

The Episcopal Consecrations of the Society of Saint Pius X

Text of a Podcast by Father Damien Dutertre
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Hello, I am Father Damien Dutertre. Today, the Society of Saint Pius X decided to proceed with the episcopal consecrations despite the ultimatum given to them by Cardinal Fernandez a few days ago.

This is therefore an opportunity for us to revisit this question of consecrations within the Society and to give you our perspective.

Obviously, from our point of view, these episcopal consecrations are necessary to ensure the continuity of the priesthood, to ensure the continuity of the sacraments, to continue the mission of the Church. That goes without saying.

However, there is a major problem within the Society of Saint Pius X: this is done while simultaneously recognizing the legitimacy and authority of the “popes” of Vatican II and the conciliar bishops.

And that, obviously, is a major problem. And that’s where this situation becomes interesting; it highlights this internal contradiction in the Society of Saint Pius X’s position on the current crisis, since here we see very clearly the untenable nature of this position and the absurdities to which it leads.

And so it is in this capacity that I will speak about it today, to come back to it a little, and to reiterate a number of explanations, avoiding, however, being repetitive.

A number of explanations were given by priests of the Society of Saint Pius X.

In concrete terms, the Society of Saint Pius X’s argument consists, on the one hand, of emphasizing the state of necessity in which the Church finds itself before proceeding with these consecrations, and on the other hand, of minimizing as much as possible its inadmissibility by saying that Catholics can perform consecrations against the explicit will of the pope, that ultimately it is possible. So these two aspects were developed.

Regarding the first part, concerning observation – in fact, I use the term *observation* because the priests of the Society have insisted, especially in France, on adopting Archbishop Lefebvre’s expression, which was that one is obliged to observe, meaning that it is not something which one desires, not something one rejoices in, that there is a crisis in the Church.

And, in fact, they go much further than that, obviously, to justify these consecrations.

They end up saying – I will paraphrase here but you will see later I will give details – that ultimately the official hierarchy, therefore those who are regarded as the pope and the bishops of the Church, are no longer fulfilling their duties to such an extent that they are no longer fulfilling the mission of the Church, and that consequently it is necessary for the clergy of the Society of Saint Pius X to fulfill this mission to souls.

So they claim that it is necessary for the very indefectibility of the Church that they

give Catholic doctrine to souls, they give the traditional sacraments to souls. That's really how they argue it; that's how they see it.

And I agree with the substantive part of this observation, that is, it is true to say that since Vatican II, unfortunately with the errors of Vatican II, with the new Mass and all the development of this doctrinal confusion that has spread throughout the world, the "official Church"—to use a very inappropriate term—is no longer fulfilling the mission of the Church.

And indeed, this is the main argument of what is called the Cassiciacum position, which consists precisely in observing that those who should have the authority of Our Lord, objectively do not fulfill the mission of the Church anymore, do not want to fulfill it — whatever may be their inner intentions that we cannot judge — but outwardly they do not have the intention to fulfill this mission of the Church and therefore consequently cannot have authority.

So about the first part of the argument, in fact, we are in complete agreement. The problem is that the priests of the Society of Saint Pius X continue to insist that Leo XIV today, and his predecessors before him, are really vicars of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This leads them to say things that are absolutely impossible, theologically impossible,

doctrinally impossible. And that's where it becomes very serious.

For example, Father Gleize¹ explains — he not only gave a sermon to explain a little the position of the Society, but he also published a kind of letter, a document, let's say, on *La Porte Latine*.² He says that these consecrations, I quote, "are the legitimate resistance to an abuse of power by which the authority recognized as legitimate refuses to souls the ordinary means of salvation to which, by divine right, they have a strict right."

So according to him, the authority of the Church refuses souls the ordinary means of salvation. Note this well.

Father Peignot, superior of the District of France, in a document also published on *La Porte Latine*, says the same thing. I quote him: "We are forced to note that" — he repeats the expression of Archbishop Lefebvre — "in an ordinary parish, the faithful no longer receive the integral preaching of Catholic truth and morality, which are nevertheless the necessary and ordinary means to ensure their eternal salvation, with the administration of the sacraments as the Church has always done."

So what Fathers Gleize and Peignot say, who are people of great influence and importance within the Society of Saint Pius X, and who are really the spokesmen for the

¹ Father Jean-Michel Gleize is considered to be the most prominent theologian of the SSPX. He has been teaching ecclesiology for almost thirty years at Ecône, and has thus formed generations of SSPX priests in the Recognize-and-Resist system. He is the main contributor to the *Courrier de Rome* (French-speaking monthly theological journal of the SSPX), and gives lectures on ecclesiology in Paris. He has taken part in many doctrinal discussions between SSPX and the Vatican.

² A French language website.

position of the Society of Saint Pius X, is that the hierarchy of the Church – or rather what they consider the hierarchy of the Church – meaning the pope and the bishops, refuses souls the necessary means of salvation, no longer provide dogma, moral teaching, or the traditional sacraments of the Church.

It is a very serious accusation. Extremely serious. It means that the official Church no longer fulfills its role. This is absolutely impossible in Catholic theology, absolutely impossible. It is contrary to all Catholic doctrine.

The Church was instituted precisely to fulfill the mission that Our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted to Her. And in fulfilling this mission, the Church is indefectible. That is to say, the Church cannot fail in its mission.

So if it is the Church, if these people constitute the authority of the Church, it is impossible to make this kind of accusation. Absolutely impossible.

But I will just recall a few teachings of the Church, precisely concerning the fidelity of the Church to its mission, because that is what is being denied by the Society.

Pope Pius XII said to the cardinals: “In the tempest of earthly events, and in spite of the deficiency and weakness that may dim its luster in our eyes, [the Church] has the security of remaining imperturbably faithful to its mission until the end of time.” (Allocution to the Cardinals of December 24th, 1944)

In *Satis Cognitum*, Leo XIII says: “The apostolic mission was not destined to die with the Apostles themselves nor to end with time

since it was destined for all people and instituted for the salvation of the human race.”

The Church, he tells us, continues forever the mission of the Savior. He says again: “It can never be that the Church committed to the care of Peter shall succumb or in any wise fail. Therefore God confided His Church to Peter so that he might guard it safely by His unconquerable power.”

Peter, and the successor of Peter is the guarantor of the fulfillment of the Church’s mission.

And the priests of the Society tell us exactly the opposite: Peter is the one who destroys the mission of the Church. Peter is the one who forbids the fulfillment of the mission of the Church. Peter is the one who rejects Catholic doctrine, who refuses to teach Catholic morality, who refuses to give Catholic sacraments to souls.

That is what the priests of the Society tell us word for word. It is a frontal contradiction of Catholic doctrine.

Obviously on a certain number of websites as well as on *La Porte Latine*, a parallel is made between the behavior of the Vatican towards communist China, and notably the nomination of “Catholic” bishops by the communists, on the one hand, and on the other hand the desire of the Society of Saint Pius X to consecrate bishops; and specifically they see that the Vatican is very tolerant and lets the communists do what ought to be unacceptable. Therefore, in regard to matters which are related in the same way to opposition to authority, the Holy See – or

rather let us say what appears to be the Holy See – is very, very harsh towards those who are trying to preserve Catholic tradition.

And therefore they are quite surprised by that. It is not surprising. They know it. For decades, as they themselves have said, the authority in fact, that is, those whom they consider to be the authority, refuses to give to Catholics what is Catholic doctrine, Catholic moral teaching, Catholic discipline, Catholic sacraments, and so forth. Obviously, this is very difficult to justify.

Therefore Father Gleize insists a lot on saying that there is no schism. Here is what he says: “In reality, on the part of the Society of Saint Pius X, there is neither schism, nor disobedience, nor a practical sedevacantism. In reality, on the one hand there is an authority in Rome which is seriously deficient to the point of seriously scandalizing souls. On the other hand, there is a reaction on the part of the Society of Saint Pius X to neutralize the scandal and repair the deficiency.”

Therefore what he is saying in this sermon which explains the consecrations, is that the Society means only to continue to do what the Church has always done until tradition retakes its rights in Rome.

“Indeed,” says Father Gleize, “we will simply continue what the Church has always done while we wait for tradition to retake its rightful place in Rome.”

The implication is that Catholic tradition, which is part of the deposit of Faith – the deposit of Faith is contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition – Catholic tradition is

no longer defended in Rome. Catholic tradition no longer has any place in Rome. And Rome, according to how they mean it, stands for the pope, the bishops, the Church, and the authority of the Church. Therefore these are extremely serious accusations and are furthermore absolutely impossible. I repeat: absolutely impossible.

This is what Father Gleize also says: “This step [of consecrating bishops] happens against the will of Rome, and that is because – and this is terrible – Rome has changed. Rome has changed. And it is precisely the tragedy against which we are simply reacting by taking the necessary measures in order that we ourselves do not change and in order that we remain faithful to the Church as it has always been. Rome has changed. And not only Rome has changed at the [Second Vatican] Council, by adopting the idea – and it was Cardinal Ratzinger who said it and repeated it, and again later as Benedict XVI – namely that the Church welcomes and adopts the values of the modern world and the principles of liberty of 1789.” [i.e., the French Revolution]

Yes, thus Rome has changed.

Therefore it means that in order to preserve the Faith, in order to not change – and when one says “to not change,” it means to remain Catholic – in order to remain Catholic, in order to not be corrupted, in order to avoid losing one’s soul, it is necessary to resist the authority of the Church. This is unbelievable, unbelievable.

And he insists on this point, and he goes on, saying that it has changed not only at the

Council, but also afterwards, gradually during the decades which followed.

Father Gleize: “What is abnormal is that one is forced to do that in order to respond to a state of necessity created by the failure of the supreme authority of the Church.”

Father Dutertre, [repeating *Father Gleize’s phrase*]: “A state of necessity created by the failure of the supreme authority of the Church.” These words should never be put together: “a state of necessity created by the failure of the supreme authority of the Church.”

You will never find such words in the texts of Leo XIII, for example, concerning the unity of the Church, in his encyclical *Satis cognitum*, nor in the texts of Pius IX concerning papal primacy, or in the texts of the Vatican Council of 1870, nor in any of the Catholic documents, nor in the entire magisterium of the Church. You will never find this kind of idea. In reality, this kind of idea is condemned and is absolutely opposed to the Catholic Faith.

Therefore *Father Gleize* even goes as far as to say that ultimately this supreme authority of the Church contributes to the destruction of the Church with the permission of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Obviously, however, it is possible to understand this in a benign way, that is, that Our Lord permits, in fact, the current crisis, but Our Lord Jesus Christ cannot give His authority to someone who is destroying the Church.

In the same document of *Father Gleize* which appeared on *La Porte Latine* on February 11th, he insists that there will not be schism, by saying: “These consecrations are possible without causing a schism, even though they are contrary to the will of the Pope, because it merely concerns the conferral of the power of episcopal orders without the power of jurisdiction, whereas only the conferral of jurisdiction against the will of the pope constitutes a schism.”

No. Here he greatly minimizes the authority of the sovereign pontiff. No one has the right to consecrate a bishop against the explicit will of the sovereign pontiff, no matter if it concerns a simple auxiliary bishop, that is, a bishop without jurisdiction, or a diocesan bishop. It does not matter. Either one is absolutely forbidden.

What he says is very deceiving, therefore, because yes, in the documents of Pius XII, for example, when he condemns the episcopal consecrations which took place without apostolic mandate in China, it is true that in this case he is indeed speaking of bishops consecrated in order to be diocesan bishops, and therefore with jurisdiction and so forth.

Nonetheless, the Roman Pontiff has, indeed, the authority over the accomplishment of the mission of the Church. It is an authority which is infallible and indefectible.

Therefore one cannot undertake to do anything which is against this supreme authority of the Church in order to save the Church. That is an entirely novel idea. This kind of argument is unknown in Catholic

tradition. According to them it is necessary to save souls despite the threat of excommunication. So I will give you evidence that it is not a novel idea, but is an idea outside of Catholic tradition. It is *not* a new idea among the enemies of the Church nor among those who have the habit of disobeying the authority of the Church.

This is the case of the Jansenists. If you, for example, look at the bull of Clement XI, the bull of condemnation of the Jansenists, he lists, in fact, a certain number of propositions which he condemns. And here is proposition number 91. It is a proposition condemned by a true Catholic sovereign Pontiff: “The fear of an unjust excommunication should never hinder us from fulfilling our duty; never are we separated from the Church, even when by the wickedness of men we seem to be expelled from it, as long as we are attached to God, to Jesus Christ, and to the Church herself by charity.”

This was a proposition which was condemned because the Jansenists had the same idea, that is, that the pope is wrong, so we are continuing what we do, for the common good, we disobey, we do not pay attention to the excommunication. This is condemned.

It is impossible that this kind of situation exist in the Church.

There is another condemnation, that of number 92, in the same document: “To suffer in peace an excommunication and an unjust anathema rather than betray the truth, is to imitate Saint Paul; far be it from rebelling against authority or destroying unity.”

This is the same kind of speech which we have heard from the mouths of the priests of the Society of Saint Pius X when they explained, when they were seeking to justify the episcopal consecrations when the threat of excommunication was leveled against them very clearly. And in what regards the excommunication, I made reference to Clement XI and his constitution. This condemnation, however, was repeated by

Pope Pius IX, in his encyclical *Quartus supra*, in which he says: “The Jansenist heretics dared to teach such doctrines as that an excommunication pronounced by a lawful prelate could be ignored on a pretext of injustice. Each person should perform, as they said, his own particular duty despite an excommunication. Our predecessor of happy memory Clement XI, in his constitution *Unigenitus*, against the errors of Quesnell, forbade and condemned statements of this kind. These statements were scarcely in any



Pope Clement XI

way different from some of John Wycliff's, which had previously been condemned by the Council of Constance and Martin V."

Therefore this idea that one must ignore an excommunication which comes from the so-called pope in order to accomplish the good of the Church, and so forth, are arguments which have already been given by people who have been condemned. The idea that priests and bishops can continue their ministry despite the fact that they have been excommunicated has also been rejected by Pope Pius IX in *Quartus supra*: "They argue that the sentence of schism and excommunication pronounced against them by the Archbishop of Tyana, the Apostolic Delegate in Constantinople, was unjust, and consequently void of strength and influence. They have claimed also that they are unable to accept the sentence because the faithful might desert to the heretics if deprived of their ministrations. These novel arguments were wholly unknown and unheard of by the Fathers of the Church." But as we see, they are unfortunately arguments which are not unknown by the priests of the Society of Saint Pius X.

There would be much to say, but you see the impossible contradiction in which the

Society of Saint Pius X finds itself. And the necessity which the Society presently has to proceed with episcopal consecrations illustrates this problem all the more. It is obvious because, in fact, they are obliged to affirm things so clearly, by saying that the Church is no longer accomplishing its mission, and that the pope is the one principally responsible for this failure, while, according to

Pope Leo XIII, the contrary is true: it is because of Peter and because of the infallible authority of Peter that this mission is accomplished. Therefore it is evident that there is a total contradiction between what the members of the Society of Saint Pius X say, and what Pope Leo XIII says. They have recourse to principles which are completely alien to Catholic doctrine.

In conclusion, Father Gleize, in his sermon, claims that the Society goes all the way. Indeed, he compares it, naturally, to groups which one would loosely call "indult," who have made a type of compromise with the Vatican. Therefore, he says that it is the Society alone which goes all the way because it goes to the point of an episcopal consecration in order to have a certain liberty in regard to the Vatican, and in this way to have no problems



Pope Pius IX

in carrying out the mission of the Church. You see how much this is a theology which cannot be believed. And in reality, no, they do not go all the way precisely because they refuse to recognize the facts. They ought to repeat the words of Archbishop Lefebvre at Ecône: “We are obliged to take note of the fact that these people do not have the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the conclusion which they ought to draw. If they do not, they find themselves in an utterly untenable position. Therefore they vacillate, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left. They try to approach the Vatican, they obtain certain advantages, certain concessions, and then, in the end, they are obliged to distance themselves and be excommunicated. Why? Because they are always caught in the crossfire because they have two principles which are absolutely irreconcilable.

It is for this reason that Archbishop Lefebvre, for example, when he was at the point of proceeding with the consecrations, also went forward and backward, we must say. He signed the protocol of an agreement [with the Vatican] on May 5th, 1988, the feast of Saint Pius V — imagine — by saying to Ratzinger that it was the happiest day of his life. Then, on the next day, he retracted. He annulled his signature. This was certainly one of the saddest days for Cardinal Ratzinger. Novus Ordo Cardinal Schönborn said: “Lefebvre signed the agreement, and he said to Cardinal Ratzinger — according to what he told us — ‘it is the happiest day of my life.’ Lefebvre went back to his residence. The next

day, he sent a communication to Cardinal Ratzinger and said: ‘I withdraw my signature.’ It was certainly one of the most sorrowful moments of Cardinal Ratzinger’s life.”

There was, therefore, this forward and backward movement. We see that the Archbishop clearly did not know what he should do because it is an untenable and impossible position.

And after all these years, the Society finds itself in exactly the same position. For how long will this continue? How sad it is that the Society has *not* gone all the way! It is sad because they see the problem, they see that the so called “official Church” does not accomplish its mission, and they are correct in perceiving this. But go all the way to the conclusion, namely that these people do not have authority, that the New Mass does not come from the Church, that the Second Vatican Council does not come from the Church. Go all the way, truly, as Father Gleize said, go all the way. We are obliged to realize that this Novus Ordo hierarchy is not of the Church, that they do not possess the authority of the Church. Let us pray that the Society of Saint Pius X one day arrive at this conclusion.