

Absolutely Null and Utterly Void

The 1968 Rite of Episcopal Consecration

— Rev. Anthony Cekada —

www.traditionalmass.org

“Once there are no more valid priests they’ll permit the Latin Mass.”

— Rev. Carl Pulvermacher OFMCap
Former Editor, *The Angelus*

“Keep the shell, but empty it of its substance.”

— V.I. Lenin

IN THE 1960’s Catholics who were upset by the post-Vatican II liturgical changes had already begun to worry whether sacraments conferred with the reformed rites were valid. A defining moment in the United States came in 1967 when Patrick Henry Omlor published the first edition of his study, *Questioning the Validity of Masses using the All-English Canon*, a work that, even before the promulgation of the *Novus Ordo* in 1969, galvanized the then-tiny traditionalist resistance.

As the modernist “reformers” overhauled the other sacramental rites — Confirmation, Penance and Extreme Unction — traditionalists questioned the validity of these sacraments as well, and sought out priests who offered the traditional Mass and used the old rites.

Holy Orders was the one sacrament that traditionalists did not seem to worry about. Sure, there were no vocations. But since few laymen had ever even seen an ordination — still less knew what made an ordination valid — how or whether the liturgical changes affected the validity of Holy Orders was a topic that went unexamined.

I encountered the issue by chance during my first year (1975-76) at the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) seminary at Ecône, Switzerland. I went to ask **Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre** about whether conservative friends from my former seminary could work with the Society after ordination. He told me yes, in principle, but they

would need to be conditionally ordained first, because Paul VI had changed the rite for Holy Orders.

The Archbishop explained that the new form (essential formula) in the rite for priestly ordination **was doubtful** because one word had been subtracted. The **new form for episcopal consecration**, the Archbishop continued, was *completely* different and thus **invalid**.

Despite the gravity of the question, only a few traditionalist writers examined the post-Vatican II ordination rites,¹ even after Tridentine Indult Masses started to multiply. Increasingly, these were offered by priests ordained by bishops consecrated in the new rite, and belonging to groups such as the Fraternity of St. Peter. If their ordaining bishops were invalidly consecrated, the sacraments these priests conferred would likewise be invalid.

After **Benedict XVI** was elected in 2005, however, the issue resurfaced. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, appointed an Archbishop and Cardinal by Paul VI, had been **consecrated with the new rite** on May 25, 1977. Was he, apart from the *sede vacante* controversy, **even a real bishop?**

In the summer of 2005, a French traditionalist publisher, **Editions Saint-Remi**, published the first volume of *Rore Sanctifica*,² a book-length dossier of documentation and commentary on the Paul VI Rite of Episcopal Consecration. The study, featuring on its cover side-by-side photos of Ratzinger and SSPX Superior General Mgr. Bernard Fellay, concluded that the new rite was invalid.

This naturally caught the attention of higher-ups in the **SSPX** in Europe, who were by then negotiating with Benedict XVI to obtain special status in the Vatican II church. How could SSPX’s superiors rally traditionalists to a **pope who may not even be a bishop?**

The Dominicans in Avrillé, France, a traditionalist religious order in the SSPX orbit, immediately took up the task of trying to make a convincing case for the

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1. The only widely-circulated study in English I know of is R. Coomaraswamy, “The Post-Conciliar Rite of Holy Orders,” *Studies in Comparative Religion* 16.2-2.

2. *Rore Sanctifica: Invalidité du Rite de Consécration Épiscopale de ‘Pontificalis Romani’* (Editions Saint-Remi 2005). rore-sanctifica.org

validity of the new rite. One of them, **Fr. Pierre-Marie OP**, produced a lengthy article in favor of it that the Dominicans published in their quarterly, *Sel de la Terre*.³

Thilo Stopka, a former SSPX seminarian in Europe, challenged Fr. Pierre-Marie's conclusions, and in turn published a great deal of valuable research on the Internet to refute them.

Meanwhile, the SSPX's official U.S. publication, **The Angelus**, promptly translated Fr. Pierre-Marie's article into English, publishing it in two successive issues (December 2005, January 2006) under the title "Why the New Rite of Episcopal Consecration is Valid."

I find it ironic and particularly sad that such an article appeared in *The Angelus*. In August 1977 I visited an old-line traditionalist in Upper Michigan, Bill Hanna. He passed along a favorite quote from Fr. Carl Pulvermacher, a Capuchin who worked with SSPX and would later edit *The Angelus*: "Once there are no more valid priests, they'll permit the Latin Mass."

Father Carl, it seems, had a bit of the prophet in him.

In his *Angelus* article, Fr. Pierre-Marie argued that the Paul VI Rite of Episcopal Consecration is valid because it uses prayers to consecrate bishops that are virtually the same as those (a) used in the Catholic Church's eastern rites, or (b) once used in the ancient Church.

Please note: Paul VI made these same two claims when he promulgated the new consecration rite in 1968, and both are demonstrably false. It is appalling that the SSPX superiors recycled them to market the validity of that same rite to an unsuspecting traditionalist laity.

To support this argument, Fr. Pierre-Marie offered several tables that compare various Latin texts. These we will discuss in an appendix.

As for the rest of his article, most readers probably came away from it utterly baffled. For although Fr. Pierre-Marie said he would "proceed according to the Scholastic method so as to treat the matter as rigorously as possible," he never managed to focus clearly on the two central questions:

(1) What principles does Catholic theology employ to determine whether a sacramental form is valid or invalid?

(2) How do those principles apply to the new rite of episcopal consecration?

We will answer both questions here, and draw the appropriate conclusions. Our discussion may be a bit technical at times — so I have provided a summary (sect. XI) to which a reader may skip if he gets too be-

wildered by talk of Copts, Maronites, Hippolytus and the mysterious *governing Spirit*.

I. Principles to Apply

PRIMARILY for the benefit of lay readers, we will review some principles that are used to determine whether a sacramental form is valid. The concepts are not complicated.

A. What is a Sacramental Form?

In catechism class we all learned the definition of a sacrament: "An outward sign, instituted by Christ to give grace."

"Outward sign" in the definition refers to what we see and hear when a sacrament is conferred — the priest pours the water on the baby's head and he recites the formula "I baptize you," etc.

Catholic theology teaches that in every sacrament this outward sign consists of two elements joined together:

- **Matter:** some thing or action your senses can perceive (pouring water, bread and wine, etc.)

- **Form:** the words recited that actually produce the sacramental effect ("I baptize you..." "This is My body..." etc.)

Each sacramental rite, no matter how many other prayers and ceremonies the Church has prescribed for it, contains at least one sentence that either Catholic theologians or authoritative Church pronouncements have designated as its essential *sacramental form*.

B. Omitting the Form

All Catholics know verbatim at least one essential sacramental form: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

If at a baptism, the priest says *all* the other prayers and performs *all* the other ceremonies, but omits this one formula when he pours the water, the sacrament is invalid (does not "work"), the grace promised by Christ is not conferred and the baby is not baptized.

This much should be obvious.

C. Changes in the Form

But another question arises: What if the wording of a sacramental form is *changed*? How does this affect validity?

The answer depends on whether a change in *meaning* also results. Theologians distinguish between two types of change:

(1) **Substantial.** (*Meaning changed = invalid.*)

This occurs "when the meaning of the form itself is corrupted... if the words would have a meaning dif-

3. *Sel de la Terre* 54 (Fall 2005), 72–129.

ferent from that intended by the Church.”⁴ Or put another way: If the form “is changed in such a way that the meaning intended or willed by Christ is no longer completely and congruently expressed through it.”⁵

A substantial change in a sacramental form is introduced through *adding, omitting, corrupting, transposing, or exchanging* words in the form, or by interrupting them in such a way that the form no longer retains the same sense.⁶ Here are two examples:

- **Corruption of words:** A modernist priest says: “I baptize you in the name of the *Mother*, and of the Son...” He has introduced a new word that changes the *meaning* of one of the essential elements of the form — Father. The baptism is invalid.⁷

- **Omission of words:** A nervous young priest who has not memorized the form says: “I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son...,” omitting the word *you*. Or alternately, he says the word *you*, but omits the word *baptize*. Since a sacramental form must express in some way who is *receiving* the sacrament as well as the *sacramental action* itself, omitting the *you* or the *baptize* changes the meaning and renders the form invalid.⁸

(2) **Accidental.** (*Meaning same = still valid.*)

This is a change that does *not* alter substantial meaning.

Example: Instead of saying “I baptize you...,” the priest says “I *cleanse* you in the name of the Father...” Because he has merely substituted an exact synonym for one of the words in the form (“baptize” is Greek for “cleanse”), the meaning remained the same. The change was therefore only accidental. The baptism was valid.⁹

This distinction between a *substantial* and an *accidental* change will be a key concept in examining the validity of the 1968 form of episcopal consecration. If the new form constitutes a *substantial* change in meaning, it is invalid.

D. Using an Eastern Rite Form

The forms the **Eastern Rites** of the Catholic Church use to confer sacraments sometimes differ greatly in wording from those the Latin Rite uses. But **the substantial meanings are always the same.**

Example: The Ukrainian Rite uses the following form for Baptism: “The servant of God N. is baptized

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”¹⁰

This preserves each concept that theologians say must appear in a valid form for baptism: the minister (at least implicitly), the act of baptizing, the recipient, the unity of the divine essence, and the Trinity of persons expressed under distinct names.¹¹

In the case of an **Eastern schismatic group** that has submitted to the pope, moreover, the Church has examined the prayers and ceremonies of its sacramental rites to insure that they were free from doctrinal error and contained everything necessary for conferring true sacraments.

So, if a bishop or priest confers a sacrament using a sacramental form identical to one contained in a duly-approved Eastern Rite ritual book, one can be certain that the sacrament will be valid.

This principle will figure in our discussion as well, because Fr. Pierre-Marie bases much of his argument for the validity of the new rite on elements supposedly common both to Eastern Rite episcopal consecration forms and the new form of Paul VI.

It was also this same claim by Father Franz Schindberger — the new form was “Eastern Rite” — that led Archbishop Lefebvre to abandon his original position that the new rite of episcopal consecration was invalid.¹²

E. Requirements in a Form for Holy Orders

What specifically are we looking for in the new rite of episcopal consecration? What must the words of a form for conferring Holy Orders express?

Pius XII, in his Apostolic Constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis*, laid down the general principle when he declared that for Holy Orders these must “univocally signify the sacramental effects — that is, the power of the Order and the grace of the Holy Ghost.”¹³

Note the two elements that it must univocally (i.e., unambiguously) express: **the specific order being conferred** (diaconate, priesthood or episcopacy) and **the grace of the Holy Ghost.**

So we must therefore ascertain whether the new form is indeed “univocal” in expressing these effects.

F. Episcopal Consecration in Particular

In the same document, having laid down a general principle, Pius XII then declared that the following

4. H. Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae Moralis* 8th ed. (Montreal: Desclée 1949) 3:20. “Quando ipse sensus forma corrumpitur... habeat sensum diversum a sensu intento ab Ecclesia.”

5. M. Coronata, *De Sacramentis* (Turin: Marietti 1953) 1:13. “modificatur ita ut sensus a Christo intentus seu volitus non amplius per ipsam complete et congruenter exprimat.”

6. F. Cappello, *De Sacramentis* (Rome: Marietti 1951) 1:15.

7. Cappello 1:15, “forma irrita est, si nova vox ex corruptione in substantialibus inducatur.”

8. Cappello 1:15, “detractio: forma irritatur, si tollantur verba experimentia actionem sacramentalem aut subjectum.”

9. E. Regatillo, *Jus Sacramentarium* (Santander: Sal Terrae 1949), 8. “Transmutatione, adhibitibus verbis synonymis: si sint omnino synonyma et usu communi recepta, forma valet.”

10. Quoted Cappello 1:777.

11. See Merkelbach 3:127.

12. Bishop Donald Sanborn relates the following: In an early 1983 conversation with the Archbishop and Fr. Schmidberger over the SSPX/Vatican negotiations then taking place (*plus ça change...*), he asked how the Society could accept any solution *at all*, since the Archbishop had told us many times that he considered the new rite of episcopal consecration invalid. The Archbishop replied, “Apparently, it is valid,” and made a gesture for Fr. Schmidberger to speak, who then said, “It’s Eastern Rite.”

13. Const. Apost. *Sacramentum Ordinis* (30 November 1947), DZ 2301. ¶4. “quibus univoce significantur effectus sacramentales — scilicet potestas Ordinis et gratia Spiritus Sancti.”

words, contained in the consecratory Preface for the Rite of Episcopal Consecration, were the essential sacramental form for conferring the episcopacy:

“Complete in thy priest the fullness of Thy ministry, and adorned in the raiment of all glory, sanctify him with the dew of heavenly anointing.”¹⁴

This form univocally signifies the sacramental effects as follows:

(1) “The fullness of Thy ministry,” “raiment of all glory” = power of the Order of episcopacy.

(2) “The dew of heavenly anointing” = grace of the Holy Ghost.

The question is whether the new form does the same.

II. Origin of the New Rite

IN 1964 PAUL VI entrusted implementing the liturgical changes prescribed by Vatican II to a new Vatican agency known as the “Consilium.” This organization was composed of several hundred clergymen, divided according to their areas of expertise into thirty-nine “study groups.” The Secretary of Consilium and its real head was Fr. Annibale Bugnini, a liturgical modernist and alleged Freemason, who had written the Council’s *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*.

Study Group 20 had the task of “reforming” the rites for Holy Orders. Its head was the Benedictine monk Dom Bernard Botte (1893–1980), a specialist in Oriental liturgical languages and another liturgical modernist.

His most famous academic achievement was a new scholarly edition of *The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus*, a collection of ancient Christian liturgical texts.¹⁵ One of these would become the New Mass’s Eucharistic Prayer II — minus its original references to the devil, hell, the salvation of just believers alone, and the sacrificing priest.

Dom Botte proposed that another text from this same collection be introduced into the Rite of Episcopal Consecration to replace the traditional consecratory Preface. The old Preface, he said, had “poor doctrinal content,” was oriented “almost exclusively towards the bishop’s liturgical role,” was a “hybrid formula, poorly balanced.”¹⁶ Something was needed that better expressed the theology of Vatican II.

The prayer for episcopal consecration from Hippolytus, said Dom Botte, survived in “more evolved” versions in the Syrian and Coptic Eastern Rites. Used in the Roman Rite, he said, it also “would affirm a unity of outlook between East and West on the epis-

copacy” — i.e., thrill the eastern schismatics, who also used these rites. “This was an ecumenical argument. It was decisive.”¹⁷

So Botte’s text, lifted nearly verbatim from his 1963 work, became the new Preface for Episcopal Consecration when Paul VI promulgated it in June 1968.¹⁸

III. The Paul VI Form

Paul VI designated the following passage in the Preface as the new form for the consecration of a bishop:

“So now pour out upon this chosen one that power which is from you, the governing Spirit whom you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Spirit given by him to the holy apostles, who founded the Church in every place to be your temple for the unceasing glory and praise of your name.”¹⁹

The dispute over the validity of the new Rite of Episcopal Consecration centers on this passage.

At first glance, it does seem to mention the Holy Ghost. However, it does not appear to specify the power of Holy Order being conferred — the fullness of the priesthood that constitutes the episcopacy — that the traditional form so clearly expressed.

So, is this new form capable of conferring the episcopacy?

To answer that, we will apply the principles outlined in section one. We proceed from stronger arguments for validity to weaker ones.

IV. An Eastern Rite Form?

Question: *Was the new form employed in a Catholic Eastern Rite as the sacramental form for conferring the episcopacy?*

If so, this would be the strongest evidence for arguing that the new form is valid. One could demonstrate that it therefore met the criteria Pius XII enunciated regarding the form for Holy Orders, because it would already be among the words “accepted and used by the Church in that sense.”²⁰

In his Apostolic Constitution promulgating the new rite, Paul VI says that new Preface for Episcopal Consecration is taken from *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (a document we shall discuss in section V), which continues to be used “in large part” for episco-

14. *Sacr. Ord.* Dz 2301, ¶5. “Comple in Sacerdote tuo ministerii tui summam, et ornamentis totius glorificationis instructum coelestis unguenti rore sanctifica.”

15. *La Tradition Apostolique de Saint Hippolyte: Essai de Reconstitution*, 2nd ed. (Munster: Aschendorff 1963).

16. B. Botte, “L’Ordination de l’Évêque,” *Maison-Dieu* 97 (1969), 119-20.

17. B. Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider’s View of Liturgical Renewal* (Washington: Pastoral 1988), 135.

18. Apostolic Constitution *Pontificalis Romani* (18 June 1968), AAS 60 (1968), 369–73.

19. ICEL translation. “Et nunc effunde super hunc Electum eam virtutem, quae a te est, Spiritum principalem, quem dedisti dilecto Filio Tuo Jesu Christo, quem Ipse donavit sanctis Apostolis, qui constituerunt Ecclesiam per singula loca, ut sanctuarium tuum, in gloriam et laudem indeficientem nominis tui.”

20. *Sacr. Ord.*, DZ 2301, ¶4: “quaequae ab Ecclesia qua talia accipiuntur et usurpantur.”

pal consecrations by two Catholic Eastern Rites in particular: the **Coptic and the West Syrian**.

And indeed on this basis, Fr. Pierre-Marie argued: “The utilization of the form that is in use in two certainly valid Eastern rites assures its validity.”²¹

But is the factual claim really true? **Is the Paul VI form indeed in use in two Eastern Rites?**

All one need do is (1) ascertain from theology books which Eastern Rite consecration prayers are considered the sacramental forms, (2) look up those texts, and (3) compare them with the Paul VI form.

Two general points immediately emerge to defeat the Eastern Rite argument:

(1) The sacramental form that **Paul VI prescribed for conferring the episcopacy consists of merely one sentence**. Eastern Rite forms, however, consist of a *whole* prayer, or even a *series* of prayers, several *hundred* words long.

So on the face of it, the Paul VI form — a mere 42 words long in Latin — *cannot* be described as a form “in use in two certainly valid Eastern Rites.”

(2) Nor could one even claim that the *entire* Paul VI Preface of Episcopal Consecration (212 words long in Latin) is somehow a form “in use in two certainly valid Eastern Rites.” The Preface does indeed contain *some* phrases found in Eastern Rite forms — but there are significant omissions and variations. **It is still not identical to any one of them.**

So on both counts, the new form cannot be among the words “accepted and used by the Church” as a sacramental form for Holy Orders.

Here are some of the details.

A. Coptic Rite Form?

This uniate group descends from **monophysite heretics** (= Christ has only one nature), who, after the Council of Chalcedon (451) went into schism, led by the Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt, and then went into a long decline. (See Appendix.)

By the 19th century, enough Copts had renounced their errors and submitted to the pope for the Holy See to organize them into their own uniate Rite.

In 1898 their Synod decreed that, for the three major orders in the Coptic Rite, **“the form is the actual prayer which the ordaining bishop recites while imposing hands on the ordinand.”**²² The 19th-century dogmatic theologian Heinrich Denzinger, best known for his *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, a collection of dogmatic texts, also published a collection of Eastern Rite liturgical texts, the *Ritus Orientalium*. In his lengthy introduction to this work, Denzinger further specifies that the sacramental form for episcopal consecration in the Coptic Rite “is the prayer *Qui es, Dominator, Deus*

omnipotens, which in the ritual itself is called the [imposition-of-hands] prayer.”²³

Note the following:

(1) **This prayer is a Preface about 340 words long in a Latin version.**²⁴ The Paul VI form is 42 words long. The two forms, therefore, cannot be equated.

(2) This lengthy Coptic form mentions three specific sacramental powers considered *proper to the order of bishop alone*: “to provide clergy according to His commandment for the priesthood... to make new houses of prayer, and to consecrate altars.”²⁵

Though the Paul VI Preface surrounding the new form contains many phrases found in the Coptic form (including “governing spirit,” which we shall discuss below), *these phrases are missing*.

This omission is particularly significant, because the dispute over **the validity of the Paul VI form revolves around whether it adequately expresses the power of the Order being conferred — i.e., episcopacy.**

B. Maronite Rite Form?

In the 5th century, some Syrians became monophysite heretics, and (like the Copts) went into schism after the Council of Chalcedon. These are also known as “Jacobites,” after Jacob Baradai, who was clandestinely consecrated a bishop in the 6th century and organized their movement.

Other West Syrians who opposed the monophysites came to be called Maronites (after the monastery of St. Maro, their center). Most Maronites eventually settled in Lebanon and were known for their deep devotion to the Holy See.

The **Maronites** adopted some externals of the Roman Rite (vestments, altar style, etc.) but continued otherwise to **follow the Rite of Antioch**, one of the ancient patriarchal sees.

According to Denzinger, the **form for the episcopacy in the Maronite Rite consists of the prayers: “Deus qui universam Ecclesiam tuam per istos pontifices in manus impositione exornas, etc., Deus deorum et Dominus dominantium.”**²⁶

Comparing this with the Paul VI form reveals the following:

23. H. Denzinger, *Ritus Orientalium, Coptorum, Syrorum et Armenorum* (Würzburg: Stahel 1863), hereafter “RO,” 1:140. “Apud Coptitas est oratio illa, Qui es, Dominator, Deus omnipotens, quae in ipso rituale eorum dicitur oratio *cheirotónias*.”

24. See RO 2:23–24. It is divided into two sections. According to the rubric in the footnote, the consecrating bishop continues to hold his hand imposed during the part following the interjection of the Archdeacon.

25. Translation in O.H.E. KHS-Burmester, *Ordination Rites of the Coptic Church* (Cairo: 1985), 110–1. RO 2:24 renders the “provide clergy...priesthood” phrase into Latin as: “constitutendi clericos (*klēros* Arabs: Clericos) secundum mandatum ejus ad sanctuarium,” giving “in ordine sacerdotali” in a footnote.

26. RO 1:141. “Apud Syros, Maronitas et Jacobitas, forma episcopatus ex Assemano est in illis duabus orationibus vel in eorum altera: Deus, qui universam Ecclesiam tuam per istos pontifices in manus impositione exornas, etc., Deus deorum et Dominus dominantium, quae apud utrosque sequuntur, postquam episcopus manum impositam tenens dixerit: Etiam, [sic] Domine Deus etc.” The text Denzinger gives for the prayer in RO 2:195 actually begins with “Eia” rather than “Etiam.” The Maronites use both prayers.

21. “Why the New Rite...” (Jan 2005), 10.

22. Quoted Cappello 4:732. “In collatione trium ordinum majorum... forma est ipsa oratio quam ordinans recitat, dum manus ordinando imponit.”

(1) The Maronite form is a Preface at least 370 words long, interspersed with impositions of the bishop's hand on the head of the candidate. It prays that the candidate receive the "sublime episcopal order," with subsequent prayers twice begging God to "perfect" his grace and priestly ministry.²⁷ This form has *nothing* in common with the Paul VI form.

(2) On a following page of the Maronite Rite for Episcopal Consecration, there is a prayer that has *some* phrases in common with the Paul VI form (e.g. "governing Spirit") and Preface ("loose bonds") but, even though it occurs in the ceremony, this is *not* the Maronite sacramental form.²⁸

(3) The Maronite prayer that most closely resembles the Paul VI form and Preface of Episcopal Consecration is one found in the Rite for the Consecration of a Maronite Patriarch.²⁹ And indeed Fr. Pierre-Marie reproduces much of the text to support arguments for the validity of the new rite.

However, this prayer is not a sacramental form for conferring the episcopacy. It is merely an installation prayer, because the Maronite Patriarch is *already* a bishop when he is appointed.

C. Syrian Rite Form?

From the 17th-19th centuries, various Syrian Jacobite bishops, including even a Patriarch of Antioch, abjured their errors and submitted to the Holy See. In the 19th century the pope set up a Syrian Rite Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch headquartered in Beirut, Lebanon. (In the mid-20th century, many Syrian Rite Catholics lived in Iraq.)

The Syrians, like the Maronites, follow the Antiochene Rite, but there are some differences.

The form for episcopal consecration in the Syrian rite, according to Denzinger, consists of either the same prayers used by the Maronites, or another: "*Deus, qui omnia per potentiam tuam,*"³⁰ recited after the Patriarch imposes his right hand on the ordinand's head.

Once again, we compare this with the Paul VI form:

(1) The Syrian form is about 230 words long,³¹ versus 42 words in the Paul VI form. Again, it is not the same.

(2) In even greater detail than the Coptic form, the Syrian form enumerates specific sacramental powers considered proper to the order of bishop: May he "create priests, anoint deacons, consecrate altars and

churches, bless houses, call forth vocations to ecclesiastical work."³²

And once again, even though the Paul VI form and Preface contain *some* phrases present in the Syrian form (e.g., "governing... Spirit," "feed" [the flock], "loose bonds"), the *foregoing* expressions are *absent*.

(3) In the Syrian Rite as in the Maronite Rite, the prayer that most closely resembles the Paul VI form and Preface is the one used for "consecrating" a Patriarch.³³

Once again, however, it is not a *sacramental* prayer for consecrating a bishop, and this is clear from the following:

- The Syrian liturgical book prescribes the same order of service and prayers for consecrating a bishop and for consecrating the Patriarch, with but one change in the text. For the consecration of the Patriarch, the presiding bishop *omits* the prayer designated as the *form* for episcopal consecration (the prayer *Deus, qui omnia per potentiam tuam*), and substitutes "the Prayer of Clement,"³⁴ the text that resembles the Paul VI Preface.

- Two different terms in Syriac are used to distinguish the *sacramental* rite for the consecration of a bishop from the *non-sacramental* rite for the consecration of a patriarch. The first rite is called an "imposition of hands," while the second is referred to with a term meaning "to confide or invest someone with a duty."³⁵

A Syrian liturgist explains: "In the first case [episcopal consecration], the ordinand receives a charism different from the one he already possesses... In the second, the Patriarch does not receive a charism different from the one he received at the time he was made a bishop."³⁶

27. RO 2:195. "recipiat sublimem episcoporum ordinem." RO 196-7: "perficere nobiscum gratiam tuam tuumque donum." "perficere...sacerdotale ministerium."

28. RO 2:198. "Spiritus...Sanctum, illum principalem." "expellat omnia ligamina."

29. RO 2:220.

30. RO 1:141. "In ordine autem nostro ex codice Florentino desumpto, non occurrit nisi haec una: Deus, qui omnia per potentiam tuam."

31. RO 2:97.

32. RO 2:97. "eo fine ut... sacerdotes constituat, diaconos ungat: consecrat altaria et ecclesias: domibus benedicat: vocationes ad opus (ecclesiasticum) faciat."

33. For the prayer instituting the Patriarch, see B. DeSmet, "Le Sacre des Evêques dans l'Église Syrienne: Texte," *L'Orient Syrien* 8 (1963), 202-4.

34. De Smet, 166-7. "Par le même rite de la chirotonie, c'est-à-dire, les mêmes prières et le même office avec lesquelles le patriarche lui-même sacre les métropolitains et les évêques, par ces mêmes rites ils le sacreront eux aussi... il y a, dans le sacre du patriarche, trois éléments qui lui sont propre, à savoir:... 2° L'invocation du Saint-Esprit, dont il est écrit de Clément, et que nous donnerons plus loin: *elle est dit uniquement sur le patriarche* par les pontifes qui l'établissent." (My emphasis. The first and third elements are the election and the manner of giving the crosier.) The episcopal consecration form and the installation prayer appear successively on pp. 202-04, where it is easy to compare the difference in contents.

35. G. Khouris-Sarkis, "Le Sacre des Evêques dans l'Église Syrienne: Introduction," *L'Orient Syrien* 8 (1963), 140-1, 156-7. "Mais le pontificale... fait une distinction entre la consécration conférée aux évêques et celle qui est conférée au patriarche... et c'est pour cela que le pontificale appelle cette consécration 'sym'ido d-Episcqûfé,' imposition des mains aux évêques. The word used in the title of the ceremony for the patriarch, "'Mettas'rhonûto,' est l'action de confier une charge à quelqu'un, de l'en investir."

36. Khouris-Sarkis, 140-1. "Dans la première, l'élu reçoit un charisme différent de celui qu'il possédait déjà... Dans le second, le patriarche ne reçoit un charisme différent de celui qu'il a reçu au moment où il a été créé évêque."

D. Not an Eastern Form.

We began this section with a question: *Was the new form employed in a Catholic Eastern Rite as the sacramental form for conferring the episcopacy?*

The answer is no, because:

- The Paul VI form is *not* identical to the Eastern Rite forms.
- In particular, the lengthy Eastern Rite forms mention either perfecting the priesthood or specific sacramental powers proper to a bishop alone (ordaining priests, etc.). The Paul VI form does not.
- In the Maronite and Syrian Rites, the prayer that most closely resembles the Paul VI consecration preface is not the *sacramental form* for conferring the episcopacy, but a *non-sacramental* prayer for installing a Patriarch, who is usually already a bishop when he is appointed.

So, one cannot argue that the Paul VI form is valid because it is in use as a sacramental form “in two certainly valid Eastern Rites.”

It is *not* among the words “accepted and used by the Church in that sense,” and there is no guarantee of validity on this basis.

V. Another Approved Form?

Question: *Was the new form employed as the sacramental form for conferring the episcopacy in some other rite in the past that enjoyed at least tacit approval from the Church?*

Such evidence, though not as strong a proof for validity as use in a Catholic Eastern Rite, would add at least *some* weight to the argument that the new form is valid.

Above, we mentioned that the Paul VI Preface for Episcopal Consecration was taken nearly verbatim from an ancient prayer for consecrating a bishop that appears in Dom Botte’s 1963 edition of *The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus*. It also has parallels in other ancient texts such as *The Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Testament of the Lord*.

Fr. Pierre-Marie also employed these texts as evidence to argue that the new rite is valid.

How much certitude can we have that (1) these texts themselves were actual sacramental forms used to confer the episcopacy, and (2) they received at least tacit approval from the Church as such — that even in a broad sense they were “accepted and used by the Church in that sense”?

Alas, if by “certitude,” we mean the certitude Catholic moral theology requires for conferring or receiving a valid sacrament, our answer must be: None at all. For we immediately descend into the mystifying world of scholarly debates over the authorship, origin,

dating, reconstruction and deciphering of 1700-year-old texts.

A. Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus?

Here are some of the preliminary problems we discover:

(1) **Identity of Author?** The Jesuit expert on Eastern liturgies, Jean-Michel Hanssens, devotes nearly one hundred pages to trying to identify Hippolytus: Was he the same Hippolytus associated with an Easter computation table? The one represented by a statue? The one reputed to be a native Roman? Or the Egyptian one? The pope’s counselor? Or the anti-pope? The priest Hippolytus? Or a bishop? Or the martyr? Or one of the several saints in the martyrology?³⁷

The best we can manage is scholarly conjecture.

(2) **Origin?** Where did *The Apostolic Tradition* come from? Some say Rome; others say Alexandria, Egypt. More conjecture.

(3) **Age?** How old is it? “Usually” dated around 215 AD, but “the section dealing with ordination *may have been retouched* by fourth-century hands in order to bring it into line with current doctrine and practice.”³⁸

Note: “retouched.” More scholarly conjecture is needed to tell us which parts of the document were retouched.

(4) **Manuscript Authority?** How much confidence can we put in the originals? Well, we don’t even *have* them:

“The Greek original of the document has not survived, except in the form of a few isolated fragments. [I]t has to be *reconstructed* from an extant Latin translation and from later Coptic, Arabic and Ethiopic versions, as well as from the use made of it by compilers of later Church orders, which *increases the difficulty of determining exactly what the author wrote.*”³⁹

Hence, the subtitle of Dom Botte’s 1963 edition: *An Attempt at Reconstruction*.⁴⁰ At least a half-dozen other scholars (Connolly, Dix, Easton, Elfers, Lorentz, Hanssens) have made similar attempts.

Reconstruction, said Dom Botte, can “bring us back only to an archetype, and not the original.”⁴¹

So, we have only more conjecture, but this won’t even get us the original.

(5) **Liturgical Use?** Does the text accurately reflect actual use?

“It is not easy to distinguish what represents a real usage from the ideal,”⁴² said Dom Botte in 1963. The

37. *La Liturgie d’Hippolyte: Ses Documents, Son Titulaire, Ses Origines et Son Caractere* (Rome: Oriental Institute 1959), 249–340.

38. P. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of East and West* (New York: Pueblo 1990), 3.

39. Bradshaw, 3–4. My emphasis.

40. “*Essai de Reconstitution.*”

41. *La Tradition...Essai*, xxxiii–iv.

42. *La Tradition...Essai*, xiv.

prayers *The Apostolic Tradition* contains were given as “models, and not as fixed formulas.”⁴³

And finally, said Dom Botte, in the *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, “Its origin, whether Roman or [Egyptian] is not really important here. Even if it is a Roman document, it should not be viewed as the Roman liturgy of the 3rd century, a time when the liturgy left a great deal of room for a celebrant to improvise.”⁴⁴

And so, multiple volumes of scholarly works produce a *model* for an episcopal consecration prayer that was not necessarily followed word-for-word anyway.

This does not exactly build our confidence.

B. Apostolic Constitutions?

An impressive title, to be sure. However, it is “a composite revision” of three earlier Church orders.

The *Constitutions* appears to have originated in Syria, “and is generally thought to be the work of an Arian [heretic] who was to some extent composing an idiosyncratic idealization rather than always reproducing exactly liturgical practice with which he was familiar.”⁴⁵

A composite dreamed up by a heretic?

C. Testament of Our Lord?

An even more impressive title! Alas, it “probably” dates from the 5th century and “seems” to have been composed in Syria.

Moreover, “Although originally written in Greek, it is extant only in Syriac, Arabic and Ethiopic versions. Like the *Apostolic Constitutions*, it is doubtful how far it represents actual historical practice.”⁴⁶

Doubtful historical practice?

D. No Proof of Approved Use.

The question that began this section was: *Was the new form employed as the sacramental form for conferring the episcopacy in some other rite in the past that enjoyed at least tacit approval from the Church?*

Our answer: We have absolutely no idea, because:

- We have no definitive original texts.
- We have “reconstructed” texts based on nothing more than the authority of scholarly theories about which readings were correct.
- We do not know whether these texts were actually used to consecrate bishops.
- We have no record of Church approval.

So, one cannot argue on the basis of these texts that the Paul VI form is valid. None of them have been

“accepted and used by the Church in that sense,” so there is no guarantee of validity on this basis either.

VI. Power of the Episcopacy?

Question: *Does the new sacramental form univocally signify the sacramental effects — the power of Order (the episcopacy) and the grace of the Holy Ghost?*

These are the criteria Pius XII laid down for the sacramental form. Here again is the new form of Paul VI to which we will apply them:

“So now pour out upon **this chosen one that power** which is from you, the **governing Spirit** whom you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Spirit given by him to the holy apostles, who founded the Church in every place to be your temple for the unceasing glory and praise of your name.”⁴⁷

The form does seem to signify the grace of the Holy Ghost.

But “*governing Spirit*”? **Lutheran, Methodist and Mormon bishops also govern.** Can such a term univocally signify the power of Order conferred — the fullness of the priesthood?

The expression *governing Spirit* — *Spiritus principalis* in Latin — is at the heart of the dispute over the validity of the new rite, for if it does *not* signify the fullness of the priesthood that constitutes the episcopacy, the sacrament is invalid.

A. Early Doubts about Validity

The casual reader will of course be tempted to dismiss this as some crackpot traditionalist fever dream. But forty years ago, even before the new rite was promulgated, a member of the study group that created the new rite of episcopal consecration raised just this issue.

In an October 14, 1966 memo, Bishop Juan Hervás y Benet (1905-1982), the Ordinary of Ciudad Real (Spain) and a promoter of **Opus Dei**, wrote to fellow study group members:

“It would be necessary to establish undeniably that the new form better and more perfectly signifies the sacramental action and its effect. That is to say, that *it should be established in no uncertain terms that it contains no ambiguity*, and that it omits nothing from among the principal charges which are proper to the episcopal order.... *A doubt occurs to me concerning the words ‘Spiritus principalis’; do these words adequately signify the sacrament?*”⁴⁸

43. *La Tradition...Essai*, xvi

44. Louvain conference notes, July 1961, “Le Rituel d’Ordination dans la ‘Tradition Apostolique’ d’Hippolyte,” *Bulletin du Comité* 36 (1962), 5.

45. Bradshaw, 4.

46. Bradshaw, 4-5.

47. ICEL translation. “Et nunc effunde super hunc Electum eam virtutem, quae a te est, Spiritum principalem, quem dedisti dilecto Filio Tuo Jesu Christo, quem Ipse donavit sanctis Apostolis, qui constituerunt Ecclesiam per singula loca, ut sanctuarium tuum, in gloriam et laudem indeficientem nominis tui.

48. German Liturgical Institute (Trier), Kleinheyer file, B 117; cited Pierre-Marie, “Why the New Rite...” (Jan 2005), 15. My emphasis.

Whether he received an answer is not recorded. But consider what the bishop's question implied at the time for anyone with serious theological training: Will introducing this expression in the form expose the sacrament to the risk of invalidity?

After Paul VI promulgated the new rite for Holy Orders in June 1968, it had to be translated into various modern languages. The expression *Spiritus principalis* immediately caused problems. The first official English translation rendered it as "excellent Spirit"; French, as "the Spirit that makes chiefs" or "leaders"; German, as "the spirit of a guide."

These expressions probably led some of the more conservative bishops at the time to fear for the apostolic succession, because Rome suddenly issued two declarations on the translation of sacramental forms within three months (October 1973 and January 1974).⁴⁹

The latter declaration from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, moreover, was reprinted in *Notitiae* (the official publication of the Congregation for Divine Worship), accompanied by a rather strange commentary. The author, a Dominican, specifically mentioned Pius XII's 1947 Constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis*, the "substance of the sacraments," how each new sacramental formula "continues to signify the special grace conferred by the sacrament," and the need to "preserve the validity of the sacramental rite."⁵⁰

A coincidence? In the same issue of *Notitiae*, about a dozen pages later, we come across a short article by Dom Bernard Botte OSB explaining the meaning of — surprise! — *Spiritus principalis*.

Clearly, this Latin expression had a lot of people worried.

B. Governing Spirit = Episcopacy?...

Dom Botte's explanation of *Spiritus principalis* was essentially as follows:

- The expression "raised several difficulties" and led to various translations.
- It occurs in Psalm 50:14, but its meaning there is not necessarily linked to what the expression in the consecration prayer meant for the 3rd-century Christian.
- "Spirit" designates the Holy Ghost.

49. SC Divine Worship, Circular Letter *Dum Toto Terrarum*, 25 October 1973, AAS 66 (1974) 98-9; SC Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Instauratio Liturgica*, 25 January 1974, AAS 66 (1974), 661. The second document explained that when the Holy See approves a translation, it judges that it "rightly expresses the meaning intended by the Church," but that it also stipulates that the translation "is to be understood in accord with the mind of the Church as expressed by the original Latin text." This statement is bizarre. A translation either conveys the substantial meaning of the Latin or it does not. If the latter, it is invalid no matter what anyone "stipulates" — except Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass*: "When I use a word... it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less."

50. B. Douroux, "Commentarium," *Notitiae* 10 (1974), 394-5. "purché la nuova formula continui a significare la grazia speciale conferita dal sacramento."

• But what did the Greek word *hegemonikos* and its Latin equivalent *principalis* mean in the Christian vocabulary of the 3rd century?

• It meant this: Each of the three Holy Orders has a gift of the Holy Ghost, but not the same for each. Deacons = "spirit of zeal and solicitude," priests = "spirit of counsel."

• Bishops have the "spirit of authority."

• The bishop is both leader who must govern and high priest of the sanctuary. He is the ruler of the Church. So the word *hegemonikos/principalis* is understandable.

• *Spiritus principalis* therefore means the "gift of the Spirit proper to a leader."⁵¹

After this statement appeared, various vernacular translations were adjusted, and the official English translation became *governing Spirit*.

C. ... or Governing Spirit = Who Knows?

So, it was a very erudite-sounding explanation. Unfortunately, it was false — a typical case of the brazen double-talk modernists excel at when they are caught out. *Spiritus principalis* can mean many things, but the "power of Order" proper to the episcopacy isn't one of them.

This becomes clear after a brief survey of what *governing Spirit* can signify, in either its Latin form (*Spiritus principalis*) or its interchangeable Greek form (*hegemonikos*).

(1) **Dictionaries.** Latin and Greek dictionaries render the adjective *governing* as, respectively, "Originally existing, basic, primary... first in importance or esteem, chief... befitting leading men or princes,"⁵² and "of a leader, leading, governing" or "guiding."⁵³

There is a related noun, *hegemonia*, which in general means "authority, command," and in a secondary sense means "rule, office of a superior: episcopal... of a superior of a convent... hence of sphere of bishop's rule, diocese."⁵⁴

But even in this sense, it does not connote the power of Order (*potestas Ordinis*), just jurisdiction (*potestas jurisdictionis*), especially since the definition mentions a monastic superior.

(2) **Psalm 50.** In ecclesiastical Latin or Greek, the first text usually cited for *governing* is King David's prayer in Ps 50:14, where it is used with *spirit*. The expression is translated into English as a *perfect spirit*,

51. B. Botte, "'Spiritus Principalis' Formule de l'Ordination Épiscopale," *Notitiae* 10 (1974), 410-1. "c'est le don de l'Esprit qui convient à un chef."

52. P. Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon 1994). Similarly: A. Forcellini, *Lexicon Totius Latinitatis* (Padua: 1940); A. Souter, *Glossary of Later Latin to 600 AD* (Oxford: Clarendon 1949); C. Lewis & C. Short, *A New Latin Dictionary* (New York: 1907).

53. G. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon 2000). F. Gingrich & F. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University Press 1957).

54. Lampe, 599.

which commentators explain as “a ‘generous’ or noble spirit.”⁵⁵

Despite Dom Botte’s claim that the meaning of *governing Spirit* in the Psalm was unrelated to its supposed 3rd century meaning in the prayer for episcopal consecration, a Greek patristic dictionary *directly* links both passages and even quotes the Greek excerpt from Hippolytus.⁵⁶

(3) **Church Fathers.** They construe *governing Spirit* in various ways, as referring to the Father,⁵⁷ the Holy Ghost,⁵⁸ the virtue of fortitude,⁵⁹ a mighty power that strengthens against temptations,⁶⁰ etc.

(4) **A Dogmatic Treatise.** In his work on the Trinity Msgr. Pohle says that *governing Spirit* in the Psalm does *not* mean the Holy Ghost itself, but nothing more than an “external divine effect,” a “supernatural spirit of rectitude and self-control, i.e., a good disposition.”⁶¹

(5) **A 1962 Commentary on Hippolytus.** The ancient prayer for episcopal consecration, says Roger Beraudy, presents the bishop as both leader and high priest successively. *Governing Spirit* appears in the section of the prayer that presents the bishop as “leader of the Church,” rather than in the following section that Beraudy identifies as presenting “the bishop as high priest.”⁶²

(6) **Non-Sacramental Ceremonies.** The Coptic Rite, apart from its sacramental prayer for episcopal consecration, also employs the expression *governing Spirit* in two non-sacramental ceremonies.

a. In the Coptic Church, as in the Catholic Church, an abbot is not a bishop, but merely a simple priest who is the head of a monastery. When a Coptic abbot (hegoumenos) is installed, the bishop imposes his hand on the priest’s head and says a prayer that God will grant the priest “a *governing Spirit* of gentleness and love and patience and graciousness.”⁶³

b. For the promotion of a Coptic bishop to the rank of archbishop (metropolitan), in which it is prayed that God pour forth his *governing Spirit*, “the knowledge which is Thine, which he hath received in Thy holy Church.”⁶⁴

55. B. Orchard ed., *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Nelson 1953), 457.

56. Lampe, 599. “Ps 50:14: cf. Hipp.trad.ap.3.3”;

57. Origen, *In Jer Hom.* 8, PG 13:336.

“Τίνα τα τρία πνευματα ταυτα; Το ηγεμονικον ο Πατηρ.”

58. Origen, *Comm. In Ep. Ad Rom.* 7, PG 14:1103. “sed in his principatum et dominationem hunc Spiritum sanctum, qui et principalis appellatur, tenere.” Cyril of Alexandria, *Dubia de Trinitate* 9, PG 77:1140.

“το του Θεου Πνευμα, το ευθες, το ηγεμονικον.” Basil the Great, *Adv.*

Eunomium 5.3, PG 29:753. “το Πνευμα ... και ηγεμονικον.”

59. Cyril of Alexandria, *Expl. In Psalmos* 50:14, PG 69:1100-1.

“τοι ηγεμονικου Πνευματι, οπερ εστιν η δια του αγιου Πνευματος ευανδρια.”

60. Athanasius, *Ep. Ad Amunem Mon.*, PG 26:1176.

“Και Πνευματι ηγεμονικου ... ισχυρα τις παρα σου δυναμεις.”

61. J. Pohle, *The Divine Trinity: A Dogmatic Treatise*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Herder 1915), 97.

62. R. Beraudy, “Le Sacrement de l’Ordre d’après la Tradition Apostolique d’Hippolyte,” *Bulletin du Comité* 36 (1962), 341, 342.

63. Tr. Burmester, *Ordination Rites...Coptic*,” 97. “hegemonicon pneuma.” Also RO 2:17. “spiritum hegemonicum.”

64. Tr. Burmester, *Ordination Rites...Coptic*,” 118. “hegemonicon pneuma. Also RO 2:34. “in spiritu tuo hegemonico.

(7) **Another Expert.** And in 1969, before it became a matter of controversy, we find at least one expert who said that *omitting* the expression *governing Spirit* wouldn’t even necessarily alter the validity of the rite:

“If one were to omit inadvertently the words *spiritum principalem*, I don’t see what that would change.”

The expert? Dom Bernard Botte.⁶⁵

(8) **Who Knows?** Our brief survey, then, uncovered a dozen possible meanings for *governing Spirit*:

- Originally existing spirit.
- Leading/guiding spirit.
- Perfect spirit like King David.
- Generous or noble spirit.
- God the Father.
- God the Holy Ghost.
- An external divine effect.
- Supernatural spirit of rectitude/self control.
- Good disposition.
- For a Coptic abbot: gentleness, love, patience and graciousness.
- For a Coptic archbishop: divine knowledge, received through the Church.
- Some quality whose omission wouldn’t change validity anyway.

None of these specifically signify either the episcopacy in general or the fullness of Holy Orders that a bishop possesses.

D. Univocally Signify the Effect?

We now begin to apply a few more of our criteria from section I.

Pius XII, in his Apostolic Constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis* declared that the form for Holy Orders must “univocally signify the sacramental effects — that is, the power of the Order and the grace of the Holy Ghost.”⁶⁶

The new form fails on two of these points.

(1) **Not Univocal.** The expression *governing Spirit* is not *univocal* — that is, it is not a term that signifies only *one thing*,⁶⁷ as Pius XII required.

Rather, as we demonstrated above, the expression is *ambiguous* — capable of signifying *many different things and persons*.

We do, among its various meanings, find one meaning connoting the Holy Ghost — but not in a sense exclusively limited to bishops. Coptic abbots, King David, and virtuous leaders can *all* receive this *governing Spirit*.

65. B. Botte, “L’Ordination...” 123. “mais si on ommetait par inadvertance les mots ‘spiritum principalem’ je ne vois pas ce que cela changerait.” Botte, a typical modernist, devotes two pages of this article to dismissing the standard safeguards for the validity of an episcopal consecration that had been introduced based on the principles of moral and dogmatic theology.

66. *Sacr. Ord.* DZ 2301. ¶4. “quibus univoce significantur effectus sacramentales — scilicet potestas Ordinis et gratia Spiritus Sancti.”

67. Forcellini, *Lexicon* 8:869. “proprie de eo qui unius est vocis... cui *multivocus* vel *plurivocus* opponitur.... ‘Univoca (*sunt*) quae sub eodem nomine et sub eadem substantia continentur.’”

(2) **No Power of Order.** Among these many different meanings, however, we do not find the power of Order (*potestas Ordinis*) of the episcopacy. The expression governing Spirit does not even equivocally connote the Sacrament of Holy Orders in any sense.

Still less does it connote what the theologians who advised Pius XII said the sacramental form for conferring the episcopate must express: the “fullness of the priesthood of Christ in the episcopal office and order” or the “fullness or totality” of the priestly ministry.”⁶⁸

One of the constituent elements for a form capable of conferring the order is therefore absent.

So, we have an answer to the question with which we began this section:

Does the new sacramental form univocally signify the sacramental effects — the power of Order (the episcopacy) and the grace of the Holy Ghost?

The answer is no.

VII. Substantial Change?

Question: *Is this a substantial change in the sacramental form for conferring the Order of episcopacy?*

A substantial change, as we saw in section I, occurs in a sacramental form “when the meaning of the form itself is corrupted,” if the words “would have a meaning different from that intended by the Church,”⁶⁹ if it no longer “completely and congruently” expresses the meaning intended or willed by Christ.⁷⁰

Now for Holy Orders, Pius XII told us *exactly* what elements a sacramental form ought to express — the grace of the Holy Ghost and the power of the Order being conferred.

The term *governing Spirit* in the new form for episcopal consecration promulgated by Paul VI may express the first of those elements, the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the pronoun beginning the clause that follows it — “whom [quem] you gave...” — clearly indicates it is supposed to refer to the Holy Ghost.

That same expression, *governing Spirit*, however, does not and cannot express the *other* required element — the power of the Order being conferred. That notion is entirely missing from the new sacramental form, which no longer adequately signifies what it is supposed to effect — the fullness of the priesthood that constitutes the episcopal order.

So, our question was: *Is this a substantial change in the sacramental form for conferring the Order of episcopacy?*

The answer is **yes**.

68. F. Hürth, “Commentarius ad Cons. Apostolicam Sacramentum Ordinis,” *Periodica* 37 (1948), 31–2. “plenitudinem sacerdotii Christi in munere et ordine episcopali.” “summa seu totalitas ministerii sacerdotialis.”

69. Merkelbach, 3:20.

70. Coronata, 1:13. “non amplius per ipsam complete et congruenter exprimitur.”

VIII. An Invalid Sacrament

Question: *How does this substantial change of meaning in the form affect the validity of the sacrament?*

A substantial change in the meaning of a sacramental form, as we have seen in section I, renders a sacrament invalid.

This leads us inexorably to our conclusion:

Accordingly, an episcopal consecration conferred with the form promulgated by Paul VI in 1968 is invalid.

We proceed to two objections.

IX. Saved by Context?

Objection: *Even if the essential part of the sacrament were insufficiently determined, it would nevertheless be adequately specified by the phrase “grant... that he show forth to Thee a high priesthood without blame”⁷¹ that occurs later in the context.*

Fr. Pierre-Marie briefly raised this objection.⁷² But one could make such an argument only if:

(1) The new sacramental form contained *both* elements required by Pius XII (the grace of the Holy Ghost and the power of the Order), and

(2) The form signified one of those elements *equivocally* rather than *univocally*.

One could then at least argue that the form indeed contained the element that Pius XII required and that the context adequately specified it.

However:

A. Certitude... or Opinion?

No matter how convincingly formulated, such an argument could never produce *moral certitude* that the new sacramental form was valid, only a *probable opinion* that it was. For the weighty counter-argument would always be that Pius XII required that the form be *univocal*, period.

It is not permissible in the administration and reception of sacraments to follow a mere probable opinion about validity. To do so is a mortal sin against religion, charity and (for the minister) against justice.⁷³

Further, this would hold all the more true regarding the administration of Holy Orders, because of the irreparable harm — invalid Masses, absolutions and Last Rites — that would result from its invalidity.

One could therefore neither confer nor receive Orders based on an *opinion* that the new rite of episcopal consecration is valid, nor function as a priest based on such an opinion.

71. *De Ordinatione Episcopi, Presbyterorum et Diaconorum*, ed. typ. alt. (Rome: Polyglot 1990), 25. “Da... ut... summum sacerdotium tibi exhibeat sine reprehensione.”

72. “Why the New Rite...” (Jan 2005), 10.

73. Cappello 1:25–6.

B. A Counter-Argument

And the argument from context, in any case, cuts both ways.

Other reconstructions of the episcopal consecration prayer in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus contain a petition to God that the bishop would receive “the power... to confer orders according to your bidding.”⁷⁴

The Paul VI Consecration Preface at this point instead asks that he receive the power to “distribute gifts (or offices) according to Thy command.”⁷⁵ The official English translation renders it as “assign ministries as you have decreed.”

A Mormon bishop with his own governing Spirit can assign ministries, and even Santa Claus can distribute gifts.

The notion of conferring Holy Orders — the distinctive power that characterizes the fullness of the priesthood — has been eliminated from the new Preface.

That the omission was deliberate is clear from the Coptic Rite form for episcopal consecration that Dom Botte consulted to reconstruct the text of Hippolytus. It further specifies after the foregoing phrase that the bishop is to provide clergy “for the priesthood... to make new houses of prayer, and to consecrate altars.”⁷⁶

The removal of the power to ordain from the Anglican form for episcopal consecration was among the reasons adduced by Leo XIII for declaring Anglican orders invalid, “because among the first duties of the episcopacy is that of ordaining ministers for the Holy Eucharist and sacrifice.”⁷⁷

C. Not Just Equivocal, but GONE

However, one may not even *make* the argument from context in favor of validity, because the new form **does not even equivocally signify** one of the elements Pius XII said the sacramental form must contain — the **power of the Order** being conferred.

That element is missing, so there is nothing for the context to determine or specify. Trying to do so is a futile effort.

If I recite *all* the prayers and perform *all* the ceremonies that the *Rituale Romanum* prescribes for a baptism, yet — God forbid — **omit the word “baptize” when I pour the water on a baby’s head, the sacrament is invalid.** All the prayers in the surrounding context — no matter how much they speak about baptism, cleansing, and the life of grace — *cannot* render the

74. Bradshaw, 107.

75. *De Ord. Ep.*, 25. “ut distribuat munera secundum praeceptum tuum.”

76. Burmester, *Ordination Rites*, 111.

77. *Apostolicae Curae*, 13 Sep 1896, DZ 1965. “eoque id magis, quia in primis episcopatus muniis scilicet est, ministros ordinandi in sanctam Eucharistiam et sacrificium.”

form valid. An *essential* element was missing from the form, so there is *nothing* — not even an equivocal term — for the context somehow to render specific.

So too, here. The power of Order is *gone* from the form, and context cannot bring it back.

All that remains is *governing Spirit*, which may refer to the Holy Ghost, or one of His effects, or the Father, or knowledge, or Coptic abbot-like virtues.

X. Approved by the Pope?

Objection: *Even if the essential sacramental form did not univocally signify one of the sacramental effects (the power of the Order of the episcopacy), approval by Pope Paul VI would nevertheless guarantee that the form was valid.*

This is the last and weakest argument for validity, not only because it assumes that authoritative declarations in the Church need no coherent theological justification,⁷⁸ but also because it wrongly attributes to the pope a power he does not possess.

A. No Power to Change?

In the beginning of *Sacramentum Ordinis*, Pius XII, reiterating the teaching of the Council of Trent, states: “the Church has no power over ‘the substance of the Sacraments,’ that is, over those things which, as is proved from the sources of divine revelation, Christ the Lord Himself established to be kept as sacramental signs.”⁷⁹

As regards Holy Orders, “The Church possesses no power over the *meaning* of the form, because it pertains to the substance of the sacrament instituted by Christ.”⁸⁰ Christ Himself prescribed that for Holy Orders the Church use signs and words “capable of expressing... the power of Order.”⁸¹

The new form for episcopal consecration does not express this power, even equivocally. It therefore changes the substance of a sacrament as established by Christ. No pope would have the power to render such a form valid.

B. Or a Change Means No Power?

If faith tells us that the Church has no power to change the substance of a sacrament, and we conclude

78. Nothing could be further from the truth. The theologians who prepared Pius XII’s 1947 declaration on the matter and form for Holy Orders studied the question for 40 years, and took great pains to insure that rigorous theological reasoning consistent with tradition supported every word of the draft. When it appeared, the head of the commission wrote a 50-page commentary to demonstrate this.

79. DZ 3201. “Ecclesia nulla competat potestas in ‘substantia Sacramentorum,’ id est in ea quae, testibus divinae revelationis fontibus, ipse Christus Dominus in signo sacramentali servanda statuit.”

80. Merkelbach 3:720. “Quantum ad sensum formae, quia pertinet ad substantiam sacramenti a Christo instituta, Ecclesiae nulla competit potestas.”

81. Merkelbach 3:18. “determinavit... quod ab Ecclesia adhiberentur signa et verba idonea ad exprimentum characterem et gratiam propriam Confirmationis, vel potestatem Ordinis.”

that Paul VI has *in fact* changed the substance of a sacrament — rendering it invalid in the process — we can arrive at but one conclusion: He was not a true pope.

The invalid Rite of Episcopal Consecration Paul VI promulgated, then, is just one more piece of evidence confirming the defection from the faith and resultant loss of authority by the Popes of Vatican II.

That the man who occupies the See of Rome is not a true bishop, moreover, should be ample proof that neither is he a true pope.

XI. Summary

WE HAVE COVERED a vast amount of material in the foregoing sections, so we will now offer the beleaguered reader a summary.

A. General Principles

(1) Each sacrament has a form (essential formula) that produces its sacramental effect. When a *substantial* change of meaning is introduced into the sacramental form through the corruption or omission of essential words, the sacrament becomes *invalid* (=does not “work,” or produce the sacramental effect).

(2) Sacramental forms approved for use in the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church are sometimes different in wording from the Latin Rite forms. Nevertheless, they are the same in *substance*, and are valid.

(3) Pius XII declared that the form for Holy Orders (i.e., for diaconate, priesthood and episcopacy) must *univocally* (=unambiguously) signify the sacramental effects — the *power of Order* and the *grace of the Holy Ghost*.

(4) For conferring the episcopacy, Pius XII designated as the sacramental form a sentence in the traditional Rite of Episcopal Consecration that unequivocally expresses the power of the order that a bishop receives and the grace of the Holy Ghost.

B. Application to the New Form

(1) The new form for episcopal consecration that Paul VI promulgated does not seem to specify the power of the Order supposedly being conferred. Can it confer the episcopacy? To answer this question, we apply the foregoing principles.

(2) The short Paul VI form for episcopal consecration is *not identical to the lengthy Eastern Rite forms*, and unlike them, does not mention sacramental powers proper to a bishop alone (e.g., ordaining). The Eastern Rite prayers that the surrounding Paul VI consecration Preface most closely resembles are *non-sacramental* prayers for the installations of the Maronite and Syrian Patriarchs, who are already bishops when appointed. In sum, one may not argue that

the Paul VI form is “in use in two certainly valid Eastern Rites” and therefore valid.

(3) Various ancient texts (Hippolytus, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the *Testament of Our Lord*) which share some common elements with the Paul VI consecration Preface have been “reconstructed,” *are of doubtful provenance*, may not represent actual liturgical use, etc. There is no evidence that they were “accepted and used by the Church as such.” Thus they provide no reliable evidence to support for the validity of the Paul VI form.

(4) The key problem in the new form revolves around the term *governing Spirit* (*Spiritus principalis* in Latin). Before and after the promulgation of the 1968 Rite of Episcopal Consecration the meaning of this expression provoked concerns about whether it sufficiently signified the sacrament.

(5) Dom Bernard Botte, the principal creator of the new rite, maintained that, for the 3rd-century Christian, *governing Spirit* connoted the episcopacy, because bishops have “the spirit of authority” as “rulers of the Church.” *Spiritus principalis* means “the gift of a Spirit proper to a leader.”

(6) This explanation is false and disingenuous. Reference to dictionaries, a Scripture commentary, the Fathers of the Church, a dogmatic treatise, and Eastern Rite non-sacramental investiture ceremonies reveals that, among a dozen different and sometimes contradictory meanings, *governing Spirit* does not specifically signify either the episcopacy in general or the fullness of Holy Orders that the bishop possesses.

(7) Before the controversy over it arose, Dom Botte himself even said that he didn’t see how omitting the expression *governing Spirit* would change the validity of the rite of consecration.

(8) The new form fails to meet two criteria for the form for Holy Orders laid down by Pius XII. (a) Because the term *governing Spirit* is capable of signifying many different things and persons, it does not *univocally signify* the sacramental effect. (b) It lacks any term that even *equivocally* connotes the *power of Order* that a bishop possess — the “fullness of the priesthood of Christ in the episcopal office and order,” or “the fullness or totality of the priestly ministry.”

(9) For these reasons, the new form constitutes a *substantial change* in the meaning of the sacramental form for conferring the episcopacy.

(10) A substantial change in the meaning of a sacramental form, as we have already demonstrated, renders a sacrament invalid.

C. Conclusion: An Invalid Sacrament

Accordingly, for all the foregoing reasons, an episcopal consecration conferred with the sacramental form promulgated by Paul VI in 1968 is *invalid*.

WHEN I WAS a seminarian in the Midwest during the late 1960s and early 1970s, I heard various modernists dismiss the traditional understanding of apostolic succession as “pipeline theology,” un-Scriptural myth and after-the-fact “faith reflection,” and mock the notion of sacramental forms as “magic words” and “mumbo-jumbo.”

During that same post-Vatican II era, modernist liturgical “experts” were hard at work fashioning the new rite of episcopal consecration. Having now read much of what they wrote — filled as it is with bogus claims of a “return to sources,” crafty double-talk, contempt for scholastic sacramental theology, and the stink of arrogance that rises from every page — I have no difficulty at all believing that these men set out to produce a rite that would destroy the apostolic succession as it was traditionally understood.⁸²

As we have seen, they have succeeded all too well. The eradication of sacramental apostolic succession is their little “joke” on the Church.

So, the modernists need mock the “pipeline” no longer. They cut it off in 1968. The bishops consecrated with this new rite do not possess the sacramental power of true bishops, and cannot validly consecrate other bishops or ordain true priests.

The priests who derive their ordination from such bishops cannot, in turn, validly confect the Eucharist at Mass, forgive sins or anoint the dying. This is a sin against the virtues of religion, justice and charity. The priests who in good faith receive invalid orders are deprived of the priestly character, and the laymen who receive invalid sacraments at their hands are deprived of grace.

It would be bad enough if this phenomenon of invalid sacraments were limited exclusively to parishes and clergy that fully embrace the Vatican II changes, but it has spread to circles where the traditional Latin Mass is offered as well.

Since 1984 diocesan-approved “Indult” traditional Masses have sprung up everywhere, offered by priests ordained by bishops consecrated with the new rite. These Masses are all invalid, but many innocent Catholics who do not know better attend them, adoring and receiving only bread.

Even more dangerous are the various clerical and religious institutes that now offer the traditional Latin

82. Dom Botte knew, for instance, that the West Syrian prayer for the consecration of the Patriarch was non-sacramental — that the title means “investiture ceremony,” rather than sacramental consecration, because “the Patriarch does not receive a charism different from the one he received at the time he became a bishop,” Khouris-Sarkis, 140-1, 156-7. He knew because he was a contributing editor for *L’Orient Syrien*, the periodical in which those words appeared. He also knew, because he himself wrote an article about it, that the true ancient sacramental form for conferring the episcopacy in the Syrian and Coptic rites was not “Hippolytus” but the formula “Divine Grace...” still used by the Byzantine Rite. “La grâce divine, sous la forme que nous trouvons dans l’eucologe byzantin, est la formule sacramentelle la plus ancienne dans le patriarchat syrien.” Botte, “La Formule d’Ordination,” *L’Orient Syrien* 2 (1957), 295.

Mass with full approval and recognition from the modernist hierarchy — the Fraternity of St. Peter, the Institute of Christ the King, the Apostolic Administration of St John Vianney, the Fogambault Benedictines, etc.

While giving an impression of splendidly maintaining integral Catholicism, these institutions are completely compromised. Their members must adhere fully to the errors of Vatican II and must cooperate with the modernist diocesan bishops and clergy.

Young men attracted to the glories of Catholicism and the ideals of the priesthood enter these seminaries and monasteries to be ordained one day in the full traditional, pre-Vatican II ceremony.

But they will exit that ceremony afterwards every bit the laymen who entered the seminary years before — for the bishop who ordained them will have possessed not the fullness of the priesthood, but the emptiness of the governing Spirit.

And as for the superiors of SSPX, their attempt to purchase a side chapel in Ratzinger’s One-World Ecumenical Church by defending his counterfeit episcopacy betrays the clergy, the faithful and the founder of the Society.

For despite the Society’s incoherent and dangerous teachings on the pope and the universal ordinary magisterium, one could at least take some consolation that it stood for the validity of the sacraments.

If the new line enunciated in Fr. Pierre-Marie’s article prevails, however, that will be gone. And should a “reconciliation” occur, it will then only be a matter of time before counterfeit clergy start surfacing throughout the SSPX’s apostolate — courtesy, perhaps, of a cardinal or even the “Bishop” of Rome himself, intent on making a gesture of his ecumenical good will.

Who, then, in the ranks of SSPX will have the courage to resist? Who, then, will thunder like Archbishop Lefebvre against these “bastard rites,” these “bastard priests,” these “bastard sacraments,” which may no longer give grace at all?⁸³

And the traditionalist laity, betrayed by the compromise of his sons, will once again wonder whether their sacraments are but an empty show — absolutely null and utterly void.

March 25, 2006
Abp. Lefebvre †
15th anniv.

83. Sermon, Lille (France), 29 August 1976. In M. Davies, *Apologia pro Marcel Lefebvre* (Dickinson TX: Angelus Press 1979) 1:262-3. “The rite of the [new] Mass is a bastard rite, the sacraments are bastard sacraments — we no longer know if they are sacraments which give grace or do not give grace... The priests coming out of the seminaries are bastard priests.”

Appendix 1

Two Notes on Fr. Pierre-Marie's Article.

A. Invalidly-Consecrated Doctors? Fr. Pierre-Marie argues that by attacking the validity of the new rite, one also implicitly attacks the ordinations and consecrations of various Eastern Doctors of the Church⁸⁴ — his assumption being that form for Holy Orders in Alexandria and Antioch was more or less the same as the rite of Paul VI.

Dom Botte himself, however, demonstrated that the true ancient sacramental form for conferring the Holy Orders in these rites was not "Hippolytus," but the formula "Divine Grace..." still used by the Byzantine Rite.⁸⁵

B. Comparison Tables. Fr. Pierre-Marie presents three impressive-looking tables of parallel Latin texts. With these he intends to demonstrate that the new Paul VI text for the consecration of bishops is fundamentally the same as texts for episcopal consecration used either in the Eastern Rites or the ancient Church, and is therefore valid.

But comparison tables are only as good as the texts selected, and the ones Fr. Pierre-Marie has chosen are quite useless for his argument.

His base text for comparison is the Latin version of the 1968 Preface for Episcopal Consecration, composed, of course by Dom Botte. Fr. Pierre-Marie provides us with the following texts to compare to it:

(1) *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*. This is Dom Botte's 1963 "reconstruction." Its inclusion in a comparison table, however, proves nothing about the validity of the 1968 form — just that Dom Botte could type the same text twice.

(2) *The Apostolic Constitutions*. This text is thought to be the work of an Arian heretic, is a composite, and may not represent actual liturgical practice.⁸⁶ Not a great proof for validity.

(3) *Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. It is doubtful how far this represents actual historical practice.⁸⁷ Again, not a great proof for validity either.

(4) *Consecration of the Maronite Patriarch*. This text is not the Maronite sacramental form for conferring episcopal consecration but a non-sacramental installation prayer for the Patriarch, who is already a bishop.⁸⁸

(5) *Coptic Rite of Episcopal Consecration*. Here Fr. Pierre-Marie at least provides a text based upon a form for episcopal consecration that is recognized as valid. Unfortunately:

(a) He has taken his Latin translation from Denzinger's *Ritus Orientalium*,⁸⁹ which in the case of the Coptic texts was based on another Latin version "filled throughout with mistranslations,"⁹⁰ and therefore "should be treated with caution."⁹¹

(b) This version mistranslates a phrase specifying the bishop's power "to provide clergy according to [Our Lord's] commandment for the priesthood."⁹² Dom Botte blurred this phrase in his 1963 reconstruction of Hippolytus as "to distribute portions," and in the 1968 episcopal consecration

84. "Why the New Rite," *The Angelus*, January 2006, 4.

85. See B. Botte, "La Formule d'Ordination," *L'Orient Syrien* 2 (1957), 295.

86. See article, section V.B.

87. See article, section V.C.

88. See article, section IV.C.

89. RO 2:23ff.

90. Emmanuel Lanne, "Les Ordinations dans le Rite Copte," *L'Orient Syrien* 5 (1960), 90-1. "Denzinger se base sur une version faite par Scholz... La traduction de Scholz contient des gros contresens."

91. Bradshaw, 8.

92. Trans. Burmester, *Ordination Rites*, 110-1. RO 2:24 renders the Coptic as "constitutendi clericos secundum mandatum ejus ad sanctuarium." The footnote reads: "in ordine sacerdotali."

Preface as "to distribute gifts."⁹³ This change should have set off alarms but didn't, because Fr. Pierre-Marie employed an unreliable translation.

In sum, Fr. Pierre-Marie presents in his tables three disputed ancient texts (Botte's "reconstructed" Hippolytus, the *Constitutions* and the *Testament*), a non-sacramental installation rite (for the Maronite Patriarch) and an unreliable translation (Denzinger/Scholz's Latin) that omits a key phrase (ordaining priests) from the Coptic sacramental form.

None of this, obviously, supports the validity of the new rite.

Appendix 2

A Note on Copts

After the 7th-century Moslem conquest of North Africa, the Copts went into a long decline.

Ill-educated candidates obtained the Patriarchate,⁹⁴ sometimes by bribes.⁹⁵ Formation of the secular clergy was null,⁹⁶ and the monasteries were little better.⁹⁷

Here are a few notes about the Copts' sacramental practice:

- If a dying baby could not be brought to the church for baptism, the priests would merely anoint it, bless it and recite the exorcisms, because Coptic sacramental law said any of these ceremonies replaced baptism.⁹⁸

- In the 12th-13th century, there was a serious attempt to abolish auricular confession entirely, replacing it with a sort of general absolution at Mass.⁹⁹

- The Coptic bishop in charge of Ethiopia would ordain thousands of Africans to the priesthood at one time, some of them stark naked for the ceremony.¹⁰⁰

- Because of the way some Coptic priests conducted baptisms, there was reason to doubt their validity, so the Holy Office decreed in 1885 that an inquiry should be made in each case when a Copt converted.¹⁰¹

That the modernists would scrap the venerable Roman Preface for Episcopal Consecration in favor of a liturgical text connected with this decadent schismatic and heretical sect is an everlasting indictment of their insufferable arrogance and folly.

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93. "distribuat munera," "dare sortes." Botte also scrapped completely the phrases that mentioned consecrating churches and altars.

94. M. Jugie, "Monophysite (Église Copte)" DTC 10:2260. "Remarquons, à ce propos, que les patriarches coptes n'ont jamais brillé pour leur science; on en a vu de fort ignorants, et nous avons donné plus haut le nom d'un illettré."

95. Jugie DTC 10:2262.

96. Jugie DTC 10:2263.

97. Jugie DTC 10:2262.

98. Jugie DTC 10:2281/

99. Jugie DTC 10:2285-6.

100. A. Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches* (London: CTS 1913), 311.

101. D. Attwater, *Christian Churches of the East* (Milwaukee: Bruce 1961) 2:191.

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