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My thoughts in regard to the “una cum” issue:

Some traditional Catholic clergy claim that it is a mortal sin for the faithful to attend Latin Masses offered by traditional Catholic priests who insert the name of Francis I, the false pope, in the Canon of the Mass. Although we condemn this practice, the state of the question is whether the faithful commit a mortal sin by their attendance. An important principle to bear in mind is that we must have the “fullest evidence” and “positive teaching” before we can claim an act is mortally sinful. Consider the following:

1) *Moral and Pastoral Theology* by Fr. Henry Davis SJ, volume 1 Principles:

“St. Augustine wisely said: ‘What those sins are which exclude from the kingdom of God, it is most difficult to determine and most dangerous to assign’; yet he spoke of certain crimes, such as adultery, as obviously mortal. S. Raymond of Pennafort speaks in the same sense: **‘Be not too prone to judge sins to be mortal when you have not the fullest evidence’**; and St. Thomas: **‘It is dangerous to decide what sins are mortal, unless we have positive teaching to guide us.’**”

2) Fr. Martin Stepanich, OFM STD (a sedevacantist priest who celebrated 70 years of priesthood) has a very pertinent point in his commentary on Fr. Cekada’s article:

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

3) Prior to Fr. Cekada’s opinion in this matter, none of the older traditional clergy (Bishop Guerard des Lauriers, Bishop McKenna, Bishop Carmona, Bishop Musey, Fr. Stepanich, etc.) taught that it is a mortal sin for sedevacantists to attend an “una cum” Mass.

4) In Fr. Cekada’s article *One Grain of Incense*, p. 10 letter F. “Participation in Sin,” he uses as his proof Vatican Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (1729):

“...There is hardly any rite among the **heterodox** that is not stained with some error in faith... especially where a commemoration is made of living Patriarchs and Bishops—schismatics and heretics—who are proclaimed *preachers of the Catholic faith*. For this reason, any Catholics who come together under circumstances like this to celebrate a rite of prayers and worship cannot excuse themselves from the sin of evil common worship, or at least, from the sin of pernicious scandal.”

This quote is obviously referring to **formal heretics** and is not applicable to traditional priests who mistakenly insert a false pope’s name in the Canon. Canon 1258 already forbids *communicatio in sacris* with heretics and schismatics, so Fr. Cekada’s reference is not a proper reference to the situation today and therefore, does not support his opinion in this matter. None of the former SSPX priests who later became sedevacantists were ever

required by Bishop Sanborn or Bishop Dolan to make an abjuration of error and be absolved from excommunication.

5) The other reference used by Fr. Cekada is from Rev. Maurice De La Taille in his book *Mysterium Fidei*. There are two points to be noted in this reference. The first point is: "Hence were anyone to mention by name an infidel, a heretic, a schismatic, or an excommunicated person...he would certainly violate the law of the Church." Nevertheless, he added in his footnote, "Though there are not a few teachers who think otherwise." There are certainly different opinions among theologians about this matter. And also, this reference pertains to the priest himself and not the faithful.

Secondly, Rev. De La Taille wrote: "today it would also appear sinful to mention by name in any liturgical prayers whatsoever an infidel, a schismatic, or an excommunicated person." Once again, this refers to the priest and not the laity in attendance. Furthermore, please note that he used the words "it would also appear." These words are not emphatic and they do not meet to the necessary condition listed above in #1: "Be not prone to judge sins to be mortal unless you have the **fullest evidence**." If this matter were so clear and obvious, why is there a difference of opinions amongst theologians and why did Rev. De La Taille not use stronger words?

6) Fr. Noel Barbara, a well-known old French traditional priest and a close theological associate with Bp. Guerard de Lauriers, treated this matter similarly to the considerations in my letter:

"Is it a sin to assist at such celebrations? **The Church forbids the faithful to participate or assist at the ceremonies of FORMAL heretics and schismatics. Do the 'una cum' priests fall within such a category? As far as I am concerned, I do not think they do.** Whatever be the situation, as long as proof of their formal heresy or schism has not established, one can only consider those who say the Mass in this manner as scandalous ministers, that is to say scandalous because they are giving scandal to the faith.

It is appropriate to apply to them the rules of the Church with regard to such ministers. The faithful who have no other Mass available, are dispensed from assisting at Mass, even on days of obligation, if the available Masses are repugnant to their faith. On the other hand, if for any reason whatsoever they feel the need to communicate, **they can assist and communicate at such Masses because no other Masses are available to them.** In this situation, only the minister is guilty of giving scandal, provided of course that he is not invincibly ignorant of the scandal that he is giving."

6) The mind of the Church is that the Sacraments were instituted by Christ for man's salvation. Canon 2261 reflects the mind of the Church: "Except as provided in number 3, the faithful can for any just cause ask for sacraments or sacramentals of one who is excommunicated, especially if there is no one else to give them; and in such cases the excommunicated person so asked may administer them, and is not obliged to ask the reason for the request."

7) Fr. Oswald Baker, a well-known 89 year old traditional priest from England, held this position:

"Given the extreme abnormality of a situation in which John Paul II is all but universally accepted as Pope, **the faithful who would otherwise be deprived of the**

life-giving sacraments are in my view entitled to ignore Lefebvre's professed allegiance and attend the Masses of his priests."

8) Fr. Herve Belmont, a close associate of Fr. Noel Barbara and a contributor to Bp. Sanborn's Catholic Restoration, permitted attendance at una cum Masses and stated:

"We realise that some will accuse us of not being rigorous enough on this point, but we fear to incur the reproach Our Lord addressed to the Pharisees; 'For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but with a finger of their own they will not move them'. (Matt, 23:4)"

9) Back in 2002, John Lane asked for an opinion on this matter and added the following as an appendix to his lengthy article on this subject of the attendance at "una cum" Masses. His appendix reads as follows:

"Bp. Mark Pivarunas and his brethren, of the C.M.R.I., have provided the following statement in relation to so-called "una cum" Masses, to be appended to this article.

'The Religious Congregation of Mary Immaculate Queen (C.M.R.I.) holds that the Catholic faithful may petition the Sacraments from traditional Catholic priests who unfortunately offer their Masses "una cum" (John Paul II).

'Although C.M.R.I. does not accept John Paul II as a legitimate successor of St. Peter, it does not consider such traditional priests (who offer "una cum" Masses) as schismatic. For, if such priests were schismatic in the canonical sense of the word, then they would be required, upon their recognition of the vacancy of the Apostolic See, to abjure their error and be received back into the Church.

'Nevertheless, it has never been the practice of any traditional bishop or priest to require this abjuration of error of any priest who at one time mistakenly recognized John Paul II as a true pope.

'This does not mean that C.M.R.I. in any way endorses the theological contradiction of those traditional priests who maintain that John Paul II is a true pope.

'Lastly, we exhort the faithful to use great discretion when they approach such priests for the Sacraments. This is especially true in regard to their children, who may be confused by their erroneous opinions on the Papacy and on the infallibility of the Church."

Bp. Mark Pivarunas, C.M.R.I., Superior General

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In conclusion, based on the teachings of St. Augustine, St. Raymond, and St. Thomas, unless there is clear proof that something is a serious matter, we should not demand it of the faithful. Furthermore, if this matter were so clear and obvious, why did the older clergy never hold this position? Why did it take 20 plus years for those clergy who say it is a mortal sin to come to this conclusion if this matter was so clear and theologically obvious?

With my prayers and blessing,

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