

## Sedevacantism and Pope Pius XII's Liturgical Reforms

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Many sedevacantists accuse traditional Catholics of hypocrisy because they recognize Paul VI as a true Pope but resist his liturgical legislation on the grounds of the enduring validity of *Quo Primum* and the fact that Paul VI did not legally promulgate the New Mass, much less impose it upon the faithful. Sedevacantist priest Fr. Cekada even accuses such traditional Catholics of having a heretical notion of the papacy. He says:

“While many traditional Catholics adhere to the position that the New Mass was illegally promulgated, advocates are especially numerous among the members and supporters of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre’s Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). The theory fits neatly into what one can only term the Society’s Jansenist/Gallican [*Nota Bene*: heretical] concept of the papacy: The pope is ‘recognized,’ but his laws and teachings must be ‘sifted.’ You get all the sentimental benefits of theoretically having a pope, but none of the practical inconveniences of actually obeying him.”<sup>1</sup>

Setting aside the fact that many sedevacantists disagree with Fr. Cekada,<sup>2</sup> his astounding hypocrisy is revealed in his own rejection of the liturgical reforms of Pope Pius XII, whom he

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> For example, sedevacantist John Lane rightly says: “These texts and commentary demonstrate perfectly clearly what I have been saying: Paul VI did not make any law permitting or obliging anybody to use the new missal. Fr. Cekada cannot point to the requisite text - he highlights the promulgation, and the preceptive terminology, yet he signally fails to point to the part that says ‘Persons X are permitted or obliged to do Y.’” Lane also says: “Fr. Cekada focusses solely on the fact that Paul VI expresses his ‘will.’ This is indeed necessary. But he has also to say what his will actually is. He has to make it known. He hasn’t done so anywhere in this text [*Missale Romanum*].” Comments taken from Lane’s website [www.sedevacantist.com](http://www.sedevacantist.com).

recognizes as a true Pope! That's right, Fr. Cekada does exactly what he ridicules others for doing - namely, "recognizing" Pius XII as a valid Pope, while he "sifts" and even rejects his liturgical legislation.<sup>3</sup> He even claims that the 1955 liturgical reforms of Pius XII are "harmful," while simultaneously claiming that it is impossible for a true Pope to give a harmful liturgical law. How does Fr. Cekada justify such a blatant contradiction? He explains:

"A human ecclesiastical law that was obligatory when promulgated can become harmful (*nociva*) through a change of circumstances after the passage of time...this principle...applies equally to the 1955 reforms."<sup>4</sup>

You see, Fr. Cekada cannot accuse Pius XII of *promulgating* a harmful universal discipline, since this is exactly what he claims Paul VI did, which "proves" that he was not a true Pope. Thus, to get around the obvious contradiction of his own argumentation, Cekada argues that Pius XII did not actually promulgate harmful laws, but rather the laws he promulgated *became harmful at a later date!* That is the argument he's forced to use to justify his actions. Specifically, Fr. Cekada conveniently argues that Pius XII's changes to the Holy Week rites in 1955, while not harmful in themselves, transformed into harmful reforms with the benefit of "hindsight" (at which time he argues they "*ceased*" to be law), just because they would later be incorporated into the *Novus Ordo*.

This is a fallacious argument because the 1955 reforms were made to the *Traditional rite itself* (not the *Novus Ordo*) and thus must be judged in that context, on their own merits (or demerits). The question is: Are the 1955 reforms of Pius XII harmful to the Traditional rite or not? Whether the 1955 reforms were *also* incorporated into the *new* rites of the *Novus Ordo* later on is irrelevant to that question (and because the conciliar

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<sup>3</sup> See Fr. Cekada's articles: "Is Rejecting the Pius XII Liturgical Reforms 'Illegal?'" (April 27, 2006); and "The Pius XII Reforms: More on the 'Legal Issue,'" (July 11, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> "Is Rejecting the Pius XII Liturgical Reforms 'Illegal?'" <http://www.traditionalmass.org/articles/article.php?id=78&catname=6>.

reforms produced entirely new rites, only *elements* of the 1955 reforms actually made their way into the *Novus Ordo*, which are substantially the *same elements* that Pius XII approved for the Traditional rites in 1955). Thus, if the 1955 reforms would be considered harmful in the Traditional Roman rite, they would be considered harmful in themselves, that is, when promulgated by Pius XII.

To answer the question, let us first take a brief look at the reforms of Holy Week promulgated by Pius XII in 1955. If sedevacantists were to give an honest assessment of these reforms, many would conclude that they are harmful *in themselves* (and which is why they were so easily incorporated into the *Novus Ordo*). After all, the 1955 reforms radically changed the Holy Week liturgies, irrespective of their introduction into the New Mass 15 years later.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, some of these reforms have absolutely no basis in the liturgical tradition of the Roman rite, but are complete novelties.

For example, the 1955 rite for Palm Sunday eliminated the “dry Mass” which had for centuries included the Introit, Collect, Epistle, Responsory, Gospel, Preface and *Sanctus*. In the liturgy reformed by Pius XII, the priest blesses the palms at a “table” and “facing the people,” and also chants the final Collect facing the people, with his back to the tabernacle. The Prayers at the Foot of the Altar and the Last Gospel were eliminated. If there are other ministers present, they read the Scriptures while the priest sits and listens (contrary to St Pius V’s injunction that the priest recites all Scripture readings which is the ancient practice of the Roman rite). Other elements, such as the ceremonial knocking at the Church door, the alternating choirs, and elements of the Passion (anointing at Bethany, setting of the guard at the tomb) were also eliminated. If these reforms were not harmful when promulgated, when and how, exactly, did they *become* harmful later? If they are not harmful under Pius XII, when and why are they harmful under Paul VI?

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<sup>5</sup> Pope Pius XII promulgated the Renewed Order for Holy Week in a document called *Maxima Redemptionis* (November 16, 1955), published in *the Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 47 (1955), pp. 838-841.

For Maundy Thursday, the Creed and Last Gospel were eliminated, the Washing of the Feet was inserted into the actual rite of the Mass (encouraging “active participation” of the laity), and the Collect which follows is recited by the priest facing the people with his back to the tabernacle. For Good Friday, the traditional ceremonies for the Mass of the Presanctified were eliminated. There is no solemn procession with the Blessed Sacrament from the Altar of Repose to the church proper. The priest chants the Solemn Orations from a book placed in the center of the altar, and the people recite the *Pater Noster* aloud with the priest – two novel reforms that have no foundation in the liturgical tradition of the Roman rite.

If these reforms (e.g., suppression of prayers, Creed, Gospel and other ceremonies, priest facing the people, physical participation of laity, vocal prayer, etc.) have proven harmful in the *Novus Ordo*, then it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they are harmful *in themselves*. That conclusion, however, would prove too much for Fr. Cekada’s argument because, using his own criteria, it would “prove” that Pius XII violated the Church’s disciplinary infallibility when he promulgated these reforms. Therefore, he claims that these radical reforms only *became* harmful at a later date.

The 1955 revisions to Holy Week were not the only “harmful” reforms promulgated by Pius XII during his reign. Already in 1948, Pius XII approved a Commission on the liturgy (known as the Pian Commission) that would begin drafting the reforms that he would ultimately approve during the 1950s. For example, Pius XII approved an experimental Easter Vigil in 1951 which not only permitted the celebration of the Vigil on Saturday night instead of early Sunday morning (contrary to longstanding tradition), but also drastically changed rubrics of the rite.<sup>6</sup>

In the revised rite, prayers for blessing the Easter fire were reduced, a new ceremony for inscribing the Paschal candle was created, the triple candle used to bring the Easter fire into the church was eliminated, the novelty of the clergy and people

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<sup>6</sup> The decree is called *Dominicae Resurrectionis Vigiliam*, February 9, 1951, which was published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 43 (1951), pp. 128-129.

carrying candles was introduced (again, promoting the “active participation” of the laity), the Prophecies were reduced from twelve to four, the priest sits and listens to the readings, he blesses the baptismal water facing the people, the faithful vocally recite the Renewal of Baptismal Vows in the vernacular (more “active participation”), and the Last Gospel was abolished, among other things.

Thus, for the *most solemn celebration* in the Church’s liturgical year, Pius XII abolished ancient prayers, eliminated parts of the Mass, created new rites, introduced the priest facing the people and desired a greater *physical* participation of the laity, even including their recitation of vocal prayers *in the vernacular* during the Mass! Such reforms certainly did not develop organically from the traditional Roman rite, and many of them can even be traced to Protestant (Luther/Cramner) influences. Can you guess, dear reader, what sedevacantists would have said about these reforms had they originated with Paul VI or John Paul II? Would they not have declared them evil in themselves, violative of the Church’s disciplinary infallibility, and further “proof” that they were not true Popes?

In addition to the changes to Holy Week, in 1955 Pius XII also promulgated many drastic changes to simplify the rubrics and calendar of the Traditional Mass.<sup>7</sup> These included demoting certain feasts, eliminating certain Collects and the Last Gospel, and suppressing ten Vigils and fourteen Octaves (the continuous commemoration of the Church’s most important feasts for a week following the actual feast), some of which were part of the Church’s liturgical calendar for well over a thousand years! Finally, Pius XII promulgated an instruction on sacred music which also introduced a radical expansion of vocal participation of the congregation.<sup>8</sup> These changes would not only allow vocal participation for short responses (“*Amen*,” “*Et cum spiritu tuo*”), server’s responses (“*Domine, non sum dignus*”) and parts of the Ordinary of Mass (*Gloria, Credo, Pater Noster*), but when fully

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<sup>7</sup> The decree is called *Nostra Hac Aetate* (March 23, 1955), which was published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 47 (1955), pp. 218-224.

<sup>8</sup> The decree is called *De Musica Sacra* (September 3, 1958), which was published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 50 (1958), pp. 630-633.

implemented, would even include the laity reciting the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, the *Confiteor*, Propers (Introit, Gradual, etc.), *Kyrie*, Sequences and Tracts, Offertory, the *Suscipiat* prayer, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei*, and the Communion verse!

As we can see, Pope Pius XII was responsible for some of the most *drastic* changes to the Roman liturgy in the Church's history, since the Roman rite had remained essentially unchanged for the previous 400 years by virtue of *Quo Primum*. For a ten year period (1948-1958), Pius XII promulgated or allowed liturgical novelties under the same rationale of the conciliar revolutionaries – for better “conformity” to “ancient liturgical traditions.” However, the truth is that many of these changes under Pius XII, which were substantial and not merely accidental changes, *were completely without precedent in the history of the Roman rite* (and many of them can even be interpreted to convey a *Protestant doctrinal judgment* on the theology of the Mass). Thus, it is entirely fair to say that Pius XII shares grave responsibility for the liturgical revolution, because the Modernists who followed him simply finished what he started, by incorporating into the *Novus Ordo* much of what Pius XII had *already approved* for the Traditional Roman Rite.

For Fr. Cekada to argue that these changes, replete with questionable doctrinal judgments, and devoid of organic development from the Roman rite, were not harmful *under Pius XII* but are harmful *under Paul VI* only reveals how barren his “harmful in hindsight” theory is. It is the proverbial case of “having your cake and eating it too.” In Cekada's own words, Pius XII's Papacy is “recognized,” but his liturgical laws must be “sifted.” Cekada gets “all the sentimental benefits of theoretically having a Pope (Pius XII), but none of the practical inconveniences of actually obeying” his liturgical legislation. Thus, Fr. Cekada continues to recognize Pius XII as a true Pope, but rejects his laws and says Mass at his sedevacantist chapels according to pre-1950 rubrics (which, to be fair, means he *practices* the hypocrisy that he preaches).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Salza has confirmed with a parishioner who attends St. Hugh of Lincoln (a sedevacantist parish in Salza's hometown of Milwaukee) that Fr. Cekada

Fr. Cekada also advances other non-sensical arguments in addition to his absurd “harmful in hindsight” theory. For example, Cekada claims that Pius XII’s liturgical reforms were “mere human ecclesiastical laws” and thus “they no long [sic] bind on two grounds.” In addition to being “harmful in hindsight,” Fr. Cekada also argues that Pius XII’s legislation “lacked one of the essential qualities of a law – stability or perpetuity – and are therefore no longer binding.” Cekada even cites Bugnini (a Freemason and public liar) as his authority for this argument, since Bugnini said the reforms are “a bridge between the old and the new.” Cekada’s self-made “lack of stability” theory is just another fallacious argument to justify his rejection of Pius XII’s reforms, while retaining “all the sentimental benefits” of recognizing the legitimacy of his Papacy.

First, if the legislation of Pius XII, which radically transformed the Roman rite, can be disregarded as “mere human ecclesiastical laws,” then certainly the liturgical legislation of the Sacred Congregation For Divine Worship under Paul VI, which was *not* promulgated by Paul VI, can also be disregarded as “mere human ecclesiastical laws” that do not violate the Church’s infallibility. Second, Fr. Cekada does not cite any authority (there is none) for his theory that certain validly promulgated legislation can be disregarded by *private judgment*, because one personally thinks the legislation “lacks stability.” Third, the aforementioned legislation of Pius XII did not “lack stability” because most of the legal changes *were made a permanent part of the Traditional rites*, irrespective of their incorporation into the *Novus Ordo* years later.<sup>10</sup>

Being neither able to prove his fallacious assertions nor counter his opponents’ arguments, Fr. Cekada is ultimately

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celebrates Mass exclusively using pre-Pius XII rubrics when he says Mass at the chapel.

<sup>10</sup> By permanent we mean mandatory and not optional (unless and until a future Pope changes the legislation). Interestingly, in light of this point, one must conclude that either the changes legislated by Pius XII were accidental only (and hence they also remain accidental in the *Novus Ordo* rites), or are substantial changes to the rites (in which case they are either legitimate for both the Old and New rites, or illicit for both the Old and New rites).

forced to make excuses for Pope Pius XII. For example, in his book *Work of Human Hands*, he claims that Pius XII “seemed to lack the common sense necessary for making sound practical judgments.”<sup>11</sup> After proclaiming on the same page that “Pius XII lacked the practical sense to be a sufficiently ruthless exterminator” (of the Modernists around him), Cekada concludes, again on the same page: “This lack of practical judgment, I think, blinded Pius XII to the disconnect between the teaching of *Mediator Dei* and the liturgical changes he permitted to be introduced during his reign.”<sup>12</sup>

This is more highly convenient argumentation from Fr. Cekada. First, if, according to Fr. Cekada, the many substantive (and completely novel) changes that Pius XII legislated into the Liturgy were merely “practical judgments” (which did not contain doctrinal errors), then how did these same reforms, when later incorporated into the *Novus Ordo* by Paul VI, become evil doctrinal judgments that violated the Church’s infallibility? As Fr. Cekada should know, infallibility only extends to the doctrinal judgment (not the practical judgment) contained in a disciplinary law. Further, if Pius XII can be excused for lacking “practical sense” and “practical judgment” in liturgical matters, then why can’t Paul VI be excused for the same reasons? After all, Paul VI publicly lamented the effects of the conciliar reforms (almost all of which were not actually issued by him), even declaring that the smoke of Satan had unexpectedly entered the Temple of God. Could Fr. Cekada’s selective indictment of Paul VI and acquittal of Pius XII be driven by his sedevacantist agenda?

Fr. Cekada also pleads that the “Angelic Pastor” was tricked into promulgating the 1955 liturgical changes by the Freemason and architect of the New Mass, Annibale Bugnini. In his article, Fr. Cekada says: “the Mason’s liturgical creations were presented to the sick pope for his approval by the two scheming modernists who will be major players in destroying the Church

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<sup>11</sup> Cekada, *Work of Human Hands* (Philothea Press: West Chester, Ohio, 2010), p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*



at Vatican II.”<sup>13</sup> In his book, Cekada repeats the same theme: “But if you are a gravely ill 79-year-old pope who is a bit credulous, and your trusted Jesuit confessor<sup>14</sup> brings you a document to approve, telling you it is just fine because it was all put together by that smart, young liturgist Father Bugnini, what are the chances that you will say no?”<sup>15</sup> On these grounds, Cekada concludes: “Traditionalists...should ignore liturgical laws that were the dirty work of the man who destroyed the Mass.”<sup>16</sup>

Again, how convenient for Fr. Cekada to make excuses for Pius XII on the grounds of illness and trickery. If Bugnini could have fooled Pius XII, then why could he not have also fooled Paul VI? Since Pius XII had *already approved* many of the changes that Bugnini sought to introduce into the New Mass, why not excuse Paul VI on the grounds that he was simply continuing the work initiated by his venerable predecessor, and relying on the same advisors that Pius XII himself had trusted with the work? Furthermore, it could be argued that Paul VI was even less involved in the liturgical reforms than Pius XII (delegating all the reforms to congregations and bishops’ conferences), even claiming that he had not read *Missale Romanum* before signing the document.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, while Pius XII may have been ill when he promulgated the 1955 reforms, this does not prove they were not validly promulgated (as the case with the New Mass, which was *not* juridically promulgated by Paul VI). Further, Pius XII was *not* ill when he appointed the Pian Commission in 1948 and promulgated the experimental Easter Vigil in 1951, which *radically* changed the most solemn of all the rites of the Church (abolishing ancient prayers, as well as introducing the priest facing the people and the faithful’s recitation of vocal prayers in the vernacular, which is part of the *Novus Ordo*). Again, what is conceded for Pius XII (misinformation, deception, lacking

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<sup>13</sup> Cekada, “Is Rejecting the Pius XII Liturgical Reforms ‘Illegal?’”

<sup>14</sup> Here Fr. Cekada is referring to Fr. Bea, whom Cekada describes as a “half-Jew, modernist and premier ecumenist at Vatican II” (Ibid.)

<sup>15</sup> *Work of Human Hands*, p. 65.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Fr. Laisney, “Is the Novus Ordo Missae Evil?,” *The Angelus*, March 1997.

practical judgment) must also be conceded for Paul VI, as a matter of equity and fairness.

All of this demonstrates that Fr. Cekada and other sedevacantists who hold his position are being inconsistent and quite hypocritical for rejecting Pius XII's liturgical reforms as being "harmful" while recognizing him as Pope, yet at the same time claiming that the harmful liturgical reforms of Paul VI's (many of which were approved by Pius XII) "prove" that Paul VI was not a true Pope (since a Pope cannot give "harmful" disciplinary laws). Thus, it is Fr. Cekada, and not traditional Catholics, who has the "Jansenist/Gallican concept of the papacy," since he not only "sifts" the liturgical laws of the Popes he chooses to recognize, but also "sifts" the Popes themselves, telling his followers just who is a valid Pope and who is not. It's quite amazing how Fr. Cekada can hold these positions publicly with a straight face, but perhaps even more amazing how many don't see (or *want* to see) the blatant contradictions they present.

More information will be provided in the upcoming book *Against Sedevacantism – and other Modern Errors* (650 pages), authored by John Salza and Robert Siscoe, scheduled for release at the end of 2015.