] arguing that this innovation opened the way to a desacralization of worship and to a dangerous trivialization of the Eucharistic mystery. They accuse the so-called *Novus Ordo Missae*, that is, the Mass reformed under Pope Paul VI, of reducing the Eucharist to little more than a commemorative meal similar to that celebrated by Protestants, depriving it of its sacrificial character and transcendent dimension.[102] They further maintain that replacing Latin with the vernacular severed the bond with the Church's centuries-old tradition and encouraged a liturgical subjectivism that threatens both the unity of the faith and the majesty of divine worship. For the Society, Latin is not merely a language but a sign of continuity and universality, a bulwark against passing fashions and against the arbitrariness of individual celebrants. For this reason, they continue to celebrate exclusively according to the Tridentine Rite, in Latin, rejecting any adaptation to local cultures or to modern pastoral needs.[103]

In contrast to this rigidly conservative position, the practice of the Italian Orthodox Church presents itself as a remarkably flexible and pluralistic model, one that might even appear to Catholic traditionalists as excessively accommodating, but which in reality is rooted in a profound liturgical theology and in a millennia-old tradition of the inculturation of worship. [104] Unlike the pre-conciliar Catholic Church, which imposed Latin as its sole liturgical language for centuries, the Italian Orthodox Church has always used the language of its faithful, following the principle that the Church's prayer should be intelligible to and shared by the people, because the liturgy is not a spectacle reserved for a few initiates but the common action of the entire Body of Christ.[105] Thus, Greeks celebrate in Greek, Armenians in Armenian, Georgians in Georgian, Romanians in Romanian, and every autocephalous Church has translated and continues to translate the sacred texts into the language of its own people. This has never resulted in a loss of sacredness or a rupture with the apostolic tradition; rather, it has enabled the faith to take deep root within different cultures and to express itself through their own poetic and spiritual riches.[106] This linguistic diversity, which for us Orthodox is a sign of catholicity and of the Incarnation of the Gospel, has never been regarded as a threat to unity, because the unity of the Church is founded not upon external uniformity but upon communion in the same faith and the same Eucharist. Consequently, the liturgy, despite its linguistic and ritual variations, preserves intact its theological structure and sacramental efficacy.[107]

What makes our position even more noteworthy is the extraordinary freedom that we allow within the Italian Orthodox Church, where, according to the principle of pastoral *oikonomia* and mercy, we do not impose a uniform liturgy but permit each community to use whichever language it prefers, without requiring special permissions or dispensations.[108] Thus, our Romanian parishes celebrate in Romanian, some communities in Sardinia use the Sardinian language, while others celebrate in Italian or in other languages, depending upon the needs and preferences of the faithful, because we believe that prayer is most authentic when it is

expressed in the language of the heart—the language that the people understand and truly make their own.[109] This flexibility, which may surprise those accustomed to the juridical rigor of the Latin tradition, is for us a deliberate theological and pastoral choice inspired by the principle of *oikonomia*, according to which the Church, as a merciful mother, adapts herself to the capacities and circumstances of her children so as not to distance anyone from the Eucharistic table but rather to draw all people through the beauty and intelligibility of divine worship.[110] Indeed, in some of our communities, we have even translated the liturgy into Latin in order to accommodate those faithful who, attracted by the solemnity and historical significance of that language, wish to pray in it, thereby demonstrating that our openness is not indifference but the ability to embrace a wide variety of spiritual sensibilities, provided that the orthodoxy of the faith and the validity of the sacraments remain uncompromised.

This practice, which may appear to the Lefebvrists as a dangerous concession to modernism, is in fact perfectly consistent with the Eastern tradition, which has always valued the diversity of rites and languages as an expression of the inexhaustible richness of the Christian mystery, [111] and has never regarded Latin as the sacred language *par excellence*, but has instead privileged Greek, Slavonic, and the various national languages as authentic and popular vehicles of spirituality.[112] We do not believe that the sacredness of the liturgy depends upon the language in which it is celebrated, but upon the faith with which it is lived, the dignity with which it is conducted, and the Real Presence of Christ who dwells within it.[113] For this reason, we do not fear renewal or adaptation, while remaining faithful to the substance of the rite and to Eucharistic doctrine. By contrast, the immobility of the Tridentine Rite and the preoccupation with Latin that characterize the FSSPX appear to us as a form of liturgical archaeologism, one that risks transforming the Mass into a monument to be preserved rather than a living and participatory act of faith, thereby creating a separation between the Church and the people, precisely as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council observed when they wisely sought to open the windows of the Church to the world and to make the liturgy more accessible and more communal.[114] Therefore, while respecting the Lefebvrists' choice to celebrate according to their own rite, we Orthodox continue along our own path, convinced that true tradition is not that which immobilizes the past, but that which knows how to embrace the present and prepare for the future, in the freedom of the children of God and in the diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is manifested also in the multitude of languages and hymns that rise before the throne of the Most High.[115]

Episcopal Consecrations

The question of episcopal consecrations carried out by the Society of Saint Pius X without a papal mandate constitutes one of the most complex and controversial aspects of the relationship between this society and the Catholic Church, while at the same time providing an opportunity for theological and canonical reflection from our own Orthodox perspective. The FSSPX justifies its actions, repeated over the years and culminating in the episcopal ordinations of 1 July 2026, by appealing to the so-called *state of necessity*, a philosophical and juridical concept known as *epikeia*, first articulated by Aristotle and later adopted by the general theory of law to describe those exceptional situations in which a law may legitimately be set aside if, under particular circumstances, its strict application would prove morally unjust or harmful to the common good.[116] A classic example of *epikeia* is that of a military officer who, during wartime, refuses to obey an order requiring him to massacre innocent civilians as an act of intimidation or reprisal, because in such a case human law is superseded by the higher moral law safeguarding human life and dignity. The Lefebvrists maintain that

the condition of the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council has become so grave and so deteriorated, owing to the liturgical and doctrinal reforms that they regard as heretical and destructive, that it constitutes precisely such a state of necessity as to justify the consecration of new bishops without papal approval, in order to guarantee the survival of the true faith and the apostolic tradition during what they perceive to be a time of widespread apostasy.[117]

It is, however, both legitimate and necessary to ask whether this is truly the case, and whether the situation of the Catholic Church can genuinely be compared to a crisis so extreme as to require the suspension of such a fundamental canonical principle as the papal mandate for episcopal consecrations.[118] In our view, the answer is probably negative, because the doctrinal position of the Society appears markedly papocentric, in the sense that it acknowledges the primacy of the Pope while refusing to accept his decisions whenever they do not coincide with its own interpretation of tradition. At the same time, it is fiercely anti-conciliar, rejecting not only the Second Vatican Council but also the authority of both general and local councils throughout the history of the Church whenever they fail to conform to its rigidly traditionalist outlook.[119] This position, which ultimately places the Society in a state of canonical and theological isolation, renders its claim to be acting under a state of necessity highly questionable, because necessity cannot properly be invoked to justify a course of action that appears more ideological than pastoral, more closely tied to opposition to the modern world than to a genuine spiritual emergency threatening the survival of the faith.[120] For us Orthodox, who possess a long experience of synods and councils and who recognize the importance of episcopal collegiality in the life of the Church, the position of the FSSPX appears contradictory and unbalanced, because on the one hand it exalts the role of the Pope as the center of unity, while on the other it openly defies him in the name of a tradition that it itself interprets selectively and often polemically, thereby creating a rupture that benefits neither the unity of the Church nor the clarity of doctrine.[121]

There remains, moreover, the crucial question of the validity of these episcopal consecrations, a matter that has generated intense debate in both Catholic and Orthodox circles and upon which intellectual honesty and theological rigor require careful clarification. According to the Catholic Church, the episcopal consecrations carried out by the FSSPX are formally illicit and constitute a grave offense against the sacraments, as established by Canon 1387,[122] as well as an offense against the unity of the Church, as provided for in Canon 1364,[123] and are therefore punished by *latae sententiae* excommunication, that is, an automatic excommunication incurred both by the consecrating bishops and by those who are consecrated. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church itself recognizes that these consecrations, although gravely illicit and schismatic, are sacramentally valid, because they are performed by a validly consecrated bishop, using the prescribed matter and form and with the intention of doing what the Church does. Consequently, they confer upon the ordinand the indelible episcopal character, even though the act is performed outside canonical communion and against the will of the Pope.[124] This distinction between validity and liceity, which is fundamental to Catholic sacramental theology and which we Orthodox largely share, enables us to affirm clearly that our Church likewise regards these episcopal ordinations as sacramentally valid, even though they have been carried out by a religious society that is not in communion with our Church and that pursues a doctrinal course foreign to us and unacceptable in many respects.[125] We do not question the apostolic succession of the bishops of the FSSPX, because it derives from Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who himself had been validly consecrated as a bishop within the Catholic Church, and we hold that the sacrament of Holy Orders, when administered under the proper conditions, confers episcopal grace independently of the canonical status of either the one conferring or the one receiving it,

because it is Christ Himself who acts through the sacraments, and His grace is not bound by human circumstances or disciplinary controversies.[126]

This position, which may appear surprisingly open to those accustomed to viewing the Society as a doctrinal adversary, is in fact entirely consistent with Orthodox sacramental theology, which has always distinguished between the gift of God and the human conditions surrounding its reception, and which recognizes the validity of sacraments administered even by unworthy ministers or by separated communities, provided that the intention to do what the Church does and the essential form of the rite are preserved.[127] Nevertheless, our recognition of sacramental validity in no way implies agreement with the theological positions of the FSSPX, nor approval of its schismatic actions, which we regard as a grave act of disobedience and spiritual pride that damages the unity of the Body of Christ and creates confusion among the faithful.[128] We Orthodox, having inherited from the Fathers the doctrine of synodality and conciliarity, believe that episcopal consecrations should always take place within the context of ecclesial communion and with the consent of the Church, and that an appeal to a state of necessity cannot be employed as a means of justifying unilateral actions that disrupt peace and concord among the brethren.[129] We therefore acknowledge the validity of the FSSPX's episcopal ordinations, but we do not approve of their liceity, and we hope that this society may one day rediscover the path of dialogue and reconciliation with the Catholic Church and with all the Christian Churches, overcoming its isolation and its controversies in order to recover that humility and charity which are the authentic marks of the true apostolic tradition — a tradition founded not upon rites and formulas, but upon love for Christ and for the brethren, in the freedom and peace of the Holy Spirit.[130]

Collegiality

The question of episcopal collegiality represents one of the most significant turning points of the Second Vatican Council and, at the same time, one of the elements that most clearly distinguishes the ecclesiological vision of the Society of Saint Pius X not only from that of the post-conciliar Catholic Church but, above all, from the Orthodox tradition, which has always regarded synodality and the shared responsibility of bishops as indispensable pillars of its identity.[131] Through its teaching on collegiality, the Second Vatican Council envisioned a transition within the Catholic Church from a monarchical and absolutist model of governance, centered almost exclusively upon the Pope, to a more constitutional and participatory structure in which the college of bishops, together with its head, the Roman Pontiff, exercises supreme authority over the Church, thereby giving greater prominence to the role of bishops in doctrinal and pastoral decision-making.[132] This development, which in many respects represented an attempt to recover certain characteristics of the ancient Church and to respond to the needs of an increasingly complex and pluralistic world, was welcomed by a large part of the Catholic episcopate and faithful. It was, however, met with firm opposition from the Society of Saint Pius X, which perceived in it a dangerous democratic tendency and a threat to the traditional hierarchical structure of the Church.[133] The Lefebvrists remain firmly attached to the dogma of papal infallibility, defined by the First Vatican Council, which, according to their interpretation, attributes to the Pope an absolute and almost semi-divinized authority, making him the sole authentic interpreter of the faith and the unquestioned center of ecclesial life. For this reason, they oppose any attempt to limit or share his authority, believing that collegiality, unless understood merely as collaboration subordinate to the Pope, inevitably leads to a weakening of unity and to doctrinal confusion that threatens the very survival of the Catholic Church.[134] This papocentric vision, which the Lefebvrists consider the only orthodox and truly traditional one, is instead perceived by all other Christian

communities, including the Orthodox Churches, as a genuine heresy,[135] because it attributes to a human being, however holy and chosen by God, an authority that belongs to Christ alone and that cannot be absolutized without betraying the synodal and communal character of the Church of the first centuries. For us Orthodox, collegiality is not a pastoral option or a concession to modernism, but the very heart of our ecclesiology, because from the earliest times the Church governed itself through councils and synods in which the bishops, gathered together, made the fundamental decisions concerning faith and discipline under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, without any one of them—not even the Bishop of Rome—being able to impose his own will above the common consensus.[136] In the Orthodox Church, Patriarchs, Metropolitans, and Archbishops do not govern their respective Churches by divine right or through any supposed personal investiture by Christ, but are simply *primi inter pares*, that is, first among equals, among the bishops of the various local Churches. Their authority is always exercised in communion with their fellow bishops, as well as with the presbyters and faithful, maintaining a balance that avoids both papal caesarism and congregational anarchy. [137] This synodal conception, deeply rooted in the patristic tradition and in the canons of the Ecumenical Councils, appears to us not only more faithful to the Gospel and to the teaching of the Apostles but also wiser and more humane, because it recognizes that truth belongs to no individual but is manifested through communion and fraternal dialogue, and that authority within the Church is not a dominion to be exercised but a service to be rendered, just as Christ Himself taught by washing the feet of His disciples.[138]

The contrast between the monarchical vision of the FSSPX and the synodal vision of the Orthodox Churches is therefore radical and irreconcilable, and it cannot be resolved through simple compromises or declarations of goodwill, because it touches the very heart of the nature of the Church and of her governance.[139] Whereas the Lefebvrists dream of a strong, centralized, and hierarchical Church in which the Pope is the Vicar of Christ on earth and every decision flows from him as from an inexhaustible source of authority, we Orthodox believe that the Church is a communion of local Churches, each of which is fully catholic because it celebrates the Eucharist around its own bishop, and that the unity of the Church is achieved not through submission to a sovereign but through concord in the faith and intercommunion among the bishops, who meet in councils in order to discern together the will of God and to confront the challenges of their own age.[140] This conviction does not, however, make us indifferent to the debate taking place within the Catholic Church, because we look with sympathy upon the efforts of the Pope and of many bishops to strengthen collegiality and to make the Church more synodal and more attentive to listening. We regard these developments, however partial and contested they may still be, as signs of the Spirit who blows even beyond the boundaries of our own communion and who invites all Christians to rediscover the beauty of a Church that is not a pyramid but a circle, in which everyone, each according to his own ministry, is called to participate in the life and mission of the People of God.[141]

The FSSPX, by contrast, appears to us increasingly enclosed within a fortress of absolute certainties and polemical refusals that distance it not only from the Catholic Church of the Council but also from that communion of love and truth which is the distinguishing mark of the disciples of Christ, nourished by humility, attentive listening, and mutual respect rather than by impositions and anathemas.[142] Therefore, while recognizing the sacramental validity of their ordinations, we cannot share their ecclesiology, which appears to us to be a caricature of the Petrine primacy and a betrayal of the spirit of the Fathers. We continue instead to bear witness, through our own life and our synodal structures, that the true greatness of the Church lies not in the power of one but in the love of all, and that collegiality

is God's gift for safeguarding the faith and for walking together, in joy and hope, toward the Kingdom that is to come.[143]

Relations with Gender and Woke Culture

On the issue of relations with gender and woke culture, the Society of Saint Pius X finds itself, paradoxically, in a position very close to that of the Italian Orthodox Church, because both unequivocally and without hesitation condemn the ideological trends that have spread throughout many Western societies and have unfortunately also influenced certain Christian denominations, particularly Evangelical and Episcopal–Anglican Churches, which have opened the priesthood to women, ordained openly homosexual persons, and approved the blessing of same-sex unions. In doing so, they have yielded to those cultural pressures now commonly described as gender ideology, cancel culture, and wokeism—terms referring to a body of theories and social practices that seek radically to redefine human identity, the family, and sexuality in ways fundamentally opposed to biblical revelation and the Christian tradition.[144] It is undeniable that in recent years we have witnessed episodes that have scandalized not only Catholic traditionalists and Orthodox Christians, but also many believers of good will, such as the so-called "gay Masses" celebrated in various Catholic churches, the most recent of which took place in Milan, or the inclusive Nativity scene displayed in Madrid, which portrayed Jesus with two Saint Josephs, identified as Parent 1 and Parent 2, without the presence of the Virgin Mary, seemingly seeking to erase the mystery of the Incarnation and the unique and unrepeatable role of Mary in the history of salvation.[145] Added to these provocations are the proposals advanced by a portion of the German Bishops' Conference, which has openly advocated the ordination of women to the priesthood and the recognition of egalitarian same-sex marriage within the Church, positions that for us Orthodox represent a most serious betrayal of apostolic doctrine and a surrender to the spirit of the world, which has always sought to distort the Gospel and to adapt it to its own whims and passions.[146]

In this context, the Italian Orthodox Church stands with equal firmness against these developments, doing so not out of mere sociological conservatism but out of strict fidelity to Scripture and Tradition, which have always taught that human sexuality is a gift of God to be lived within marriage between one man and one woman, and that homosexual relations are explicitly condemned as contrary to the natural law and to divine revelation, both in the Book of Leviticus, where they are described as an abomination, and in the Epistles of Saint Paul, which describe them as grave sins excluding one from the Kingdom of God.[147] It is important to emphasize, however, that our Church, in accordance with the principles of mercy and *oikonomia*, does not reject homosexual persons as though they were beyond redemption or accursed, but welcomes them as children of God struggling with their own weaknesses and in need of spiritual guidance and fraternal support in order to live chastely and to grow in holiness.[148] The Italian Orthodox Church has, in certain historical and cultural contexts, recognized rites of spiritual brotherhood known as *adelphopoiesis*, which establish a spiritual or blood bond between persons of the same sex, similar to what in the Balkans is known as blood brotherhood. Such a bond, however, is purely spiritual, has no sexual implications whatsoever, and must not be confused with marriage or with same-sex unions, because the Church has never blessed or recognized as lawful sexual relations between persons of the same sex, which remain unequivocally prohibited by divine law and by the moral teaching of the Church.[149]

By contrast, the declaration *Fiducia Supplicans*, issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2023, which permits the blessing of same-sex couples, has caused profound concern

and considerable bewilderment throughout the Orthodox world,[150] because it appears to be contrary not only to the centuries-old tradition of the Catholic Church, which until recently taught that sinful unions could not be blessed, but also to the Christian doctrine that we Orthodox have received from the Apostles and faithfully preserved throughout the centuries without yielding to the fashions and pressures of the contemporary world.[151] We firmly believe that a blessing is a sacred act implying recognition of the goodness of that which is blessed, and therefore it cannot be extended to situations that are objectively sinful, because to do so would inevitably create confusion and lead the faithful into error by presenting evil as good and sin as grace.[152] Our position is clear and uncompromising, founded upon the words of the Apostle Paul, who exhorts us faithfully to hand on what we have received, without additions or omissions, because the truth of the Gospel is not negotiable and cannot be adapted to anyone's tastes or preferences, however noble the intentions of those who seek to be more inclusive and welcoming may appear.[153] We recognize that, on this particular issue, the Society of Saint Pius X shares both our concerns and our struggle, and that its representatives have rightly denounced the direction taken by certain Churches and pastors who, in the name of a misunderstood mercy, ultimately empty the Gospel of its prophetic content and transform the Church into little more than a social club where everything is permitted and nothing remains sacred.[154]

Nevertheless, as we have already emphasized on other occasions, this convergence of views on ethical and moral questions is not sufficient to bridge the profound doctrinal and canonical differences that separate us, nor does it authorize us to regard the FSSPX as an ally in the defense of the faith, because their ecclesiological vision remains too deeply marked by an exaggerated papocentrism and by a systematic rejection of dialogue, positions that we Orthodox cannot accept.[155] We therefore continue along our own path, convinced that true tradition is not one that withdraws into the defense of an idealized past, but one that knows how to bear witness to the truth with love, without fear and without compromise, yet also without pride or contempt, welcoming every person with respect and offering to all, believers and non-believers alike, the word of salvation that heals and sets free, even when it appears demanding and countercultural in relation to the fashions of the age.[156]

Final Consideration

A final consideration deserves to be made regarding the complex and troubled relationship between the Society of Saint Pius X and the Holy See, particularly in relation to the lifting of the excommunication by Pope Benedict XVI, an act of pastoral magnanimity undertaken in the hope of bringing the Lefebvrists back into the fold and fostering a path toward full reconciliation with the Catholic Church.[157] On that occasion, the Society had declared on several occasions—in 1988, 2008, and 2012—that it accepted the Second Vatican Council, describing it as a pastoral rather than a dogmatic council, and this led the Pope to remove the ecclesiastical censure imposed upon the four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre, thereby opening the way to a dialogue that many hoped would eventually lead to their full reintegration into Catholic communion.[158] Time has shown, however, that this submission to the Roman Pontiff was neither sincere nor genuine, because the Society continued openly to contest the conciliar reforms and to behave as though it were a parallel Church, almost as if to demonstrate that its true objective was not unity but the uncompromising defense of its own interpretation of tradition, regarded as superior to every authority, even that of the Pope himself.[159] This attitude, which we Orthodox observe with detachment but also with a certain sadness, reveals a profound contradiction in the conduct of the FSSPX. On the one hand, it declares its acceptance of the Council in order to obtain canonical advantages and to

emerge from juridical isolation; on the other hand, it continues to oppose the Council by every possible means, demonstrating that its professions of fidelity were merely instrumental and did not correspond to a genuine conversion of heart or to an authentic recognition of the authority of the Magisterium.[160]

It is certainly not our intention to set ourselves up as judges of the Society, because our Church has no jurisdiction over it and because the internal affairs of the Catholic world do not directly concern us. Nevertheless, we cannot fail to observe that hypocrisy and falsehood, when they become a method of action, undermine the very foundations of every relationship of trust and every sincere attempt at dialogue.[161] It is sad to observe that the Lefebvrists, while professing an immense love for truth and tradition, have chosen the path of ambiguity and duplicity in their dealings with the Holy See, saying one thing to their superiors while doing another in practice, as though the end justified the means and the defense of their own faction were more important than obedience to the Pope, whom they nevertheless acknowledge as the visible head of the Church.[162] We Orthodox, who possess a long experience of persecution and injustice and who have often been compelled to coexist with hostile powers and oppressive regimes, have always sought to maintain a straightforward and transparent manner of conduct, because we believe that Christian witness requires consistency between what one says and what one does, and that falsehood, even when spoken for what appears to be a good cause, always remains a sin that offends God and damages the credibility of the Church.[163] For this reason, when we see the FSSPX presenting itself as the champion of orthodoxy while at the same time acting through subterfuge and strategies of convenience, we cannot help but experience a sense of disappointment and concern, because such conduct not only fails to advance the cause that they claim to defend, but ultimately casts discredit upon all traditionalist positions and fosters skepticism and confusion among the more simple faithful.

Moreover, this manner of acting appears to us all the more serious because the Society so often assumes the role of judge over others, accusing the Catholic Church of modernism, heresy, and betrayal of the faith, while failing to recognize that it itself falls into what appears to us to be an even more subtle sin: spiritual pride and a lack of humility, which is the root of every division and every scandal.[164] We Orthodox, who have always regarded synodality and concord as fundamental values of ecclesial life, cannot approve of an attitude that places personal judgment above the authority of the Church and transforms the defense of tradition into a partisan banner, as though truth were the exclusive possession of one particular group rather than the gift of God to the entire faithful people.[165] We acknowledge that the Catholic Church has its own responsibilities and contradictions, and that certain of its pastoral developments have raised questions and at times even prompted justified criticism on our part, as we have already expressed previously. Nevertheless, this does not authorize us to justify hypocrisy and falsehood, which are sins against the Holy Spirit and which undermine the very possibility of constructive and fraternal dialogue.[166] Truth, when professed with love and humility, enlightens and unites; but when it is manipulated for partisan purposes or to fuel controversy, it becomes a weapon that wounds and divides. This is precisely what we believe we see occurring within the Society, which, despite having received extraordinary gestures of mercy from successive Roman Pontiffs, has failed to respond with corresponding sincerity and openness, preferring instead to remain enclosed within its own ivory tower and to continue fighting a war against an enemy that perhaps exists more in its own imagination than in reality.

Our observation is not intended as a definitive judgment upon the Society, because only God knows the human heart and only He can judge the intentions and responsibilities of each individual,[167] but rather as an invitation to reflection and consistency, because Christian witness cannot exist apart from transparency and fidelity to one's word, and because the Church, whatever its liturgical or theological tradition, is called to be a sign of unity and love in a world torn apart by divisions and conflicts.[168] We Orthodox, conscious of our own limitations and weaknesses, continue to walk the path of synodality and mercy, seeking to preserve the faith of the Apostles without arrogance and without hypocrisy, while trusting that the Holy Spirit may one day restore all Christians to full communion in truth and charity, beyond every form of manipulation and every merely human calculation.[169] History teaches us that the Church has survived crises far more severe than the present one, and that fidelity to Christ is measured not by factional allegiances or by the controversies of the moment, but by the capacity to love as He loved, even to the complete gift of oneself, seeking not one's own interests but only the glory of God and the good of one's brethren.[170] In this spirit, we extend our thoughts to all Christians, including the members of the Society of Saint Pius X, with the hope that they may find the path of humility and reconciliation, and that they may rediscover that true tradition is the one that bears fruit unto eternal life, rather than the one that confines itself within a sterile defense of the past, forgetting that the present is the time of grace and that the future rests in the hands of God, who is the merciful Father of all His children.[171]

His Beatitude
Monsignor Filippo Ortenzi

Notes

- [1] Decree of canonical erection of the *Fraternitas Sacerdotalis Sancti Pii X*, signed by Bishop François Charrière, Bishop of Fribourg, 1 November 1970.
- [2] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, in particular the constitutions *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), *Lumen gentium* (1964), *Dei Verbum* (1965), the declaration *Dignitatis humanae* (1965), and the decree *Unitatis redintegratio* (1964), the principal objects of the FSSPX's opposition.
- [3] Official communiqué of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X concerning the episcopal consecrations of 1 July 2026.
- [4] *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), can. 1383 (formerly can. 1382 before the 2021 reform of Book VI); cf. John Paul II, motu proprio *Ecclesia Dei adflicta* (2 July 1988).
- [5] Council of Trent (1545–1563), dogmatic and disciplinary decrees; First Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution *Pastor Aeternus* (18 July 1870).
- [6] First Council of Constantinople (381), can. 3; Council of Chalcedon (451), can. 28; cf. Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, *The Ravenna Document* (2007), on the relationship between primacy and synodality.
- [7] Saint Pius V, Apostolic Constitution *Quo Primum Tempore* (14 July 1570), by which the Roman Missal reformed after the Council of Trent was promulgated; Benedict XVI, motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum* (7 July 2007).
- [8] Second Vatican Council, decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (21 November 1964), on the dignity and equal legitimacy of the Eastern liturgical traditions; cf. *Liturgikon* and the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.
- [9] First Council of Nicaea (325), can. 6; Council of Chalcedon (451), can. 28; cf. Joint International Commission for Catholic-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *Ravenna Document* (2007), on the relationship between primacy and synodality.
- [10] Congregation for Bishops, Decree remitting the excommunication of the four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre (21 January 2009); Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church (10 March 2009), on the canonical situation of the Society of Saint Pius X.
- [11] Second Vatican Council, decree *Unitatis redintegratio* (21 November 1964); World Council of Churches, New Delhi Assembly (1961), definition of the “visible unity” of the Churches.
- [12] Council of Ephesus (431); Council of Chalcedon (451); Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, II, 5–6 (“quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est”), the classical principle of the transmission of the *depositum fidei*.
- [13] *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), cann. 277 and 1037; Council of Trent, sess. XXIV (11 November 1563), *Decretum de reformatione matrimonii*; Second Vatican Council, decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 16.
- [14] Mt 8:14-15; Mk 1:29-31; Lk 4:38-39; cf. 1 Cor 9:5, where Saint Paul recalls that the other apostles and Cephas took with them a “believing woman” (*adelphēn gynaika*).

[15] Council of Elvira (ca. 306), can. 33; Council of Carthage (390), can. 3; First Lateran Council (1123), can. 21; Second Lateran Council (1139), can. 7, which progressively consolidated the discipline of celibacy in the Latin Church.

[16] Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* (4 November 2009), arts. VI and VII; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Complementary Norms*, which provide for the ordination of married men coming from Anglicanism by means of a dispensation.

[17] Council in Trullo (Quinisext, 691-692), cann. 12, 13, and 48, which confirm the Eastern tradition of married clergy and the discipline concerning bishops.

[18] 1 Tim 3:2-5 and Tit 1:5-6, where Saint Paul indicates, among the requirements for ministry, that the bishop and presbyter be the “husband of one wife”; cf. *Apostolic Constitutions*, Book VI, and Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the First Epistle to Timothy*.

[19] “Until death do us part” does not mean that a spouse married to a violent partner must remain married and endure daily violence until being beaten to death.

[20] Eph 5:22-33; Mt 19:3-9; Council of Trent, Sess. XXIV (11 November 1563), *Decretum de Sacramento Matrimonii*.

[21] Saint Basil the Great, *Canonical Letters*, Epistles 188 and 199; Council in Trullo (Quinisext, 691-692), can. 87; *Pedalion (Rudder)*, canonical collection of the Orthodox Church.

[22] Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Πηδάλιον (Pedalion – The Rudder)*, Venice, 1800; John Zonaras and Theodore Balsamon, commentaries on the ecclesiastical canons concerning the principle of *οἰκονομία (oikonomia)* as the pastoral application of canonical discipline.

[23] Council of Trent, Sess. XXIV, canons on marriage; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1644-1651; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), nos. 19-20 and 84.

[24] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Reception of Eucharistic Communion by Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful (14 September 1994); Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, Declaration of 24 June 2000 on the application of can. 915 of the Code of Canon Law.

[25] Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, Homily XXXII; Saint Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homilies*, I, 51, on the superiority of mercy over rigor.

[26] Mt 9:13; Mt 12:7; Mk 2:27; Lk 15:11-32; cf. Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, Homily XXX, on the evangelical interpretation of mercy.

[27] Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna Document (2007); Chieti Document (2016), on the relationship between ecclesial communion, primacy, and synodality.

[28] *Pedalion (The Rudder)*, edited by Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1800), Introduction to the ecclesiastical canons, on the distinction between *ἀκρίβεια (akribeia)* and *οἰκονομία (oikonomia)*; Theodore Balsamon, *Commentary on the Canons*.

[29] Council of Trent, Sess. XXIV, *Decretum de Sacramento Matrimonii* (1563); *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), cann. 915 and 916; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), no. 84.

[30] Saint Basil the Great, *Canonical Letters* (Epistles 188 and 199); Council in Trullo (Quinisext, 691-692), canons 87 and 102, which illustrate the principle of pastoral moderation in the application of canonical penalties.

[31] *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), can. 1752: *Salus animarum suprema lex esto*; the principle, already present in the medieval canonical tradition, constitutes the ultimate criterion of the Church's pastoral action.

[32] Council of Ancyra (314), canons 19 and 20; Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 37; Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, in which pastoral mercy is presented as an integral part of ecclesial ministry.

[33] Saint John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, III, 6; Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), no. 47: "The Church is called to be the house of the Father... where there is a place for everyone"; the image of the Church as a "field hospital," frequently used in his pastoral Magisterium.

[34] Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (19 March 2016), in particular Chapter VIII ("Accompanying, Discerning and Integrating Weakness").

[35] Cf. the *Dubia* presented in 2016 by Cardinals Walter Brandmüller, Raymond L. Burke, Carlo Caffarra, and Joachim Meisner; cf. also Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Placuit Deo* (2018), for the context of the contemporary theological debate.

[36] *Amoris Laetitia*, nos. 300–305, with particular reference to footnote 351; cf. Francis, Letter to the Bishops of the Buenos Aires Pastoral Region (5 September 2016), published in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 108 (2016), pp. 1071–1074.

[37] Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna Document (2007); cf. Jean Meyendorff, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975, on the Orthodox concept of *oikonomia*.

[38] Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, *Declaration on Amoris Laetitia* (2016); cf. Bernard Fellay, Superior General of the FSSPX, addresses and official communiqués of 2016 concerning the reception of the apostolic exhortation.

[39] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Persona Humana* (1975); John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), no. 84; Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), no. 29.

[40] Mk 2:27; Mt 9:13; Abba Dorotheos of Gaza, *Spiritual Instructions*; Saint John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Prologue and Steps IV–V, on discernment and pastoral mercy.

[41] Saint John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, VI; Saint Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homilies*, I, 51; Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Chieti Document (2016), on ecclesial communion in the first millennium.

[42] Second Vatican Council, Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* (7 December 1965), on religious freedom; cf. Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia (22 December 2005), on the hermeneutic of reform in continuity.

[43] Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), arts. VII and XIV; Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600*; Benjamin Braude – Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols., Holmes & Meier, 1982.

[44] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dignitatis Humanae*, nos. 2–3; cf. Crete Document (Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*, nos. 13–16.

[45] *Svod Zakonov Rossiyskoy Imperii (Code of Laws of the Russian Empire)*, 1832 edition and subsequent revisions; Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia*, Harvard University Press, 2006.

- [46] Pope Innocent IV, bull *Ad extirpanda* (15 May 1252); Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, 3 vols., New York, 1887–1888.
- [47] Third Lateran Council (1179), can. 27; Pope Innocent III, bull *Vergentis in senium* (1199); Fourth Lateran Council (1215), can. 3; Edict of Fontainebleau (1685), by which Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes (1598), intensifying the persecution of the Huguenots.
- [48] Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, XXIV (“Nec religionis est cogere religionem”); Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, V, 20; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World*, nos. 15–16.
- [49] Pius IX, Encyclical *Quanta Cura* (8 December 1864); *Syllabus Errorum* (1864), propositions 15, 77–79, concerning religious liberalism and relations between Church and State.
- [50] Leo XIII, Encyclical *Immortale Dei* (1 November 1885); Encyclical *Libertas Praestantissimum* (20 June 1888), on the Christian State and freedom.
- [51] Second Vatican Council, Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* (7 December 1965); Marcel Lefebvre, *Ils L’ont Découronné* (1987); Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, *La Liberté Religieuse* (collection of studies and official declarations).
- [52] *Dignitatis Humanae*, nos. 2–3 and 6, which ground the civil right to religious freedom in the dignity of the human person.
- [53] Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia (22 December 2005), on the “hermeneutic of reform in continuity”; cf. International Theological Commission, *Religious Freedom for the Good of All* (2019).
- [54] Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, II, 2 (“Humani iuris et naturalis potestatis est unicuique quod putaverit colere”); Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, V, 20; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World*, nos. 13–16.
- [55] Mt 22:21; Jn 18:36; Rev 3:20; cf. Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, 70, and Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, PG 91, on respect for human freedom in responding to grace.
- [56] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* (21 November 1964); Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Chieti Document (2016).
- [57] Peace of Augsburg (1555); Peace of Westphalia (1648); Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Yale University Press, 1972.
- [58] World Council of Churches (WCC), Constitution approved at Amsterdam (1948) and amended at New Delhi (1961), doctrinal basis: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures...”.
- [59] Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August 1964); Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993); the Catholic Church officially collaborates with the WCC through the Joint Working Group, established in 1965.
- [60] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, nos. 1–4; John Paul II, Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (25 May 1995).
- [61] Fourth Lateran Council (1215), ch. 1; Boniface VIII, bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302); Council of Florence, Decree *Cantate Domino* (1442); *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 846–848, which today interprets the formula *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* in light of the Second Vatican Council.

- [62] Francesco Pucci (1543–1597), tried by the Holy Office and condemned for heresy; cf. *Bullarium Romanum* and the records of the Holy Office; Hubert Jedin (ed.), *History of the Church*, vol. VI, Jaca Book.
- [63] Pius XI, Encyclical *Mortalium Animos* (6 January 1928), a fundamental document of the pre-conciliar phase concerning the ecumenical movement; Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, *The Ecumenical Movement: A False Unity* and other official documents contesting *Unitatis Redintegratio* and post-conciliar ecumenism.
- [64] On the Old Calendarist movement, cf. Patrick Viscuso, *A Quest for Reform of the Orthodox Church: The 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress*, Berkeley, 2006; Pan-Orthodox Congress of Constantinople (1923), convened by Patriarch Meletius IV Metaxakis for the reform of the ecclesiastical calendar.
- [65] *Encyclical of the Synod in Resistance* (1985); cf. Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna Document (2007); World Council of Churches, *Constitution and Rules*.
- [66] Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920, “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” regarded as one of the foundational texts of modern Orthodox ecumenical dialogue; cf. Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World*.
- [67] Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), document *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World*, nos. 4–24; Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, established in 1979 by John Paul II and Dimitrios I.
- [68] Jn 3:8; Jn 17:20-23; Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 8, on common prayer for Christian unity.
- [69] Saint Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto*, XXVII; Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, II; John Paul II, Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), nos. 18–20.
- [70] Jn 13:34-35; Jn 17:21; Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, XX, 2; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World*, no. 24.
- [71] Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920, *Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere*; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World*, nos. 16–18.
- [72] On the millet system in the Ottoman Empire, cf. Benjamin Braude – Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, Holmes & Meier, 1982; Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- [73] Gen 1:26-27; Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio*; Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, PG 91, on the dignity of man created in the image of God.
- [74] Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans*, Homily XXV; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World*, nos. 19–21.
- [75] Second Vatican Council, Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965); John Paul II, World Day of Prayer for Peace, Assisi, 27 October 1986; Benedict XVI, Assisi Meeting (27 October 2011); Francis, Assisi Meeting (20 September 2016).

- [76] *Nostra Aetate*, nos. 2–4; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16; Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, *Against Interreligious Dialogue* and official communiqués following the Assisi meetings.
- [77] Pius XI, Encyclical *Mortalium Animos* (6 January 1928), on false irenicism; Marcel Lefebvre, *Open Letter to Confused Catholics* (1985), chapters devoted to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.
- [78] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000), nos. 4–8 and 20–22, reaffirming the uniqueness and universal salvific character of Jesus Christ and the Church in the context of interreligious dialogue.
- [79] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16; Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, no. 3, both promulgated on 28 October 1965.
- [80] Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019.
- [81] First Council of Nicaea (325), *Symbolum Nicaenum*; First Council of Constantinople (381), *Symbolum Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum*; Saint John of Damascus, *De Haeresibus*, c. 100 (“On the Heresy of the Ishmaelites”).
- [82] The three statues, objects of idolatrous devotion by the faithful, were stolen by certain Catholic traditionalists and thrown into the Tiber, and were subsequently recovered by the Carabinieri. They are currently in the custody of the Provincial Command of the Carabinieri of Rome, the Church having refrained from returning them to the church in order to avoid controversy.
- [83] Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region (6–27 October 2019); Final Document of the Synod; Francis, Address of 25 October 2019 requesting forgiveness for the removal of the statues from the Church of Santa Maria in Traspontina. The Holy See has never officially identified the statue as the Virgin Mary nor defined the gesture as an act of idolatrous worship.
- [84] Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*, nos. 16–18; John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), nos. 55–57.
- [85] Second Vatican Council, Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2; Francis, Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), nos. 271–285.
- [86] 1 Pet 3:15–16; Second Vatican Council, Decree *Ad Gentes*, nos. 11 and 15; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*, nos. 19–21.
- [87] Saint John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, IV, 13; Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, IV; cf. Byzantine *Euchologion*, Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.
- [88] Council in Trullo (Quinisext, 691–692), can. 32; Saint Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chs. 65–67, on the distribution of the Eucharist to the faithful under the consecrated species.
- [89] Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 55; *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (2002 ed.), nos. 281–287; Council of Florence, Decree for the Armenians (*Exsultate Deo*, 1439), on the use of unleavened bread in the Latin Church.
- [90] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, no. 27; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (CCEO), cann. 671–683; cf. Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Balamand Document (1993).
- [91] Saint Augustine, *Contra epistulam Parmeniani*, II, 13; Saint Basil the Great, Canonical Letter 188; cf. Council of Arles (314), can. 8, on the distinction between the efficacy of the sacrament and the worthiness of the minister.

- [92] Cf. documentation and publications originating from circles of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X and from authors close to it concerning the *Novus Ordo Missae*; among the reference texts: Marcel Lefebvre, *Lettre ouverte aux catholiques perplexes* (1985). Practices attributed to individual priests do not appear to have been formulated as an official universal norm of the Society.
- [93] Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* (3 April 1969); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (2000); cf. articles published on the website *Disputationes Theologicae*, which report the opinions of traditionalist authors but do not constitute official documents of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X.
- [94] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 2–5; Saint Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistula* 73 (*Ad Iubaianum*); Pope Stephen I, fragments of his letters preserved in Eusebius and Saint Cyprian, on the controversy concerning the baptism of heretics (254–257).
- [95] Council of Arles (314), can. 8; Saint Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, Books I–VII; Council of Trent, Sess. VII (3 March 1547), *De Sacramentis*, canons 8 and 12, on the validity of the sacraments independently of the holiness of the minister (*ex opere operato*).
- [96] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 22; Balamand Document (1993), nos. 13–15; Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna Document (2007). (Recognition of sacraments outside canonical boundaries varies among the different autocephalous Orthodox Churches and is a matter of ecclesial practice rather than of common dogmatic definition.)
- [97] *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), can. 844; Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993), nos. 122–136; Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, official declarations on the liturgical reform and the *Novus Ordo Missae*.
- [98] Jn 6:35; Jn 6:51; Jn 3:8; Saint Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, IV–V; Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses*, IV.
- [99] Jn 17:20–23; Eph 4:3–6; Saint Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto*, XXVII; John Paul II, Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), nos. 77–79.
- [100] Marcel Lefebvre, *La Messe de Toujours* (1975); Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, *The Holy Mass: Treasure of Catholic Tradition*; cf. Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops accompanying the motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum* (7 July 2007).
- [101] Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963), nos. 36 and 54. The Council established that “the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites,” while permitting a broader use of the vernacular languages according to the decisions of the competent ecclesiastical authorities.
- [102] Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* (3 April 1969); Congregation for Divine Worship, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (1970; typical edition 2002), nos. 2–19; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Mysterium Fidei* (1965), on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist.
- [103] Saint Pius V, Apostolic Constitution *Quo Primum Tempore* (14 July 1570); Benedict XVI, motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum* (2007); Francis, motu proprio *Traditionis Custodes* (16 July 2021), which redefined the discipline governing the use of the 1962 Missal.
- [104] Saints Cyril and Methodius, *Vita Constantini* and *Vita Methodii*; Letter of Pope Hadrian II (*Gloria in excelsis Deo*, 868), approving the liturgical use of the Slavonic language.
- [105] 1 Cor 14:9–19; Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Homily XXXVI; Apostolic Constitution *Veterum Sapientia* of John XXIII (22 February 1962), on the importance of Latin in the Latin Church.

- [106] Council of Constantinople (869-870), acts concerning the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius; cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Slavorum Apostoli* (2 June 1985), on the translation of the liturgy into the Slavonic languages.
- [107] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, nos. 2–6; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*; Nicholas Cabasilas, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, Proemium.
- [108] Saint Basil the Great, *Canonical Letters*, Ep. 188; *Pedalion (The Rudder)*, edited by Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1800), on the application of the principle of *oikonomia* (*oikonomia*) in ecclesiastical discipline.
- [109] Saints Cyril and Methodius, *Vita Constantini* and *Vita Methodii*; John Paul II, Encyclical *Slavorum Apostoli* (2 June 1985), nos. 21-25, on the translation of the liturgy into the languages of the peoples.
- [110] Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*, nos. 1-3 and 19; cf. Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Homily XXXVI.
- [111] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, nos. 2-6; Saint John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, IV, 13; Nicholas Cabasilas, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*.
- [112] Letter of Pope Hadrian II to Saints Cyril and Methodius (868), approving the liturgical use of the Slavonic language; John VIII, bull *Industriae Tuae* (880), which confirmed the use of Slavonic in the liturgy.
- [113] Jn 4:23-24; Saint Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 65-67; Saint Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, IV-V.
- [114] Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 14, 21, and 34; John XXIII, Opening Address of the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, 11 October 1962); Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* (3 April 1969).
- [115] Acts 2:1-11; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:4-7; Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 24, 1, on the unity of the Church in the plurality of peoples and languages.
- [116] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, ch. 10 (1137a–1138a), on *ἐπιείκεια* (*epieikeia*) as a corrective to positive law; Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 120, *De epikeia*.
- [117] Marcel Lefebvre, Homily at the episcopal consecrations of Écône (30 June 1988); John Paul II, *motu proprio Ecclesia Dei adflicta* (2 July 1988); official communiqués of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X concerning the episcopal consecrations of 1 July 2026.
- [118] *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), can. 1013 (now can. 1015 and can. 1383 following the 2021 reform of Book VI), requiring a pontifical mandate for episcopal consecration; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 21.
- [119] First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* (18 July 1870); Second Vatican Council, Constitutions *Lumen Gentium* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*; Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, *Declaration of 21 November 1974*, a foundational text of the Society's doctrinal identity.
- [120] Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the remission of the excommunication of the four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre (10 March 2009), in which it is stated that the Society “has no canonical status in the Church” and that the unresolved questions are doctrinal in nature.

- [121] Apostolic Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29); First Council of Nicaea (325), can. 4; Council of Antioch (341), can. 19; Council of Chalcedon (451), can. 28, on episcopal collegiality and the synodal ordering of the Church.
- [122] *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), formerly can. 1382 and now can. 1383, as amended by the Apostolic Constitution *Pascite Gregem Dei* of Pope Francis (23 May 2021), concerning episcopal consecration without a pontifical mandate. (Can. 1387, cited in the text, instead governs a different criminal offense.)
- [123] *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), can. 1364 §1, on excommunication for apostasy, heresy, and schism; John Paul II, motu proprio *Ecclesia Dei adflicta* (2 July 1988).
- [124] Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis* (30 November 1947); Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 21; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1581-1584, on the sacramental character of Holy Orders.
- [125] Balamand Document (1993), nos. 13-15; Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna Document (2007). In Orthodox practice, recognition of the orders of other Christian communities is not uniform among all the autocephalous Churches.
- [126] Marcel Lefebvre was consecrated a bishop on 18 September 1947 by Cardinal Achille Liénart, with Jean-Baptiste Fauret and Alfred-Jean-Félix Ancel as co-consecrators; *Annuario Pontificio* 1948; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 40 (1948).
- [127] Saint Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*; Saint Basil the Great, Canonical Letter 188; Council of Arles (314), can. 8.
- [128] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 18-23; John Paul II, *Ecclesia Dei adflicta*, nos. 3-5.
- [129] First Council of Nicaea (325), can. 4; Apostolic Canons, can. 34; Council of Antioch (341), can. 19; Council of Chalcedon (451), can. 28.
- [130] Jn 17:20-23; Eph 4:1-6; Saint Cyprian of Carthage, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*; John Paul II, Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (25 May 1995), nos. 8-14.
- [131] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 18-27; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), document *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*.
- [132] *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 22-23; *Nota explicativa praevia* appended to the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (1964), clarifying the relationship between the Roman Pontiff and the College of Bishops.
- [133] Marcel Lefebvre, *J'accuse le Concile!* (1976); Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, Declaration of 21 November 1974; Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, *Marcel Lefebvre. Une vie* (2002).
- [134] First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* (18 July 1870), chs. III-IV; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 880-891.
- [135] First Council of Constantinople (381), can. 3; Council of Chalcedon (451), can. 28; Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna Document (2007), on the relationship between primacy and synodality. (The Orthodox Churches do not recognize the universal primacy of jurisdiction defined by Vatican I; the characterization of this doctrine as “heresy” is not a common formulation expressed by all the Orthodox Churches in official documents.)
- [136] Acts of the Apostles 15:1-29 (Council of Jerusalem); First Council of Nicaea (325), can. 4; Apostolic Canons, can. 34, the traditional foundation of Orthodox synodality.

- [137] Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, VIII; Saint Cyprian of Carthage, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*; Chieti Document (2016), nos. 15–21, on the principle of the *primus inter pares* in the first millennium.
- [138] Mt 20:25–28; Jn 13:12–17; Saint John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, II–III; Saint Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum*, V, 18, on the ideal of the bishop as *servus servorum Dei*.
- [139] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 22–23; Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna Document (2007), on the relationship between primacy and synodality.
- [140] Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, VIII, 1–2; Saint Cyprian of Carthage, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*; John Zizioulas, *The Eucharist, the Bishop, the Church* (1981), on the Eucharistic ecclesiology of the Orthodox tradition.
- [141] Pope Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio* (15 September 2018); Final Document of the Synod on Synodality (XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2021–2024); International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2018).
- [142] Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, Declaration of 21 November 1974; Marcel Lefebvre, *Ils L'ont découronné* (1987); Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church (10 March 2009), on the doctrinal questions still unresolved with the Society.
- [143] Mt 20:25–28; Jn 13:13–15; Apostolic Canons, can. 34; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*, nos. 22–26.
- [144] Anglican Communion, Lambeth Conference Resolution I.10 (1998); Church of England, decision of the General Synod on the episcopal ordination of women (2014); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Created Male and Female* (2019); Congregation for Catholic Education, *Male and Female He Created Them* (2019).
- [145] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* (18 December 2023), which generated extensive ecclesial debate concerning pastoral blessings; reports concerning inclusive celebrations and Nativity displays in various European dioceses. (The episodes cited in the text have been reported in the media and are subject to differing interpretations.)
- [146] Synodal Path of the Church in Germany (*Synodaler Weg*), texts approved between 2019 and 2023; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (22 May 1994), on the reservation of priestly ordination to men; Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Responsum ad dubium* (22 February 2021) concerning the blessing of unions between persons of the same sex.
- [147] Gen 2:24; Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 6:9–11; 1 Tim 1:9–11; Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans*, Homily IV.
- [148] Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Sacrament of Marriage and Its Impediments*; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2357–2359; Saint Basil the Great, Canonical Letter 188, on the pastoral principle of *oikonomia*.
- [149] Barberini Euchologion gr. 336 (8th century), containing the rite of *adelphopoiesis*; John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (1994), which proposed a controversial interpretation of such rites; Robin Darling Young, Claudia Rapp, and Brent D. Shaw subsequently argued, on the basis of liturgical and canonical sources, that *adelphopoiesis* constituted a rite of spiritual brotherhood and not a marriage between persons of the same sex.
- [150] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* (18 December 2023); numerous autocephalous Orthodox Churches, including the Patriarchates of Moscow and Georgia and the Church of Greece, expressed official reservations or criticism concerning the document in the months following its publication.

[151] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Responsum ad dubium* concerning the blessing of unions of persons of the same sex (22 February 2021), which stated: “the Church does not have, and cannot have, the power to bless unions of persons of the same sex”; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2357-2359.

[152] *Book of Blessings (De Benedictionibus)*, 1984), General Introduction; Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, Homily XV; Saint Basil the Great, *Moral Rules*, 80.

[153] Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thess 2:15; 1 Cor 11:23; 2 Tim 1:13-14; Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, II, on the principle of the continuity of Tradition.

[154] Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, official communiqués of December 2023 concerning the declaration *Fiducia Supplicans*; Marcel Lefebvre, *Ils L'ont découronné* (1987), on the relationship between pastoral practice and doctrine.

[155] Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church (10 March 2009), on the doctrinal questions still unresolved with the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X; Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ravenna Document (2007), on the relationship between primacy and synodality.

[156] Eph 4:15; Jn 1:14; 1 Pet 3:15-16; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*, nos. 1-4 and 22-26.

[157] Congregation for Bishops, Decree remitting the excommunication of the four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre (21 January 2009); Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church (10 March 2009), in which the Pope explains the pastoral reasons for the measure.

[158] Protocol of Agreement between the Holy See and Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (5 May 1988); Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, Doctrinal Declaration submitted to the Holy See (15 April 2012); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Preamble (2011), the basis of the canonical negotiations.

[159] Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops (10 March 2009); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, communiqués concerning the doctrinal discussions with the Society (2009-2012); Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, Declaration of 21 November 1974, still regarded as a programmatic text.

[160] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Communiqué of 13 June 2012 on the discussions with the FSSPX; Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, official documentation of the doctrinal discussions (2009-2011).

[161] Eph 4:25; Col 3:9-10; Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Homily XIII.

[162] Mt 5:37; Jas 5:12; Saint Basil the Great, *Moral Rules*, 80; Saint John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step XXIII, on sincerity and humility.

[163] Mt 5:16; 2 Cor 8:21; Saint Cyprian of Carthage, *De Lapsis*; Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, XIV–XV.

[164] Mt 7:1-5; Lk 18:9-14; Saint John Cassian, *Conferences*, II; Saint John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step XXV, on spiritual pride.

[165] Apostolic Canons, can. 34; Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29); Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*, nos. 22-26.

[166] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2475-2487, on truthfulness; Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, XXIII; Eph 4:15 (“speaking the truth in love”).

[167] 1 Sam 16:7 (“Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart”); Jer 17:10; Mt 7:1-5; Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, Homily XXIII.

[168] Jn 13:34-35; Eph 4:1-6; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 1, which defines the Church as “the sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race”; Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, IV.

[169] Acts 15:1-29 (Council of Jerusalem); Apostolic Canons, can. 34; Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World*, nos. 22-26; John Paul II, Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), nos. 7-14.

[170] Jn 15:12-13; 1 Cor 13:1-13; Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, *Historia Arianorum*; Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica*, testimony to fidelity to the faith during the great doctrinal crises of the early Church.

[171] 2 Cor 6:2 (“Behold, now is the favorable time”); Phil 2:1-11; Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, II and XXIII, on the homogeneous development of Tradition; Saint Silouan the Athonite, *Spiritual Writings*, on humility and reconciliation as fruits of the work of the Holy Spirit.



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