

# Chapter Eight

## THE BISHOPS OF PIERRE MARTIN NGÔ ĐÌNH THỰC

Perhaps the reader might recall that a few chapters ago, I pointed out the doubtful **validity** of the "sacraments" of the **Novus Ordo** religion. In particular, I speak now of the new form now being used for the sacrament of Holy Orders, and most specifically that of the highest rank, which confers the Episcopacy (makes a bishop). Given the unreliability of the new man-made ceremonies, one has to wonder how many (if any) of the "bishops" **consecrated** to the Episcopacy by the new rite were actually **validly consecrated** bishops, and how many were not, and who (if anyone) among them the true bishops would happen to be. (One usually says of a priest that he is "**ordained**," but of a bishop that he is "**consecrated**.") In the church of the **People of God**, there is no way one can trust that any particular "bishop" in that establishment is really even a bishop at all, nor that any "priest" is really a priest (unless of course they were **consecrated** or **ordained** previous to the changes made to those rites made in 1968). The Church cannot afford to have to worry about such things, but now is obliged to. That is the most dangerous aspect of the conciliar and post-conciliar "reforms."

As long as we can know that we have **validly consecrated** bishops, all the other problems of the Church can be reasonably put to rights by having the heretics repent or be put out, and by instructing the ignorant. But without **validly consecrated** bishops, there can be no sacraments except Baptism and Marriage. It takes a priest (or a bishop) to say Mass. It takes a priest (or a bishop) to absolve a penitent from sin in the confessional. It takes a priest (or a bishop) to administer the Last **Rites** (including Extreme Unction) to a soul in danger of death. It normally takes a bishop (although in some rare cases a "mere" priest will do) to Confirm a soul, or bless the Holy Oils, such as are used for Extreme Unction. It takes a bishop (a priest will not do here) to make a priest or another bishop.

One can easily see from the preceding that if ever the Church should run out of **validly consecrated** bishops, an essential component of the Church's fourth mark, Apostolicity (the succession of **validly consecrated** bishops extending from the original twelve Apostles themselves clear to modern times), would be forever lost, utterly irretrievable. With no more bishops, it would only be a matter of time before the last **validly ordained** priest would die, and then there could be no more Masses, no more absolutions, no more Confirmations, and no more Last **Rites**. The sacramental priesthood would vanish and could never be recovered. The Church would go from seven sacraments to two. Furthermore, if the pope must be a bishop, indeed the "Bishop of Rome," how can there ever be a pope in that case?

On April 9, 1951, Pope Pius XII had published a bit of legislation formally requiring that the Pope must approve any **consecrations** of any new bishops. Such an approval is called a "**papal mandate**," because the pope would be in that case commanding that the person should be **consecrated** a bishop. Although that was already the customary procedure, only then did it finally get written into law. That was done in response to the Chinese when they were attempting to create a new hierarchy of their own, the "Patriotic Chinese Church." Who back then could have anticipated that within twenty years such "illicit" **episcopal consecrations** would become absolutely essential to the **continuation** of the Church, and that scarcely thirty years later the first of such would take place? Clearly, such a law as that cannot apply in such a case as this where even the person who imposed the law would have **suspended** or revoked it. There is no reason to doubt that Pope Pius XII would count the **continuation** of the Church as being more important than obedience to this bit of legislation that he himself imposed as an attempt to stop what the Chinese government was trying to do (and ended up doing anyway).

If it hadn't been for the heroic actions of a few faithful bishops, the **Novus Ordo** religion would have eventually brought about an end of the Apostolic succession! Something had to be done to preserve alive that sacred and irreplaceable treasure of the **validly consecrated** Episcopate. The entire future of the Roman Catholic Church rests on the actions of the very few bishops who actually did this. So far, there have been four such bishops, two of them archbishops. At this particular juncture of my account of the **traditional** Catholic movement (June 1987), only one of the four bishops had as yet made any other

**traditional** bishops: Archbishop Pierre Martin Ngô Đình Thục, of Huế, Việt Nam (Vietnam).

The peculiar and sad figure of Abp. Thục is probably the most enigmatic of the four bishops from whom all reliable episcopal **consecrations** of the Church in the future are derived. Of course, Abp. Lefebvre could be a somewhat enigmatic figure as well. Could it be that a defining characteristic of archbishops is to be enigmatic characters? In the time when none of the other three bishops were even remotely considering the **consecration** of any bishops according to the **traditional** rite, which would therefore have been without the permission of the Vatican leadership, Thục had already run way ahead of the others. It was he who blazed all the trails and made all the mistakes. And, for the most part, they were very big mistakes indeed. On the other hand, the only alternative to making such mistakes would have been to do nothing at all, and that would have been terminally catastrophic.

Abp. Thục, together with other members of his family, also found himself close to the center of another major event of the 1960's which tore up American, European, and Southeast Asian society and which contributed in a major way to the rise of the 1960's counterculture movement: the Vietnam War. It is for this reason that a fairly detailed account of the history of the man and his family up until this point bears telling.

On October 6, 1897, Pierre Martin Ngô Đình Thục was born to Catholic parents in Huế, Việt Nam. His father, Ngô Đình Khả, was by nationality a Mandarin, and by office the Minister of Rites and Grand Chamberlain to Emperor Thành Thái who had reigned from 1889 to 1907. The family had been among the first to convert to Catholicism back in the seventeenth century, and some of them had even been martyrs for their faith.

Although the French had originally introduced Catholicism to Vietnam, the Ngô family became estranged from the French when the French conspired to depose Emperor Thành Thái in 1907. In the wake of that, their Catholicism became the more solidly **traditional** faith of the Spanish and Portuguese, both of old as that of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, as well as that which would later rally to the cause of Governor Franco, rather than the relatively easygoing and liberal Gallican Catholicism of certain factions in France which were then operative in Vietnam.

At this point, the family had a mission to establish Roman Catholicism in mostly Buddhist Vietnam, and without the help of the French, thank-you. Most of his brothers pursued politics, but Thục instead pursued the priesthood. In the course of this he went to Rome and obtained doctorate degrees in canon law, theology, and philosophy. He was **ordained** a priest on December 20, 1925.

His distinguished career as a seminary professor began in Sorbonne in Paris, but in 1927 he returned to Vietnam where he held professorships at both the Major Seminary and the College of Divine Providence. So well had he performed his professor duties that on May 4, 1938, he was **consecrated** bishop and became the Titular Bishop of Sesina. He organized and set up that diocese in the city of Vĩnh Long and also founded the University of Đà Lạt.

This university had to be built up practically from scratch, but when one of his brothers, Ngô Đình Diệm had risen to power, he gave Thục the right to profit from a forested area which generated the needed funds. Tragedy was already being served up to the Ngô brothers by the communists in that their oldest brother, Ngô Đình Khôi, had been buried alive along with his son by the communists.

In 1955, Ngô Đình Diệm ousted Bảo Đại, the ruling Chief of State over Vietnam at that time (who had previously stepped down from his former post of Emperor in 1945). The United States followed the recommendation of Francis Cardinal Spellman, the Vicar General for the U. S. armed forces and John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, by backing the Diệm regime. The United States had backed him in order to fight the communists, but unfortunately, he seems to have devoted the bulk of his efforts against the Buddhists instead. This was a grave political blunder, and theologically unsound.

I say "Buddhists" here, following the practice of most chroniclers of the Vietnam war, but actually only

about 20% of the population was strictly Buddhist, the remainder being a kind of mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism, Animism, and occasionally other less well known Asiatic religions. Diệm failed to recognize the fundamental difference between this Buddhism and Communism as non-Christian forces in Vietnam. On the one hand, Communism was an invading alien intruder, a subtle Red Chinese invasion absolutely no better for Vietnam than the invasion of the Japanese had been. On the other hand, this sort of Buddhist is what Vietnam had been for thousands of years - - longer than Christianity had even existed. It would have been perfectly reasonable, Catholic, and politically sound for him to have used military force to drive (or keep) the Communists out. Practically all of Vietnam, Catholic and Buddhist alike, would have cheerfully backed his efforts in this direction. That is also what the United States wanted him to do and why they backed his regime.

But dealing with Buddhism would have required a great deal of time. Where Communism was merely an idea that some dilettantes found fashionable, Buddhism is what most of the people truly believed. Threat, coercion, and force have never changed anyone's personal belief. The proper thing to do would have been to win the Buddhists to Christ, one soul at a time. That requires a lot of sacrifice, suffering, prayer, and time. Only when the Buddhists can see the superior depth of the Christian Faith would they be able to convert voluntarily; an involuntary conversion is no conversion at all. Diệm thought he could take a short cut around this process, or perhaps he may not have known how he was supposed to respond to the differences between Communism and Buddhism in his country.

In a Catholic nation which is made up mostly of Roman Catholics, one can very easily and properly pass and enforce laws prohibiting the spreading of all false teachings in the public forum, or at least deny them any official recognition. Diệm desired to pass such laws because he imagined that the faith could be easily spread to large numbers if politically mandated. But Vietnam was about 90% Buddhist and scarcely 10% Christian. The Church does not approve of the use of military or political force to overcome the long-established **traditions** which a society has received from their forefathers. That is something quite different from dealing in such a manner with Catholic members of a Catholic society who depart from the Faith and encourage others to do the same. In Buddhist Vietnam, there was no way for Christianity to be thus enforced. Making such an attempt was further made unsound from a political standpoint because he also opposed the French who were the only other force for Christianity in Vietnam. A truly Catholic and Vietnamese nation was simply not possible in the near term under such conditions.

Seeing this problem and being irrevocably committed to making Vietnam a Catholic nation, the next plan of the Ngô brothers (including Ngô Đình Nhu who was appointed Political Advisor) was to consolidate the Roman Catholics in South Vietnam, even though most of them lived in the north. The rumor was sent forth that Jesus and Mary had gone South. In response to that, nearly a million North Vietnamese Catholics relocated to South Vietnam, placing a very heavy burden on the already overtaxed infrastructure in the South. Hard times were had by all, but this did have the effect of consolidating the Catholics into a smaller area in which they would be a majority, and also of bringing them into the territory which was politically controlled by Diệm's regime and spiritually guided by the Archiepiscopal see of Huế, which Thục was soon to be raised to on November 24, 1960.

Things got particularly ugly in 1963 when Buddhist monks, in protest to the way all Buddhists were being treated, began drenching themselves in gasoline and setting themselves on fire. Mrs. Ngô Đình Nhu (Trần Lệ Xuân) took an extremely dim view of what those Buddhists were doing, and in an attempt to discourage such behavior she responded to it by joking about how they were using imported gasoline to make barbecues of themselves. Her well intentioned attempt totally backfired, resulting in more such suicides and bringing international disgrace on the Diệm regime. With each new problem, Diệm's solution always seems to have been to crack down harder on those who opposed him.

When Roncalli was elected Pope in 1958, the new spirit of **ecumenism** took over at the Vatican. Cardinal Spellman (who floated his boat down the Tiber river causing some to think that by so doing, he would fulfill the prophecy that the next pope would be a Pastor and Mariner) went from being a likely successor to the papacy to practically a cardinal in exile. Roncalli, as Pope John XXIII, took a very soft stance

against the Communists, and an even softer stance against other religions such as Buddhism. This was not a result of Catholic leaders becoming more aware of the difference between Communism and Buddhism in Vietnam, but simply a policy of going soft on everything non-Christian. It was only a matter of time before nominally Catholic President John F. Kennedy sensed the change and began to think about ousting Diệm. When Buddhist monks began burning themselves to death, Kennedy gave Diệm one last chance. Forget the Buddhists and go get the Communists, or else. Diệm responded by merely taking a yet harder line against the Buddhists and so signed his own death warrant. The order was given to the CIA to have Diệm removed, but guaranteeing his safe passage out of Vietnam.

The CIA-directed thugs eagerly agreed to remove Diệm, but took matters into their own hands as to what to do about him. On November 2, 1963, Diệm and his brother Nhu had spent part of the night in Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church, a Chinese-Vietnamese church in Cholon City, and the remainder of the night in the home of a prominent parishioner, a Chinese businessman, and called for a limousine to take them out of the country. Instead, a military van showed up and they were bundled into the back. While en route to their destination the van stopped at a railroad crossing where the noise of a passing train concealed the sound of the shots by which they were assassinated. Ngô Đình Cẩn, another brother, was captured and had been promised a fair trial by the new government. What he got was only a kangaroo court which found him guilty and had him executed by firing squad on May 10, 1964, after his having spent an entire year in a small cage.

Where was Thục during all of this? In 1962, he had been called to Rome to participate in the Second Vatican Council. During the summer of 1963 between the first and second sessions of the council he saw his homeland for the last time. On June 5, a massive celebration was held in Huế in his honor. A few days later, the Buddhists wanted to hold a public celebration of their own, but were denied permission by the Diệm government. It was at this point that they began dousing themselves with gasoline.

In the fall of 1963, he returned to Rome for the second session, and there he was while his brothers were being killed, and there also he was detained against his will after the Council session was over. One might fairly argue that he had been detained in the interest of his own physical safety, but in 1968, pro-marxist Philippe Nguyễn Kim Điền was appointed to his post in Vietnam while he was made Titular Archbishop of Bulla Regis. His role in Vietnam had ended quite permanently in 1963 when he returned to Rome for the second session of the Council. This was very much in keeping with a tendency which Paul VI displayed on many occasions of attempting to replace faithful bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and even **patriarchs**, such as Josyf Slipyi, Josef Mindszenty, or Stefan Wyszyński, with Communist sympathizers. This would typically be done in order to establish "diplomatic relations" with the Communist government, which was a very thin disguise for a total acquiescence to Communist rule and of no spiritual benefit or consolation to the Catholics trapped in that country.

At the Council, Thục took a number of rather strange positions. The extremism with which he expressed certain views, which could almost have seemed reasonable in the context of where the Council was headed but which were clearly out of step with the long-established teaching of the Church, might in part be traced to the Oriental tendency he had to sense the direction being taken and jump at once to the logical conclusion of that direction. He may also have felt that his brothers might still be alive if only the Church had been more soft on diversity and had not provided any excuse for his brothers to fight the Buddhists.

If he could be said to have come to the Council with a pet theory of his own, it would have to have been diversity in worship and belief. Early on in the Council, he had complained quite vehemently that the leaders of many other religions hadn't been invited and ought to have been. He only calmed down when he was informed that they had been invited but had not bothered to come. He also seemed to feel that the Mass should reflect the culture of those who are celebrating the Mass, whether by sitting on their heels, on the ground eating off a banana leaf, or even using chopsticks (how would one have used chopsticks in a Mass?). At another point he is even known to have argued in favor of allowing there to be priestesses. In his mind, anything should be approved, even the **tridentine** Mass! The strangest aspect of all of this is, what kind of Council it was such that one could argue for such things and be taken seriously? Could these

pet theories he had harbored be the reason that John XXIII had made him an archbishop on November 24, 1960? It is possible that his advocacy of such ideas may have been intended only ironically, i. e. "as long as you are doing these crazy things, why not do these other crazy things as well?" Despite the craziness of these pet theories, he is known to have generally voted quite conservatively during the Council. The Council approved none of his pet theories and once it was over he never mentioned any of them again.

Finally, the Council ended, and being old, not allowed to return to his homeland, and obviously in mourning for his brothers, he had been given very few duties to perform and much time to think. What had particularly galled him was the way the new pope and much of the Roman Hierarchy, by changing their policies in favor of **Ecumenism** and Communism, had (he felt) practically incited the Americans and Vietnamese to betray and kill his brothers. He was also disgusted by the easy way the new Roman establishment seemed to get along with the new communist regime which benefitted from that betrayal. His exile also kept him away from the material assets he had built up from the timber concessions and rubber plantations in Vietnam, forcing him to live in despair as a pauper in a far off strange land, a shell-shocked and broken man.

Other than some doubtful reports of real estate fraud (namely, should he have accepted that forested land assigned to him by Diệm?) and a suspicion of nepotism (namely, what role might he have had, perhaps through Cardinal Spellman, in helping his brothers come to power?), there is no clear evidence that his behavior (apart from his own pet theories heard at the Council) as priest, bishop, archbishop, and council father had been anything other than exemplary. Vietnamese Catholics who had known him thought very highly of him. The spiritual crisis he went through did much to keep him out of sight while as Titular Archbishop of Bulla Regis he served as a substitute Assistant Pastor in various parishes near Rome. After some years, he then moved to France. While still in Rome, other events forced themselves upon him.

A new visionary, Clemente Domínguez y Gómez of Palmar de Troya, Spain was supposedly having visits and visions of Mary. In those visions he had been told to have himself made a bishop by a **traditional** bishop, so his representatives first went to Ecône where Lefebvre had his seminary. Lefebvre himself was too busy to look into their case so as to give it the attention it demanded and he certainly wasn't about to **consecrate** any bishops at that point, but he knew Abp. Thục and felt he could trust him to look into the matter and do the right thing, whatever that should turn out to be. For that reason he pointed his visitors to Thục.

These representatives of Clemente, led by a priest who had once taught at Ecône, a canon of Saint Maurice named Father Revas, came to Thục's small apartment in the Italian village of Arpino. They told him that they had a car waiting outside ready to take him to Palmar de Troya where the Virgin Mary was expecting him to perform a great service for her. They also lead him to believe that Archbishop Lefebvre had recommended that he go and **consecrate** Clemente. (Lefebvre had only recommended that he look into it.)

In Palmar de Troya, in the last week of 1975, Thục **ordained** Clemente Domingues Gomez and four of his friends (Manuel Alonso, Louis Moulins, Francis Fox, and Paul Fox) to the priesthood, and on January 11, 1976, he **consecrated** Domínguez, Alonso, and three other individuals as bishops (it is not known whether or not these three other persons are Moulins and the Fox's), all without going through the normal channels for approvals, without even a Mass, and with very little if any priestly formation. It was this pivotal action which changed his destiny. Normally a great deal of care goes into the selection of a bishop, hence the role a pope would have in the selection process. In **consecrating** individuals he barely even knew, the die was cast. Before Rome even heard about this **consecration**, on July 10, 1976, he had already **consecrated** another man to be bishop, a certain P. E. M. Comte de Labat d'Arnoux by name, an **Old Catholic**.

Rome promptly excommunicated him and Domínguez, but by September 17, 1976, Thục had repented from **consecrating** the Palmar de Troya bishops and obtained absolution from Paul VI for his mistake. Apparently, the issue of what had become of the July 1976 bishop never came up. When, upon the death of Paul VI, Bp. Domínguez had himself declared Pope Gregory XVII in a mystic vision, Thục even more

came to regret having **consecrated** him.

For several years, Thục was content to lie low living in poverty in Arpino, and then later with a Buddhist Vietnamese family in Toulon, France. While regretting his decision to **consecrate** Clemente Domínguez y Gómez and his cronies, he was clearly very angry with the Roman hierarchy for having not even tried to reestablish him in "his" See in Vietnam, nor obtain any reparation for what had been allowed to happen to his brothers. Over the next several years, eight others would approach him for Episcopal Orders, most notably **Old Catholics** who had doubts about their Orders they had received from other **Old Catholics**, or else who had some strange notion of combining the lineages of the various bishops by being successively consecrated by bishops of each lineage. For example, the next one of them, Jean Laborie, who had been **consecrated** as an **Old Catholic** bishop in 1966, and again in 1968 (in case the first wasn't **valid**), and at least several other times as well, approached Thục on February 8, 1977, and was conditionally **consecrated** by him (in case the previous **consecrations** were **invalid**). The next month, on March 19, 1977, Thục **consecrated** another **Old Catholic** Claude Nanta de Torrini, and the year after that on October 19, 1978, he **consecrated** Roger Kozik and Michel Fernandez who used their **valid consecrations** to start their own religion and defraud people of a lot of money.

Up until this point, the bishops he unofficially **consecrated** were all unmitigated disasters for the Church. Domínguez and his group have since gone on to **consecrate** hundreds of bishops and even appoint many "cardinals" at the service of "Pope" Gregory XVII (of Spain). Some of these "cardinals" are (or were at the time of their selection as "cardinals") teenagers and totally untrained and unqualified. It was one of the bishops from this group that attempted an "ordination" of Sinéad O'Connor. The entire false Church of Palmar de Troya places private revelation above the defined truths of the Church and deviates quite widely from the universal and historical Magisterium of the Church. Roger Kozik and Michel Fernandez were actually prosecuted for fraud in the secular courts, on account of some of their religious claims and even served jail terms, and the others (the **Old Catholics**) had each set up some little church of their own which was of no real or lasting value or interest. One of the Old Catholics even indulged in devil-worship. And yet, with four more bishops to go, Thục wasn't through making mistakes, although the next (and last, but mildest) mistake would not come until September 24, 1982, when he **consecrated** his last bishop, Christian Marie Datessen, who had been ordained by the **Old Catholics**, but at least professed a solid traditional Catholic Faith.

It is only the next three bishops (the first three of the last four) he **consecrated** who would come to be of much interest to the future of the Church. The first and most important of these three bishops was the one time philosophy professor of Lateran University in Rome, the Dominican priest, Fr. Guérard des Lauriers, of Ottaviani Intervention fame, and one time professor at Ecône. During his professorship at the faculty of Ecône, Fr. des Lauriers and several priest friends had spent a great deal of time attempting to come to an understanding as to what had become of the Church and eventually their research centered on the great question of whether or not Paul VI was really even a pope at all.

After all, a pope is supposed to be a source and center of Catholic orthodoxy, and clearly Paul VI had failed in that capacity, and it would soon begin to look as if John Paul II was not about to do much better. Maybe somehow (thought Fr. des Lauriers), they are not really popes. Eventually, he adopted the position called **sedevacantism**. This term comes from the Latin "sede," seat and "vacant," vacant. The Chair of Peter is vacant, according to this understanding of events. There is nothing unusual about the Chair of Peter being vacant. That occurs upon the death of each pope and lasts until the election of another pope. What set apart the "**sedevacantist**" position of Fr. des Lauriers was the claim that the elections of certain modern popes (Paul VI and the John Paul's, at least, with some suspicion hovering over John XXIII as well) were either invalid, or else if their elections were valid, then they must have somehow lost their papal office, most likely through heresy.

This was clearly not an attempt to break with "the pope" as much as it was an attempt to continue holding the office of the papacy in the esteem that so great an office is worthy of. Since the teaching and actions of the new Vatican leadership were so seriously out of step with the teaching and practice of the **reliable**

**popes**, one way to preserve the integrity of the Church is to conclude that the newer "popes" are not popes at all! After the 1976-77 academic year, Lefebvre dismissed Fr. des Lauriers from the faculty of his seminary at Ecône. Whatever validity the theory may have had as an explanation for the crisis in the Church, Lefebvre felt it was too scandalous and that having such a professor on his staff might impede any diplomatic gestures he was making toward the Vatican.

On their own with only their small congregations to support them, Fr. des Lauriers and a few of his closest priest friends began publishing a series of studies which presented the case for the position he had taken on the pope issue, a position known as the **Cassiciacum Thesis**. As he grew more concerned for the future of the Church he came to believe that he was led to become a bishop with the help of Abp. Thuc who had already acquired quite a reputation for his willingness to **consecrate** bishops. Finally he went to Toulon to visit Thuc there and on May 7, 1981, Thuc **consecrated** him to be a bishop. His priest friends abandoned him; his congregation shrank. He had to endure a considerable amount of abuse and public infamy for this heroic act, but in the end it has increasingly become clear that this action was the beginning of the **continuation** of the Church.

The next two Catholic bishops made so by Abp. Thuc had quite another story: In Mexico, two priests, Adolfo Zamora Hernandez of Mexico City and Moises Carmona y Rivera of Acapulco had, on their own, embraced the position of **sedevacantism** and also came to believe that they should be made bishops in order to help rebuild the Church. Fr. Carmona had been named Irremovable Pastor of the Divine Providence parish in Acapulco by Bp. Raphael Bello Ruiz (the regular diocesan bishop), but on May 5, 1977, Bp. Ruiz attempted to excommunicate Carmona for keeping the faith. Since Mexican Law is somewhat like French Law in this regard, Bp. Ruiz found it just as impossible to remove Fr. Carmona as the apostate French hierarchy had found it to remove the Catholics from St. Nicholas du Chardonnet. Once Frs. Carmona and Zamora learned of Fr. des Lauriers' **consecration** in France, they decided to receive the episcopal orders from Ngô Đình Thục. So they went to France and on October 17, 1981, Thuc **consecrated** them to be bishops.

These three new unofficial bishops have far more importance than all of the other bishops **consecrated** by Thuc put together. Thuc himself has been known to claim that he had no real intention to **consecrate** the Palmar de Troya and **Old Catholic** bishops, thus providing room for doubt about the **validity** of their Orders. He has also expressed sorrow for having done all the unofficial **consecrations** he had performed. However, Thuc has never wavered from his stand that these last three men were truly and **validly consecrated** as bishops, even when he was exhorting the three Catholic bishops he had made and the others following from them to please return to John Paul II.

One important question in all of these "illicit" and (for the most part) ill-advised **consecrations** (he also **ordained** a number of questionable priests) is simply, Why? What did he think he was doing? Did he feel that this would be a good way to get even with God, or the Roman hierarchy, for having betrayed him and his brothers, by injuring His Church and creating many opportunities for sacrilegious sacraments? Or do these actions admit to any other explanation? These questions also have some bearing on the question of whether or not the three Catholic bishops he did make were **validly consecrated**.

One prominent opponent of the bishops **consecrated** by Thuc takes the position that Abp. Thuc had to have been either insane or very evil to have done the eleven truly scandalous episcopal **consecrations** he had done. If he was insane during those years of his life when he **consecrated** those bishops that would cast doubt over the **validly** of their **consecrations**. If he was doing this out of sheer wicked malice against the sacraments it would sully them (despite their **validity**), perhaps irretrievably, with scandal. Either way (according to that opponent) one ought not have anything to do with any of the **Thuc bishops**.

This writer prefers to take a more balanced view of Abp. Thuc and the bishops he **consecrated**, especially the three Catholic bishops, des Lauriers, Carmona, and Zamora. Given the overall perspective of the man and also the shock and tragedy through which he had lived, it is easy to see that his attitude or outlook had to have been one of "What's the use? What does anything matter anymore? Want my fortune? Take it!

Want my life? Take it! What does it matter?" A valid theory would be that in such a frame of mind, his gullibility might have been to the point that it would not have taken much in the way of persuasion to get him to make someone a bishop. He may also have been the sort of person who, lacking guile himself, may have had difficulty sensing guile in those who approached him. Such is not a state of insanity, or else if it is, it is not one that in would in any way endanger the **validity** of the **consecrations** he performed. "So you want to be a bishop? Why don't I make you one?" At one point, he couldn't help asking, "Why does everyone wish to be a bishop?"

The point was that if someone wanted to be a bishop, they could go to Thục and become one, and fourteen men did. The only other objection raised against the **validity** of the Thục **consecrations** is the relatively private nature of the ceremonies which took place in his small, rather shabby bedroom chapel, while some number of cats meowed underfoot, and with only two laymen as witnesses to the three Catholic **consecrations**. Even worse, the two laymen were sufficiently unfamiliar with the ceremonies associated with an **episcopal consecration** that they didn't even know whether the book containing the ceremonies performed had been the Roman Missal (which it would not have been for an **episcopal consecration**) or the **Roman Pontifical**. Their testimony is only useful for verifying that some sort of ceremony had actually taken place on the days concerned, who the participants had been, and that the book (whatever it was) had been scrupulously followed.

Nevertheless, there is every reason to believe that these three episcopal **consecrations** are **valid** and ought to be recognized as such by the Church. It is the case of Fr. des Lauriers which merits close scrutiny. Fr. des Lauriers, having been the main intellectual force behind the Ottaviani intervention, clearly knew that the **validity** of Church sacraments was being threatened by the new rites. Eager to preserve a **valid** succession of bishops for the future of the Church, he approached Abp. Thục, secure in the knowledge that Thục's **consecration** would be **valid**. Certainly Thục himself would be able to follow the correct book, and Fr. des Lauriers would have noticed if the wrong book had been used, or if anything else improper had been done.

While he did notice a few small omissions in the ceremony, as one who was sufficiently educated to have been a professor at Lateran University, he knew enough theology to know that those omissions in no way threatened the **validity** of the **consecration** he received. As Bishop de Castro Mayer has acknowledged, "If it's **valid** for Guérard (des Lauriers), it's **valid** for me." On another occasion, the Papal Nuncio to the United States, Pio Laghi, also acknowledged their **validity**. As for the case of the two Mexican priests there is no reason to believe that Abp. Thục had done anything different with them than with Fr. des Lauriers. The three Catholic priests can be quite safely regarded as **validly consecrated** Catholic bishops.

Now, three out of fourteen bishops does not sound like a very good record. Clearly, Abp. Thục was no judge of character. And unfortunately it gets somewhat worse. One wishes that one could truthfully say that the three Catholic bishops Thục made went on to do a great ministry, free from any further spot or scandal, but alas even that is not quite so. However, for the sake of putting all of this into perspective, let us compare his record to the record of those bishops chosen by the Vatican leadership over the same time span (1976-82) during which Thục **consecrated** his fourteen bishops (ignoring, for the moment, the question of whether the men chosen to be bishops by the **Vatican establishment** were **validly** made bishops or not).

Out of hundreds of "bishops" made by the **Vatican establishment** over that same period, NOT ONE has ever clearly and unambiguously taken a stand for the **traditional** Catholic Faith. While some small percentage (ten to fifteen percent if one wants to be optimistic) allow or have allowed **traditional** Catholic worship on an "**Indult**" basis and a much smaller number have even shown great sympathy for the **traditional** Catholic faith, even these have allowed the heretical **Novus Ordo** religion to be the main thrust of their labors and efforts. Others have positively hijacked "their" dioceses on the claim that they are Corporations Sole, and have demonstrated absolutely no regard for their ostensible pope, John Paul II. If only the Vatican leadership could have chosen their bishops anywhere near so well as Abp. Thục did!

So what is it that added yet further trouble to that line of bishops who trace their orders to Thục besides the non-Catholic eleven? It is only this: The two Mexican priests, unlike Fr. des Lauriers, were relatively uneducated. They were just sincere, humble, simple country priests who saw a need to preserve a **valid** line of succession, but whose training and formation in no way prepared them for episcopal duties. Many of their earliest choices for men to **consecrate** as bishops were simple country priests very much like themselves, honest and sincere, but again lacking the necessary training. Bp. Carmona, for example had served for a time as a teacher of Latin, despite his flawed knowledge of that language. Bp. Zamora's knowledge of Latin was even worse, just barely enough to say Mass and administer the sacraments, so no one had ever made him a teacher of Latin.

The first man **consecrated** by Carmona (with Zamora assisting as a "**co-consecrator**") was a Texan by the name of George Musey who was also just a simple country priest, on April 1, 1982. Only a couple months later on June 18, 1982, Carmona (this time assisted by Zamora and Musey as **co-consecrators**) **consecrated** two more Mexican priests, Benigno Bravo y Valades and Jose de Jesus Roberto Martinez y Gutierrez. While these two Mexicans don't seem to be well known in any particular way (Bp. Bravo passed away in 1985, but Bp. Martinez still serves in Mexico), George Musey together with Carmona and Zamora **consecrated** Louis Vezelis on August 24, 1982. That **co-consecration** of Bp. Vezelis marks the last known **episcopal consecration** on the part of Bp. Zamora. Bp. Zamora became inactive soon thereafter and passed away on May 3, 1987.

The story of Bishops Musey and Vezelis bears some telling since it quite resembles some of the actions taken by some of the other such early Thục bishops from Carmona and Zamora. Unlike George Musey who was just a simple country priest, Louis Vezelis was a somewhat more educated and much more scheming Franciscan who became increasingly upset over the changes being made even to his order as it went over to the **Novus Ordo** religion, to the point that on April 19, 1978, he left that Franciscan community and became an independent Franciscan. He started his own Franciscan order on the claim that their bishop was the "Bishop of Rome," which was clearly and simply a fraudulent claim (even though it was accidentally true from the standpoint that all **traditional** Catholics are in union with the Pope, the "Bishop of Rome," even if not necessarily in union with John Paul II). In 1980 he began publishing a small newsletter called *The Seraph* which came out (and continues to come out) irregularly.

When he learned of the Thục **consecrations**, and especially the **consecration** of George Musey, he rapidly abandoned his claim of being under John Paul II, adopted a theological opinion similar to George's, befriended him, and obtained an **episcopal consecration** from him. Once **consecrated**, Vezelis together with Musey set themselves up as being the only Catholic hierarchy in the United States, with Vezelis taking everything east of the Mississippi except Florida and Musey taking everything west plus Florida. Having little if any instruction in Canon Law and aware of the power and influence their **valid episcopal consecrations** brought them, they fondly imagined themselves to have full and regular **jurisdiction** over the United States, now carved up into only two "dioceses." Not only that, but Bp. Vezelis even set up an **Old Catholic** priest as a regular parish priest in one of the churches in "his diocese," in Ohio.

While it was more correct than they knew to claim that as Catholic bishops of that part of the Church subsisting outside the **Vatican institution** they enjoy a measure of **jurisdiction** over the Catholic faithful, they made the mistake of claiming that their **jurisdiction** was fully that of regular diocesan bishops which would have implied their having the authority to rule out all other bishops from functioning in "their" territories (no word on how they would have handled a mere abbot of a religious order, at any rate no other American bishops chose to recognize their "authority") and that all American priests must submit to their authority, either to one or to the other, depending on where the priest was located.

Such a claim, clearly borne of extreme ignorance, was so scandalous that very few other **traditional** Catholic priests ever had anything to do with them. The other bishops in Mexico had done similar things at various points and in various groupings. However, now that all but one of them has passed away and the position taken by that one survivor, Bp. Martinez, has matured into a more realistic understanding of his true position, all of that foolishness has ceased and Bp. Martinez now serves as a truly respectable

bishop. Alas, Bp. Musey carried this false position clear to his death in 1992, and Bp. Vezelis still sees himself as the ordinary bishop of the eastern portion of the United States.

If the actions of some of these early Catholic **Thục bishops** have to be regarded as "scandalous," it is only so in comparison to the actions of the later **Thục bishops** and the other **traditional** bishops who would come to trace their episcopal orders to such "illicit" **consecrations**. Even the worst of these early Catholic **Thục bishops** was infinitely preferable to practically the entire set of **Novus Ordo** bishops who were systematically destroying the faith of hundreds of millions of devout Catholics worldwide!

Other bishops tracing their line to the Mexicans include Ralph Siebert and Conrad Altenbach (both deceased), and Michel Main who serves in France, Mark Pivarunas who serves in Spokane, Washington and Omaha, Nebraska, Daniel Dolan who serves in Ohio, and Martin Davila who serves with the Trento priests in Mexico. There are also a number of other bishops who trace their orders to Fr. des Lauriers, namely Gunther Storck and Joseph Vida Elmer (both deceased), and Robert McKenna who serves in Connecticut, Oliver Oravec who serves in Canada, and John Hesson who serves in New Jersey. Also of interest as bishops tracing their orders to Abp. Thục are Don Franco Munari who was one of the four Italian priests who left the **SSPX** in late 1985 and is now inactive, Richard Bedingfeld who served in Africa for a season and then decided to follow the false pope Gregory XVII in Canada, Peter Hillebrand who serves in Japan, Thomas Fouhy who serves in New Zealand, and José R. López-Gastón. Bp. des Lauriers passed away on February 25, 1988, due to ill health (he was very old), and Bp. Carmona passed away on November 1, 1991, as a result of an automobile accident.

Commonly heard in traditionalist circles is the expression "**Thục-line bishop**" which usually means a bishop who traces his episcopal Orders to the three Catholic priests he **consecrated**. For the time being, the above list pretty much comprises the lot. Since some of the earlier men **consecrated** by the three Catholic **Thục-line bishops** were of questionable character and shady morals, an additional shadow of ill-repute fell on the **Thục-line bishops**. Beyond that, there are some writers who still use the phrase "**Thục-line bishop**" to refer as well to the **Old Catholic** and Palmar de Troya bishops which now number in the hundreds, all of whom are thoroughly disreputable. Happily most of the more recent **Thục-line bishops** from des Lauriers, Carmona, and Zamora have been quite admirably able to defend their reputations and demonstrate their good character.

On February 25, 1982, Abp. Thục declared that "As a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church I declare the See of Rome being vacant and it is my duty, to do everything to assure the preservation of the Roman Catholic Church for the eternal salvation of souls." A bit later, on May 26, 1983, Thục, together with the Mexican bishops he **consecrated** (ignoring the fact that it was John XXIII who made him Archbishop in 1960) enlarged on this point by making the following public statement:

The Roman Catholic Bishops, united with His Excellency Archbishop Ngô Đình Thục, declare:

That we support him in his valiant public declaration made regarding the vacancy of the Apostolic See and the invalidity and illicitness of the New Mass. We hold with him that the Apostolic See has been vacant since the death of Pope Pius XII by virtue of the fact that those who were elected to succeed him did not possess the canonical qualifications necessary to be legitimate candidates for the Papacy.

... Based upon the Bull Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio of His Holiness Pope Paul IV, we hold that Angelo Roncalli was never a legitimate Pope and that his acts are completely null and void.

We declare that the New "Mass" is **invalid**. ... We declare that the introduction of this New "Mass" also signals the promulgation of a new humanistic religion in which Almighty God is no longer worshipped as he desires to be worshipped. ... Those who have accepted this New 'Mass' have, in reality and without taking notice of it, apostatized from the true faith; they

have separated themselves from the true Church and are in danger of losing their souls, because outside the Church founded by Jesus Christ no one can be saved. For this reason, we invite the faithful to return to their Faith from which they have strayed.

We reject the heretical Decree on Religious Freedom which places the divinely revealed religion on an equality with false religions. This decree is a clear and evident sign of the denial of our holy **traditions** by the apostate and schismatic hierarchy.

We declare that no one can oblige us to separate ourselves from the true Church, from that Church instituted by Christ Himself and which is destined to last until the consummation of the world just as He instituted it. ... We give thanks to God for the integrity of our Faith and we beseech His grace that we may be able to persevere in it. We pray for those who have lost this Faith by accepting the heretical changes that have given rise to a new Church and to a new religion.

Clearly, the man was doing at each point what he had been led to believe by those around him was what was necessary to help or **continue** the Church. There is no substantial reason to see in this anything but a very high degree of gullibility coupled with a genuine desire to help the Church. Gullibility is not insanity, and a desire to help or **continue** the Church by **consecrating** new bishops cannot be in any way construed as an attempt to injure the Church or profane the sacraments. The problem is simply that many of those who approached him to be **consecrated** by him were very wicked men who were taking advantage of his gullibility.

The ability of the six men, each of whom were either **Old Catholics** or crooks, to fool Abp. Thục was demonstrated in that, for a time, even some of the Catholic Thục bishops had been fooled into thinking of them as their compatriots. Even as late as April, 1992 Bp. McKenna listed all of the last nine bishops **consecrated** by Thục as "providential assurance indeed of the Apostolic Succession," the Palmar de Troya bishops, at least, being properly excluded. Only later did he and many others come to know that six of that last nine were not, and had never been, Catholics, or at best, had knowingly received their previous Holy Orders from schismatically tainted sources.

Shortly thereafter while living in New York with Bp. Vezelis, Thục was taken to Carthage, Missouri and held incommunicado by Vietnamese priests in union with Modernist Rome until his death on December 13, 1984. After his death, the following was published as his last public statement:

I, undersigned, Peter Martin Ngô Đình Thục, Titular Archbishop of Bulla Regia, and Archbishop Emeritus of Huế, wish to publicly retract all my previous errors concerning my illegitimately **ordaining to the Episcopate**, in 1981, several priests, namely Revs. M. L. Guérard des Lauriers, O. P., Moses Carmona, and Adolpho Zamora, as well as my denial of the Second Vatican Council, the new 'Ordo Missae', especially the dignity of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, as actually legitimate successor of St. Peter, published in Munich in 1982.

I wish to sincerely ask you all to forgive me, praying for me, and redressing all scandal caused by such regrettable actions and declaration of mine.

I would also like to exhort the above mentioned priests who had illegitimately been **ordained to the Episcopate** by me in 1981, and all others whom they have in turn **ordained** bishops and priests, as well as their followers, to retract their error, leaving their actually false status, and reconciling themselves with the Church and the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II.

There is some report that Abp. Thục sent a letter shortly before his death warning against such a letter as this and stating that this "statement" was a forgery and that he was in fact actually remaining faithful to the Catholic Church despite his being deprived of needed medication. If this report is true, then this certainly would be typical of the Novus Ordo to foist such a forgery on the public, and if not, then one would only see here once again the gullibility of Abp. Thục in his ready willingness to agree with those he

is around. It is most interesting to note that he has not backed down regarding the **validity** of his **consecrations** since he knew what he had done. He was not insane, only easily persuaded. However, the Catholic **Thục-line bishops** cannot be so easily persuaded. They know why God has allowed them to be bishops, and that is to do their share in preserving a **valid** apostolic succession on into the future. Also, despite the admittedly shaky start some of them got (especially those **consecrated** through Carmona and Zamora), nearly all of the Catholic **Thục-line bishops** now function quite well as responsible and capable leaders of the Church.

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