

# A Response to Rev. Cekada on Roman Episcopal Ordinations

On the Validity of Episcopal Ordinations according to the Rite Reformed by Pope Paul VI

Rev Timothy Eck, STL-Lit.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

This somewhat lengthy essay is a response to an article by Rev. Anthony Cekada (+2020). He was a sedevacantist priest who also rejected the validity of the Second Vatican Council. In 2006 he wrote an article (which is still available online) that rejected the validity of episcopal ordinations using the reformed ritual promulgated under Pope Saint Paul VI.

This is not normally the kind of topic which I would address as I am not a controversialist; however, some have found the writings of Rev. Cekada (hereafter Rev. C. for brevity as I will be referring to him quite often) and this has caused them to doubt the validity of the current Roman Catholic bishops and in turn the validity of the current Roman Catholic priests. And so, for the good of the faithful I have decided to set down my thoughts to be of aid to those that might accidentally be led astray by his works. To address his thought, I will outline the relevant works by Rev. C., then I will lay out some high-level principles relevant to our discussion, and finally I will move work by work in chronological order examining and commenting upon his arguments.

Rev. C.'s first public article on this topic is *Absolutely Null and Utterly Void: The 1968 Rite of Episcopal Consecration* published on March 25, 2006.<sup>2</sup> The title of this article is a reference to the apostolic letter *Apostolicae Curiae* by Pope Leo XIII from 1896 which declared that the

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<sup>1</sup> Published at [verbumcaro.com](http://verbumcaro.com) on December 15, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> <https://traditionalmass.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/NewEpConsArtPDF2.pdf>.

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Anglican ordinations were “absolutely null and utterly void.”<sup>3</sup> As so unsurprisingly, in this article Rev. C. finds the current rite of episcopal ordination also invalid.

Almost a year later, on January 9, 2007, he published a follow up article entitled *The 1968 Rite of Episcopal Consecration: Still Null and Still Void Replies to objections from Br. Ansgar Santogrossi, Fr. Pierre-Marie de Kergorlay and Fr. Alvaro Calderon* in response to three responses to his 2006 article.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately the responses to the original 2006 article are not easily accessible. Needless to say, they did not change his mind. A few months later he returned to the topic again in May 2007 with an article entitled *New bishops, Empty Tabernacle* responding the SSPX in France who had defended the current ritual.<sup>5</sup> He returned to the topic one final time on June 21, 2012, in a post on his own website entitled *Saved by Context? The '68 Rite of Episcopal Consecration* where he responded to a person who sees the validity of the current rite based upon the full context of the Prayer of Ordination.<sup>6</sup>

### Initial Observations

Having sketched out the documentary timeline, I would like to make some initial observations. First, for such a major thesis, the brevity of Rev. C.’s original article is shocking. Apparently, such a major error has been missed for decades that he can in a mere fourteen pages definitively show that the ordination rite is invalid. One would expect this to take at least the length of a book to properly address. As a result, there are hidden erroneous presuppositions that Rev. C. does not spell out and which I will endeavor to lay plain. This though also means that I will have to go into further details than might otherwise be necessary. But when the Devil is in the details, the light must be brought there.

Looking at his presuppositions, two stem from the very facts of his sedevacantist position and his rejection of the Second Vatican Council. These *a priori* propositions are assumed in much of his argumentation, and if one were to reject these presuppositions then his argumentation also fails. I will point out when this is the case. That is, if one accepts that the Bishop of Rome is in fact the Pope, and that the Second Vatican Council was in fact an ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, then his argumentation becomes far weaker. This logical error is called question begging.

Further, he does not properly address who is competent in judging these matters. Only the Church and the Pope in particular is capable of passing a definitive judgement on the validity of sacramental form. Yes, theologians can provide opinions. Yes, they can even find clear cases of invalidity. But when there is doubt on the matter of validity, meaning there can be reasonable argumentation both ways as to if a sacramental form is valid, then only the Magisterium has

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<sup>3</sup> Leo XIII, “Apostolicae Curae,” in *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, vol. 29 (1896–1897) (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1896), 202.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.traditionalmass.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/NuEpConObjex.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.traditionalmass.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/NewEpCelierWeb.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fathercekada.com/2012/06/21/saved-by-context-the-68-rite-of-episcopal-consecration-2/>.

## The Original Article from 2006

competency to judge on the matter. And conveniently for Rev. C., he rejects the very Magisterium which approved the current rite of ordination. Not just conveniently, but his rejection is precisely because he disagrees with Paul VI's promulgation of the current rite of ordination. For him, the promulgation of the current rite of ordination was promulgation of heresy (since it supposedly does not have a valid form) and in doing so Paul VI automatically ceased to be Pope. Now it is hard to tell which came first for Rev. C., his sedevacantism, which led to him finding Paul VI's promulgation as the convenient justification of his sedevacantism, or if he first thought that Paul VI promulgated an invalid rite of ordination which in turn led to Rev. C. being a sedevacantist.

For one who is in communion with Rome and believes that the Pope is in fact the Pope, then they can confidently trust that whatever ambiguities there may be in the text, the Pope correctly spoke on the validity of the rite of ordination. (There is a school of thought that such decisions must be infallible by the Pope because they address matters so essential to the faith.)

## The Original Article from 2006

To comment on Rev. C.'s articles I will move through them section by section and comment upon them as needed. I will cite them in-line by page numbers for the sake of convenience. Rev. C. begins with an overview of the literature within the "traditionalist" school that argued for the invalidity of sacraments as a result of the liturgical reforms starting in the 1960s. I will assume that the history of his own school of thought is correct. It is interesting to note that he places the source waters of this history with a work entitled *Questioning the Validity of Masses using the All-English Canon* by Patrick Omlor from 1967. The very notion that changing between languages can invalidate a sacramental form is at first glance absurd. For if that was the case, one should be really worried that Christ himself did not speak Latin at the Last Supper, and that the Greek Words of Consecration recorded in the New Testament accounts are themselves a translation from either the Aramaic or Hebrew which Christ himself would have spoken during the meal. Now Rev. C. does not himself endorse this position, but it does alert us that we need to be careful of sloppy scholarship.

Of the history that he outlines, only those who are part of the SSPX and related organizations had serious concerns over the validity of ordinations. He does not clearly say why they had concerns but simply notes that the rite had changed and that concerned them. Yes, he mentioned a book-length treatment in 2005 which concluded that the current rite is invalid, but he does not provide a reason why this may be the case nor does he provide a summary of the book's argumentation.<sup>7</sup> In time it would appear the SSPX came to terms with the validity since the current rite has "DNA" from Eastern rites of ordination (namely Coptics and Maronites). (pg. 2) This argument for validity comes from an article by SSPX priest Fr. Pierre-Marie in 2005.<sup>8</sup> And so most properly, Rev. C.'s article is responding to Fr. Pierre-Marie's article, not the broader Catholic theological

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<sup>7</sup> One may suppose that Rev. C.'s article is a summary of this work; however, he does not cite the work again in support of his arguments.

<sup>8</sup> <https://sspx.org/en/validity-new-rite-episcopal-consecrations-30483>.

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world. (This is a result of his having already discredited the contemporary Catholic scholarship.) For this reason, he is more concerned with showing that the Eastern rite of ordination claim is weak. To do so Rev. C. will attempt to answer 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? (pg. 2)

This happily gives us a clear framework to judge his claims and see if he has been successful. And it gives us a benchmark to attempt to put forth a response to him.

### I. Principles to Apply (pgs. 2-4)

This section seeks to address his first question indicated above: what principles are used to determine validity of a sacrament? His explanation of sacrament form, omitting the form, changes in the form, and using an eastern rite form are all fair enough. (pgs. 2-3) His fifth section “E. Requirements in a Form for Holy Orders” requires a closer look because this will set the core principle for all that follows. He rightly cites the Apostolic Constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis* by Pius XII which states that “the only form, is the words which determine the application of this matter, which univocally signify the sacramental effects – namely the power of Order and the grace of the Holy Spirit – and which are accepted and used by the Church in that sense.”<sup>9</sup>

He rightly identifies that Pius XII indicates two criteria:

1. The words used must “univocally signify the sacramental effects” meaning they must clearly and unambiguously signify (indicated or express) the sacrament effect of the specific order;
2. And that this effect comes about by grace of the Holy Spirit.

He though does not explicitly mention two more criteria that I would include:

3. The form must be accepted and used by the Church;
4. And understood by the Church as signifying that effect.

These last two criteria are important because language can mean many things and context determines what a text means. By that, I mean context actually constitutes text *as a text*. Without context language is largely (if not entirely) incomprehensible. The phrase “rite of ordination” signifies one thing to a Catholic and another to a Buddhist monk. This is why we look to the Church to see if she accepts a form or not, because we are looking to the Magisterium to see how she understands the words. The Church herself supplies a context which is necessary to properly understand that text. If the Church understands the words to signify the effect of the sacrament and she has formally

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<sup>9</sup> Pope Pius XII, “Sacramentum Ordinis,” in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 40 (1948) (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1947), 4.

expressed so, then one must have an incredibly strong argument to show that the Church does not in fact know what she is saying. That is unless you *a priori* reject the Magisterium of the Church.

Continuing to the next section “F. Episcopal Consecration in Particular” Rev. C. notes that Pius XII identified the form of episcopal consecration as “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.” (pg. 4)<sup>10</sup> He will then claim that this form fulfills the above-mentioned criteria in the following ways:

(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. (pg. 4, emphasis in original)

Unfortunately, he does not explain just how (1) univocally shows the power of the Order of Episcopacy. It would appear that from (1) that the core of the episcopacy is sharing in a fullness of Christ’s ministry and being clothing in God’s glory. Interestingly he misses another essential character of the sacrament in the form “*complete in thy priest* the fullness of Thy ministry,” meaning this sacrament is *completing* or fulfilling the priestly character receiving in ordination to the Priesthood. And so, we can summarize three characteristics of the order of episcopacy:

1. It completes priesthood,
2. It is the fullness of Christ’s ministry,
3. And it endows the person with divine glory.

(2) is fine, no reasonable mind would argue it is not referring to the Holy Spirit.

## II. Origin of the New Rite (pg. 4)

This section is broadly correct in that Bernard Botte was the chief drafter of the reformed rite and used Syriac and Coptic rituals for his proposed reform. Unsurprisingly Rev. C. is quite polemical and unobjective in his interpretation of the history. We will return to Rev. C.’s opinion on Botte in his second article, since they become more relevant there.

## III. The Paul VI Form (pg. 4)

This section is so short, and yet probably the most important one in the whole article. This is where Rev. C. ought to have spent considerable space analyzing the form to set up the field of play. For the sake of the reader, I have updated the English translation of the form to the current version and not used Rev. C.’s version; this does not affect anything in the argument.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Pius XII, *Sacramentum Ordinis*, 5. The translation of the form is a found in Rev. C.’s article.

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Now pour forth upon this chosen one the power that is from you [God the Father], the governing Spirit, whom you gave to your beloved Son Jesus Christ and whom he gave to the holy Apostles, who established the Church in each place as your sanctuary, to the glory and unfailing praise of your name.	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.
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After providing the current form, Rev. C. gives his assessment of the form, “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.” (pg. 4) (Note that he now adds the character of completing priesthood which he did not earlier.) Yet, what is his argument for this case? His whole thesis is predicated upon this single sentence being true and yet he does not provide a single reason to doubt the validity of this form. (Unless of course you already doubt the Second Vatican Council and its products. Yes, I will keep hammering this point home. Doubt and suspicion of Holy Mother Church is a product of the very modernism that our dear author supposes to fight against. Doubt is also the first tool of the Devil starting in the Garden of Eden.)

Further he claims that he will “proceed from stronger arguments for validity to weaker ones” (pg. 4) without starting with any basic analysis of the text which would be the strongest argument by his own criteria which only pertain to qualities of the text itself. Yes, Pius XII refers to Church usage, but our author does not, and so it is quite surprising that instead of going directly to the text and applying his criteria, he begins with looking at ecclesial usage, which is the weaker argument.

And so, I will provide what Rev. C. does not, an analysis of the form so we can see if there are any grounds for suspicion. The core of the discussion around the current text is this *governing Spirit* which was given by God the Father to his beloved Son, which in turn Christ gave to his Apostles, who in turn established the Church. That is, what is given is a governing Spirit from God the Father. This Spirit is then described with two subordinate clauses: “whom you gave to your beloved Son Jesus Christ” and “whom he gave to the holy Apostles.” As such the textual context of this primary gift indicates that this governing Spirit is that which was given to Christ and that which was given to the Apostles. Finally, the second subordinate clause has its own subordinate clause: “who [the Apostles] established the Church in each place as your sanctuary, to the glory and unfailing praise of your name,” which further contextualizes the meaning of the gift of the Spirit to the Apostles. With this in mind, let us look at each of the four parts in order.

Now pour forth upon this chosen one the power that is from you [God the Father], the governing (*principalem*) Spirit,

This phrase is where all the debate occurs. Rev. C. will claim that the phrase “governing Spirit” in particular does not indicate the power of the order of bishops, and we will look at that claim more closely. But first we have to look earlier in the opening phrase, since another claim of those who deny validity is that *just* the Holy Spirit is being given; and many sacraments give the Holy Spirit (e.g., Baptism, and Confirmation); therefore, the phrase “governing Spirit” is not specific enough to signify the order of bishops. Looking earlier in the phrase, it is not simply that the Holy Spirit as a governing Spirit, but the *power* of the Holy Spirit as a governing Spirit is given. The question then becomes what is the *power* of the governing Spirit that is pour out, not simply what does governing Spirit indicate *in se*.

Returning to “governing (*principalis*) Spirit,” the clearest reading of the Spirit in this phrase is as the Holy Spirit. We will see this more clearly in the following clauses, but we can safely affirm that now. And so, the second criterion for a valid form is satisfied. As Rev. C. will note later there was much discussion over the term *principalis* after the Council. And so, we will need to spend a little time on this word. *Principalis* can indicate first in rank or primacy as an adjective, or a source or font, the foremost official, or overseer of lesser officials as a noun.<sup>11</sup> Surveying Patristic Latin texts, the adjectival use is more frequent than the substantive form.

Following Rev. C., this word can be paired with the Greek *hegemonia* which is a noun and indicates primarily temporal or juridical authority.<sup>12</sup> Rev. C. will then go onto to argue that therefore this word cannot possibly indicate the powers of the office of bishop since these powers cannot be merely juridical. (pg. 9) Now *hegemonia* was in fact used to indicate the juridical extent of a bishop’s authority; however, it could also indicate the governing spirit of a person, and spiritual preeminence.<sup>13</sup> That is, even in Patristic (and Greek philosophical) usage *hegemonia* does not simply mean juridical authority, but also spiritual powers or faculties.<sup>14</sup>

Further, there is another Greek word that is a synonym to *hegemonia*: *episkopos*.<sup>15</sup> *Episkopos* also originally only meant temporal power in “secular” usage; however, in time it came to refer to bishops *in se*, meaning both as a sacramental and juridical reality. As such, just because *principalis* primarily indicated temporal authority or temporal preeminence does not exclude its usage today for spiritual authority or spiritual preeminence. Further as noted, both *principalis* and

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<sup>11</sup> See “*Principalis*” in Charlton T Lewis and Charles Short, eds., *A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrew’s Edition of Freund’s Latin Dictionary*, Rev (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 1445; P. G. W. Glare, ed., *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1604.

<sup>12</sup> See “*ἡγεμονία*” in G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 599.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. “*ἡγεμονία*” in *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Tertulian, *De Anima* XIV in PL 2 668, and Jerome, *Homilia Tertia of Translatio Homiliarum Origenis in Jeremiam et Ezechielem* in PL 25 713.

<sup>15</sup> See “*ἐπίσκοπος*” in Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 532.

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*hegemonia* themselves could be used for spiritual preeminence and spiritual powers or faculties even in the Patristic period.

And so, returning to the semantic domain of *principalis* itself, it can clearly support the idea of the bishop as the fullness of Holy Orders, particularly when we recall that in some way the lower ranks participate in the episcopal rank, that is the bishop is the source of the other ranks. It can also clearly support the idea of powers or faculties beyond mere juridical realities. Rev. C. will trace the discussion on how to understand *principalis* and that it came to take on the governing meanings of the word (hence the English translation), and he concludes therefore this must indicate a juridical reality. But as we have seen, the word supports a spiritual (or ontological) notion of governing, since it can denote in Greek thought the governing faculty of the intellect over the body. As such the clean divide between juridical governance and sacramental governance or the power of governance as an ontological reality which Rev. C. wants to make cannot be sustained based upon either the Greek or Latin usage during the Patristic period. Further given our theology of the episcopacy, the bishop's authority and governance of the diocese is intimately tied together with him as the source of sacred ministry throughout the diocese. And so, with this we can find a path to expressing the powers of the episcopal office.

Further, the Church after the council understands the governing role as *unique* to the episcopacy and what is uniquely added to Priesthood. (Though this was not a novelty of the council, this was widely held before the council. Aquinas himself presupposes that the office of bishop essentially involves being set over others to govern them.<sup>16</sup>) As we will see later, this is not a juridical office, but one which flows from the sacramental character of the bishop. And so, at this point we can say that there are some ambiguities, and if this open phrase was all there was to the text of the form, then there may be a problem. However, there are three more clauses provided to unpack the power of this governing Spirit.

whom you gave to your beloved Son Jesus Christ

Moving to our first subordinate clause, this governing Spirit is identified with the Spirit which was given to Christ. If there was any doubt whether this Spirit was the Holy Spirit, there can be none now as Christ received no Spirit but the Holy Spirit. Further the phrasing of the gift of the Spirit is clearly an allusion to Christ's baptism where “the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, ‘This is my *beloved Son*, with whom I am well pleased.’” (Mt 3:16-17, cf. Mk 1:10-11, Lk 4:22, and Jn 1:32-33. Emphasis added.) Interestingly it is after Christ's baptism that he goes into the desert to be tempted and then begins his public ministry. And so, Christ's baptism and the presence of the Holy Spirit is related to the initiation of his public ministry. That is, the fullness of Christ's ministry began with the gift

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. *ST* II-II Q. 185, A. 1, and “Bishops, who have succeeded to the place of the apostles, principally belong to this hierarchical order; that they are placed, as the same apostle says, by the Holy Ghost, to rule the Church of God” from Council of Trent, *Decree on the Sacrament of Order* (23<sup>rd</sup> Session), chapter 4.

of this Spirit, and so the power of this same Spirit is given to the person being ordained. This is the second criterion describing the episcopal office.

and whom he gave to the holy Apostles,

Moving on to the second subordinate clause, it is this Spirit which Christ received which the text says was given to the Apostles. This is clearly a reference to Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit by Christ to the Apostles. In the Gospel of John we read, “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’” (Jn 20:21-23) As noted above, Christ’s public ministry began by the Father sending the Spirit, and so too now the Apostles are gifted the Spirit and sent out in the same way. The Apostles had been ministering alongside Christ previously, but now that have received the *fullness* of Christ’s ministry in the gift of the power the Spirit (hence why they can now forgive sins which only God can do).

Again, in Acts of the Apostles we read “they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. … Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to [the crowd] … Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.” (Acts 2:4, 14, and 41) Once more the gift of the Spirit leads the Apostles to public ministry and the celebration of the sacrament of baptism. (Which also come to be the core functions of the Apostles: preaching, and leading prayer or celebrating the sacraments. See Acts 6:2-4) Or to put it another way, the Apostles received the *fullness* of their office from this Spirit, which in turn is given to the man in ordination.

Further, this same apostolic public ministry will in turn will lead the Apostles to ordaining deacons. And so, this Spirit given to Christ leads him to *ordain* the Apostles for public ministry, they in turn take on the same public ministry of Christ and in time they will *ordain* others. And so, by basic logic, if this same Spirit is given to the one being ordained, then he too is being given the power to ordain. Taking all of this together, the power of this Spirit as given to the Apostles fulfills the first criterion of completing priesthood. And here it is worth noting that it is not indicating the completion of priesthood in the sense that the Apostles were priests before Pentecost and then bishops afterward, but in the sense that the episcopacy (and the Apostles) is the fullness itself and the other grades of Holy Orders are only counted in reference to the *episcopacy*. We can restate the criterion: episcopacy completes priesthood as episcopacy is the fullness of priesthood.

who established (*constituerunt*) the Church in each place as your sanctuary(*sanctuarium*), to the glory and unfailing praise of your name.

Coming to the final subordinate clause, this one adds context to how we are to understand the role of the Apostles. This clause is tricky to unpack because of how the different concepts grammatically relate to each other. The simple read is that the person receives the power to establish churches in different place, in the sense of establishing Local Churches (i.e., dioceses or

eparchies). Rev. C. will rightly note in his second article that this power is proper to the Pope alone and was unique to the Apostles.<sup>17</sup> As such, this interpretation does not help us.

Happily, the text need not be interpreted in that way, and it would also seem to not mean it anyway. The text says that *the* (One) Church is established in each place as a sanctuary, meaning the one Church of God becomes established or planted in every place as God's sanctuary. Meaning, the mode by which the Church is established is through establishing it as God's sanctuary in specific places throughout the world. And so, the question then becomes what is this sanctuary and how does that happen? The clause finishes by specifying that this sanctuary renders glory and unfailing praise to God's name. How does that happen other than through the worship of God in truth and spirit? It is through the establishment of the sacraments and preeminently the celebration of the Eucharist that the Church is established in local places as a sanctuary of God or holy place of God. The clause is not concerned with the establishment of Local Churches, but the establishing of the Church's worship so as to render glory and praise to God. And how can the bishop do so unless he has the ability to ordain priests to celebrate the sacraments? And here this would satisfy the first two criteria required for a valid form.

And so, we can summarize this close reading of the entire text of the form by saying the Holy Spirit gives the man the power to exercise Christ's own public ministry and the public ministry of the Apostles. If that is not what the character of a bishop is I have no idea what a bishop is. The bishops are *the* successor of the Apostles, and so if praying for the man to receive the power of their ministry does not express that reality I do not know how to do so. Further to deny so would require one to deny that the Apostles themselves were bishops, in which case one might have just found themselves in friendship with the Reformers (... of the 1500s). Rev. C. would probably object that if we have to do this much work, then it is not clear. The problem is that the same amount of work must be done to make clear the older form too. This will be a problem for Rev. C. later, as the level of clarity which he expects from the current form when applied to the previous form, results in one having to doubt that the old form itself was *valid*. More on that later.

An objection might be raised at this point: the form does not mention the person himself receiving the fullness of glory. It is dubious that this is strictly necessary, as the old form seems to have "all glory" modify the kind of raiment bestowed to clarify which raiment is given. That is "all glory" is accidental and the raiment could be described in other ways. Nevertheless, "all glory" inhering in the man is not explicit in the current text, yet it is hard to imagine one not receiving divine glory if they are receiving the same office as the Apostles and the same Spirit given to Christ.

And so, it appears that we have no positive reason on the face of the text alone to doubt the validity of this sacramental form. It meets the requirements that Rev. C. himself identified earlier. This argument does not require one to assent to the Second Vatican Council or that the Pope is in

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Still Null and Still Void*, 6.

fact the Pope. It works entirely using presumptions Rev. C. (and traditionalist like him) should accept and so does not beg the question against him. Therefore, by all right I can stop right here; he has provided no reason to doubt this text thus far and I have met the criteria which he has stipulated. But naturally, that is not what we are going to do since he does attempt to respond to some of the above. And so let us continue along with the article.

#### IV. An Eastern Rite Form? (pgs. 4-7)

This section opens once more with the question begging problem. Rev. C. again cites *Sacramentum Ordinis* that the words of ordination must be “accepted and used by the Church in that sense.” And if the Church after the council accepted the form (by Papal decree and the ordinary magisterium of the College of Bishops), the words are able to clearly articulate the effect of the sacrament (as above noted), and the Church uses them in that way, then there is no problem. However, since Rev. C. rejects the living Magisterium of the Church, he in turn rejects that the Church has accepted the form and so begs the question.

Further, since Rev. C.’s primary focus is Fr. Pierre-Marie’s argument, which as presented by Rev. C. depends primarily upon the antiquity of the reformed form, his opening remarks in this section are unproductive for his argumentation as we are concerned with his argument. Yes, his argument might respond to the SSPX, but it is not a problem for the rest of Catholic theologians. It is openly accepted that the reformed liturgical texts are inspired by parts of ancient liturgical texts, while no serious academic would say they are *identical* to the ancient texts.

Turning to his discussion on the Coptic rite of ordination, I do not have ready access to the basic Coptic text from which he is working; nevertheless, we can make some observations based upon what he provides. He acknowledges that “the Paul VI Preface surrounding the new form contains many phrases found in the Coptic form,” (pg. 5) and then says that “*these* phrases are missing.” (pg. 5, emphasis in original) by which he means “to provide clergy according to His commandment for the priesthood... to make new houses of prayer, and to consecrate altars.” However, just because they are part of the “form” in the Coptic rite of ordination, that does not mean they are *essential* for the form of the sacrament; after all, the pre-conciliar form makes no mention of these things either and that was valid. And so just because they are not present is not itself a problem.

Moving on to his section on the Maronite rite of ordination, he is correct that the prayer does not clearly come from the Maronites. Interestingly, Rev. C. does seem to like that they mention the reception of the “sublime episcopal order” in their prayer of ordination; however, it must be noted that naming the thing does not itself describe or signify the thing unless you already know what the episcopal order is. (pg. 6) Meaning, external *theological context* and knowledge of the *intention* of the Church is necessary to have a clear understanding of what is signified. Which is of course how text works; however, if that is the case and if this formula works for them, then why does receiving the Spirit Christ gave to the holy Apostles not work for us now? How can he possibly go on to so stridently reject context when this citation only works by *context*?

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Next comes the Syrian rite of ordination. There is not much to add in commentary beyond what I have noted for the Coptic and Maronite sections. He then ends with the section, “D. Not an Eastern Form.” As already mentioned, the claim that the current form is not an exact eastern text is not controversial unless you are part of the SSPX apparently. At this point what is interesting is that he has not just gone to Bernard Botte’s text and looked at the sources that he used, that would have saved him a lot of investigative work.

### V. Another Approved Form? (pgs. 7-8)

Mercifully, this section is shorter though still caught up on the antiquity of the text. It is accepted that the text is *inspired* by ancient texts not *literally* an ancient text. Looking at his section on the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, he is broadly right that this text is quite complicated and hard to derive definitive conclusions concerning liturgical practices in the third century. At a minimum it can give us a feel for how things were understood and maybe no more than that. This holds true for the other documents which he looks at and so his conclusions at the end are broadly correct. (pg. 8)

### VI. Power of the Episcopacy? (pgs. 8-11)

Finally, we arrive at the arguments that truly matter to us. In these pages Rev. C. engages with the text itself. And at the start he opens with a bit of sophistry by stating “Lutheran, Methodist and Mormon bishops also govern” and so it seems ambiguous to state that “governing Spirit” in the current form speaks to episcopal governance. (pg. 8) But just because the dictionary has multiple meanings for a word does not mean every time we use the word the meaning is ambiguous. Nor because others might use a word incorrectly does not mean the word is ambiguous.

And this brings us to the core issue with his hermeneutics (method of interpretation). Rev. C. seems to think that the only way a sacramental form can be clear and unambiguous is if there are no competing interpretations of the form. (cf. pg. 10) Further his analysis lacks awareness of the entire form itself focusing only on two words “governing Spirit”. Yet as we have already seen above in detail, the two subordinate clauses further clarify what is meant by this governing Spirit.

He claims that the term phrase “governing Spirit” cannot indicate the power of bishop in theory. (pg. 10) But as our fuller analysis has shown, Rev. C. is simply wrong on this case. Further his analysis is entirely dependent upon the text in the light of ancient sources and how they mean a governing Spirit. (pgs. 9-10) However, he had already discounted the text as coming from those same sources and so therefore it is not our concern how those texts meant the phrase. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot say this text did not come from source A, therefore the form is not ancient and so invalid; and that source A uses governing Spirit in a not sacramental way, therefore the form is not valid.

Now yes, we care about the broad semantic domain of *principalis* as we already saw. But Rev. C.’s argument is 1) that this is a *new* text and so cannot be argued to be valid from past validity, and 2) the text itself cannot meet the criteria for validity. Once we accept number 1, that also frees us to use a different part of the semantic domain for the word *principalis* in interpreting

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the text than people 1700 years ago would have. But even still, as we saw earlier, the current usage of the word *principalis* is not novel or a fringe meaning.

Now if we apply this same logic of clarity applied by Rev. C. to the old form what happens?

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.

What is this fullness of Christ's ministry? Well ministry (*diakonia* in Greek) could be either diaconal or episcopal. Christ himself came to serve and not to be served,<sup>18</sup> and so emptied himself taking the form of a slave.<sup>19</sup> So maybe the fullness of Christ's ministry is a fuller form of diaconal ministry. (Rev. C. will be really strict that no further context can be taken and to be clear there can be only one meaning.) Or we could also argue that Christ was a king in his ministry, so maybe this means the priest is receiving Christ's royal ministry since he already shares in Christ's priestly and diaconal ministry. There seems to be plenty of ambiguity and so reason to doubt the validity.

Of course, this line of argumentation is absurd. The form can indicate the office of the episcopacy. However, it can *only* do so if you already know what a bishop is. After all it mentions nothing about ordinations, it mentions nothing about governance of a diocese; in fact, it mentions nothing about the character of Christ's ministry and what a full share in that ministry looks like. And yet, it is clearly understood. If we permit the same knowledge of a bishop as necessary context to understand the sacramental form, the above discussion should be sufficient to demonstrate that the current form is at least as clear as the previous form.

### The Final Sections (pgs. 11-14)

Rev. C. naturally concludes that there is a substantial change and so the current rite of episcopal ordination is invalid. (pg. 11) He entertains the objection that the context can help clarify the meaning, only to dismiss it without even entertaining the context of the form *itself* in the subordinate clauses. He once more mentions the lack of clear reference to the ability to ordain in the form itself and yet the previous version also had no reference. (pg. 12)

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As mentioned earlier, this article is in response to three critics of his first article which we just looked at. His opening summary of his position is largely the same except he clarifies how he understands Pius XII's use of "univocal": "The term *governing Spirit*, then, is not *univocal*, a term that signifies only one thing, as Pius XII required. Rather, it is *ambiguous* — capable of signifying *many different things, qualities and persons.*" (pg. 3, emphasis in the original) This usage of univocal is closer to the Aristotelian meaning of the word. It is ambiguous if Pius XII meant this strict meaning of the word. Either way any Thomist or Aristotelian would know that to use a word univocally requires first specifying the proper meaning of the word. This is another way of saying

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<sup>18</sup> Mt 20:28.

<sup>19</sup> Phil 2:7.

one must define the context of a word. By a strict univocal criterion, the old form fails alongside the current form. As such it would seem that Pius XII does not mean “univocal” in a strict logical sense.

## II. Br. Ansgar Santogrossi OSB (pgs. 4-5)

The first critic that Rev. C. responds to is Br. Ansgar (Br. A. hereafter) from Mt. Angel Abbey. Br. A. appears to have taken a similar strategy as I have by acknowledging the semantic domain of words. The core of Rev. C.’s response is that even acknowledging this, the domain is not able to articulate the office of the episcopacy. Br. A. also had the similar objection that by Rev. C.’s own criteria the old form was invalid or at least ambiguous. In particular Br. A. pointed out that the word *ministry* is ambiguous as it could refer to episcopal or diaconal ministry as such the text itself is not clear in which office is indicated.

Rev. C. claims to erase the ambiguity of the old form by pointing to what the drafter of *Sacramentum Ordinis* (Rev. Francis Hürth, SJ) intended (namely episcopal ministry). (pg. 4) But it does not really matter what Hürth thought in and of itself; it matters that Pius XII approved of what Hürth thought. Since Pius XII *implicitly* approved of the selected meaning by Hürth to clarify the ambiguity, then there is in fact no ambiguity in the text. That is convenient for Rev. C. since he accepts the papacy of Pius XII. But in that case, we are permitted to apply the same solution to the current form; namely, Paul VI approved the text and so therefore he must have thought that the text intended to convey the office of episcopacy. And it is here that Rev. C.’s opinions on Botte in the original article become relevant.<sup>20</sup> Rev. C. is of the opinion that Botte himself is not clear that the text of the current form clearly means the episcopacy. And so, the ambiguities of the text cannot be clarified by looking to what Botte thought, whereas the ambiguities for the old form can be clarified by looking to what Hürth thought.

In case it is not obvious, Hürth did not author the old form (as it preceded him by centuries); he helped draft *Sacramentum Ordinis* and wrote a commentary on the Apostolic Constitution. His comments clarifying the meaning of the form come as a theological expert and presumably were given to the pope who in turn accepted them as how he interpreted the text. It does not logically follow therefore that because Botte as a theological expert while drafting the current rite was himself unclear concerning the meaning of the text (according to Rev. C.) that Paul VI was unclear concerning the meaning of the text. At a minimum all that this means is that Paul VI intended the text in a way different from Botte. (Once more assuming we agree with Rev. C.’s interpretation of Botte.) However, in this case, all that we need to demonstrate concerning the text’s validity is that there is a *single* way that the form can be interpreted so as to express the episcopal office in a straightforward manner, and then we assume that this is similar to what the pope intended. Which I content I have accomplished above.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Absolutely Null and Utterly Void*, 4, and 9-10.

## Back at the SSPX

What is even better for us and our interpretation, Hürth himself used the fuller context of the older form to help clear the ambiguity of the first clause (the meaning of ministry). (pg. 5) Rev. C. approves of this yet still does not seem to understand how that applies to the current form. (pg. 5) He also seems to miss the point of Br. A.'s argumentation. He does not think the old form was invalid, but simply that Rev. C.'s original argumentation invalidates the old form. To correct for this Rev. C. brings in the nuance that Hürth used above for the old form while missing Br. A.'s greater point that the same needs to be done for the current form.

Unfortunately, it does not appear that Br. A (as presented by Rev. C.) used the full context of the form himself but instead only attempted to defend the form based upon the phrase "governing Spirit." (pg. 5) As such Br. A. does not sufficiently defend his position since there is sufficient ambiguity in "governing Spirit" which requires something more than an analysis of that phrase itself.

### III.Fr. Pierre-Marie OP (pgs. 6-8)

Next Rev. C deals with a brief reply from Fr. Pierre-Marie (Fr. P. hereafter) the original person to whom Rev. C. was primarily responding. Fr. P. raised the same point as I did that there was no mention of the power to ordain in the old form. Rev. C. is correct that he did not *technically* say that it had to be explicitly mentioned; however, that was the critique he made of the current form when compared to the eastern forms. (pg. 6)

Fr. P. brings in the clause on the apostles but argues that this is the power to found churches. As Rev. C. notes, this is technically a juridical act. (pg. 6) But that is why I did not interpret this clause as a juridical establishing of Churches, but as the celebration of sacraments which flows from the power of the office. As such, my argument still stands. The rest of Rev. C.'s response to Fr. P does not affect much of what has already been said.

### IV. Fr. Alvaro Calderon SSPX (pgs. 8-9)

The third and final person the Rev. C responds to is Fr. Alvaro Calderon SSPX. This last objection spends much of its time responding to Rev. C.'s dismissal of the antiquity of the current form. As I have not particularly engaged with this line of argumentation, I will leave Rev. C's response to this reply to the side.

## Back at the SSPX

Rev. C. returns again to respond to the SSPX in France who defended the current form. On neither side does it appear that the ball moves forward. Fr. Celier (the author of the French article Rev. C. is responding to) brings up the same arguments others have made and Rev. C. responds in the same way. As such there is no need to spill further ink.

## Still Doesn't Like Context

The context of this post is one who, when reading the form of the current rite in the light of the explanatory section immediately following the words of ordination, has no doubt about the

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validity of the form itself. To better understand the context which we will be discussing, I think that it makes sense to present the whole Prayer of Ordination with the three sections indicated by name:

### **Introductory Preface**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Father of mercies and God of all consolation,  
who dwell on high and look upon the lowly,  
who know all things before they come to be:  
it is you who established order in your Church through your gracious word,  
who from the beginning predestined a righteous people born of Abraham,  
who instituted rulers and priest  
and did not leave your sanctuary without ministry,  
who from the beginning of the world  
have been pleased to be glorified in those you have chosen:

### **Words of Ordination or the Form**

NOW POUR FORTH UPON THIS CHOSEN ONE  
THE POWER THAT IS FROM YOU, THE GOVERNING SPIRIT, WHOM YOU GAVE  
TO YOUR BELOVED SON JESUS CHRIST  
AND WHOM HE GAVE TO THE HOLY APOSTLES,  
WHO ESTABLISHED THE CHURCH  
IN EACH PLACE AS YOUR SANCTUARY,  
TO THE GLORY AND UNFAILING PRAISE OF YOUR NAME.

### **Explanatory Exposition**

Grant, O Father, the knower of all hearts,  
that this your servant whom you have chosen for the Episcopate  
may nourish your holy flock  
and may without reproach exercise before you the High Priesthood,  
serving you night and day;  
that he may unceasingly cause your face to shine upon us  
and offer the gifts of your holy Church.  
Grant that by the strength of the Spirit of the High Priesthood  
he may have authority to forgive sins according to your command;  
that he may apportion offices according to your precept  
and loosen every bond according to the authority you gave the Apostles;  
may he be pleasing to you in meekness and purity of heart,  
offering a sweet fragrance to you  
through your Son Jesus Christ,

through whom glory and power and honor are yours,  
with the Holy Spirit in the holy Church  
both now and for ever and ever.

All three prayers of ordination follow a similar structure (though obviously the text is particular to the order). And so, a brief explanation of how these three sections interact is needed. The first section: Introductory Preface introduces the particular order that is being given in the light of the Old and New Testaments. In the Introductory Preface for bishops, we see themes of the origins of authority, and the provisioning of governance and worship. In the Old Testament, the origin of something is seen as the most pure and highest form of something. For this reason, the preface mentions Abraham, who is the origin of all Israel, and so in turn is the fullness of Israel. It is from him that priests and rulers will be provided, not *juridically* but *essentially*. This neatly points to the relationship between the bishop and the rest of Holy Orders; he is the origin of priests and deacons not juridically but essentially.

Then come the Words of Ordination themselves. We have discussed them already, and they are what confer the sacrament of ordination itself. Following the Words of Ordination is the Explanatory Exposition. This lengthy section then explains what it is that just happened in the Words of Ordination. And so, we see that the person *was chosen for the Episcopate*, is a *High Priest*, can *apportion offices*, and can *loosen every bond according to the authority you gave the Apostles*. These are clear indications that the Church intended the Words of Ordination to confer the episcopacy upon the person. And it is this broader context that the person who occasioned the blog post is talking about, and it is this context which Rev. C. discusses in his post.

### I. Overthrowing a General Principle

Rev. C. rejects that the broader context of the Prayer of Ordination can salvage an insufficient sacrament form. He states correctly that if the entire rite is done correctly but the form itself is substantially defective (or absent) then the sacrament has not happened. He uses the example of Penance, where only the final sentence “I absolve you...” in the prayer of absolution is necessary. And it is certainly true that if the preceding sentences in the prayer of absolution were said and the final sentence was not, absolution did not happen. And so, context cannot make complete that which is essentially or substantially incomplete.

### II. A Missing Element

He continues on to entertain the hypothetical that the Explanatory Exposition could clarify what the words in the form meant. His core contention is that the form only mentions the Holy Spirit, but nothing in the form can reference the order of bishops. Therefore, there is nothing to clarify. And if that were true, then he would be correct. But this seems to imply that if there were elements in form which could signify the episcopal order, then he would entertain the idea that the Explanatory Exposition could provide the needed clarity.

Now, Rev. C. seems to have never moved beyond an analysis of the phrase “governing Spirit” because if he did, as we have mentioned abundantly above, there are certainly ways to see

the form mentioning the episcopacy and its powers. After all, the text clearly states that the person is not simply receiving the Holy Spirit, but the *power* of the Holy Spirit. What kind of power? The power of Christ and the Apostles. One could ask, but what does the Church mean when she says that? Happily, she tells us what she meant by that, it is laid out in the Explanatory Exposition.

### III. Admission of a Substantial Defect

Rev. C. then moves on to a “gotcha” point: if the Explanatory Exposition is needed, then the form is not clear, therefore it fails the criterion of clarity defined by Pius XII. And if one could only speak of vague power of the Holy Spirit, he would have a point. However, as we have already seen above, given the structure of the clauses and the text used we can express the power of the office of bishop. Can we do so fully? No, that is impossible in a sentence. The old form itself had ambiguity. That is why we have the explanatory section, to unpack that which is present but densely packed. Information density should not be confused with ambiguity.

### IV. Equivocal Qualifiers

Unsurprisingly Rev. C. also takes issue with the descriptions of the episcopacy in the explanatory. He interprets them in a purely juridical sense. And because he can interpret them in a purely juridical sense therefore that are not clearly about the sacrament of orders. Here we run into a major theological question which takes us far beyond the scope of this essay. Namely, whence flows the bishop’s authority? From the law (i.e., from delegation by the Pope) or from the sacrament of episcopal orders? There is a strain of theology running from the early Church up to the Second Vatican Council that the bishop was simply a priest who received juridical authority from the Pope. This is what made him a bishop. As such, all bishops were vicars of the Pope acting in the person of the Pope in the same way that parish priests are acting in the person of their bishop.

There was another strain of theology which ran parallel to this first strain which stated that the bishop’s authority comes from the sacrament itself, meaning from the effect of the man being conformed to Christ the High Priest in a particular way. This effect did not simply unlock that which was latent in the priest but actually perfects the sacrament of Holy Orders and brings about new abilities in the person. As such the bishop’s authority comes directly from Christ through his sacramental configuration to Christ, *not* from the Pope. Yes, the bishop is *juridically* bound to the Pope, but his authority does not come from the Pope.

The Second Vatican Council came down firmly on the side of the second strain. In *Lumen Gentium* we read, “the Sacred Council teaches that by Episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred, that fullness of power … [which] is called the high priesthood, the supreme power of the sacred ministry.” (LG 21) And so the ordination itself confers the fullness of power, which the Council call the high priesthood. Continuing “episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the office of teaching and of governing.” (LG 21) These offices therefore do not come from the Pope or a juridical act, but themselves flow from the sacrament itself. To make it quite clear that the bishop acts in the person of Christ, not the Pope, *Lumen Gentium* goes on to say that the “bishops in an eminent and visible way sustain the roles of

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Christ Himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His person.” (LG 21) and “this power, which they personally exercise in Christ’s name, is proper, ordinary and immediate, although its exercise is ultimately regulated by the supreme authority of the Church.” (LG 27) Yes, the Pope has supreme authority; and yes, the Pope can regulate the Church., but the bishop acts directly and personally in Christ and thence flows his authority, not from the Pope.

How is this all relevant? Well, because the following the first strain it is very hard to distinguish between the bishop’s *juridical* power and *sacramental* power. As such it would seem that Rev. C. is following this strain and so has a hard time making the distinction. The Council in siding heavily with the second strain, would clearly intend the powers enumerated in the Explanatory Exposition as indicating *sacramental* powers, which is why the Church put them in a prayer which she intends to confer the *sacrament* of ordination to the episcopacy. Yes, these sacramental powers confer juridical authority, but that authority flows from the sacrament. Rev. C. is free to reject the Council, but he cannot reject the fact that the Council took one side and that you must interpret the text in the light of that decision as the text comes from the context of the Council.

Looking more closely at his objections, he first objects that specifying this person participates in High Priesthood does not in fact indicate that a person has been ordained because “Eastern Rite liturgies use similar language in non-sacramental rites to ‘consecrate’ a Metropolitan or a Patriarch.” Therefore, the office of High Priest is merely a juridical office not sacramental. It would appear if that were case then Rev. C. has proved too much. Then the only priestly difference between a priest and bishop is merely juridical, that the bishop is the high priest of the diocese is merely a juridical fact, not a sacramental fact. But the tradition consistently speaks of the bishop as the high priest to distinguish him from the priests beneath him. And so just how does Rev. C. propose we indicate that in this sacrament a bishop becomes a high priest in some way, if we cannot say he is now a high priest because the term can also be used in a juridical context? If we left it out, he would complain because there was no mention of the bishop participating in the fullness of orders, and if we insert it, he complains. Further, just because a phrase in one context means one thing, and another in another context does not mean it is ambiguous. Finally in response to this objection, quite conveniently he ignores the parts the says, “chosen for the Episcopate.” If there was an ambiguity about whether the “High Priesthood” referred to the installation of metropolitan or the ordination of a bishop, looking thirteen words earlier in the same sentence would have clarify that.

Turning to his objections to the “Enumerated Powers” this at heart depends upon the theological understanding of the origin of these powers. Yes, some of these powers may be able to be delegated, but that is not how this ordained person has received them. The person received them through the “the Spirit of the High Priesthood [of Christ].” He received them not through delegation (i.e., a juridical act by Christ or the Church) but through participating in Christ’s own strength, meaning through union with Christ himself. This is not a juridical high priesthood, but a unique participation in Christ’s own high priesthood. Once more, the priest originates in the bishop, not

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vice versa. If the bishop by the sacrament of episcopal orders did not have these powers, then neither would the priests.

### His Concluding Thoughts

Rev. C. continues by arguing the Explanatory Exposition is too implicit and removed clear references to episcopal powers, therefore it cannot supply in theory that which is lacking. He also takes umbrage with the principal consecrator alongside the co-consecrators saying the form and then only the principal consecrator saying the final section. And if the final section was part of the form, then he would be correct. The final section cannot make up what is missing in the form unless it is also part of the form. However, the entire point of the Explanatory Exposition is that it unpacks what was already said. As we noted, we can see the episcopacy in the form, and when the final section is interpreted in the light of the Second Vatican Council it can serve to articulate further what has happened. The co-consecrators do not need to say this section, because it is not part of the form.

### Conclusion

On one hand, it is unfortunate that Rev. Anthony Cekada passed away in 2020 at what appears to have been a relatively young age. (I think it was in his 60s.) This essay as a whole then can be of little use to advancing a discussion with him. I do think that I have raised points which he has not properly considered; namely the fuller context of the form itself. I think he was too fixated on the two words “governing Spirit,” which led to an overly restrictive understanding of the form. On the other hand, do I think that I would have changed his opinion? No. As stated at the very beginning, his *a priori* assumptions *required* him to hold this hill and die upon it. From this perspective this whole exercise is simply tilting at windmills; a vain debate against a man who cannot respond, and even for those who might, would the discussion really advance?

Nevertheless, the originating motivation was not to change Rev. Cekada’s mind, but to shepherd the sheep of my flock and aid my fellow coworkers in guarding their folds. For Rev. Cekada’s writings are still alive and online, and they are still leading people astray. And it is for them, for you, that I hope I have not labored in vain.

The topic is dense and of the highest stakes. To properly engage one ought to be a specialist (or well read) to be able to properly judge the arguments. However, this discussion has been in the public forum, and as such I have striven to make as plain the varied and subtle arguments at play by both myself and Rev. Cekada. More could certainly be said and further explanations given. As I stated at the beginning, one would want a book to properly address this topic for someone unfamiliar with the field.

The heart of my defense is found in my analysis of the form itself. The heart of Rev. Cekada’s argument was always that this text could not express the power of the episcopacy. Most of his critics seem to not have properly addressed that point but instead too quickly conceded that “governing Spirit” was insufficient and moved on to other arguments. I have attempted to respond

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squarely to the heart of the matter, and it is there that this essay ultimately should be judged. By the grace of God, might it be found true and of aid to the reader.

Prayer for the repose of the soul of Rev. Anthony Cekada. Pray for myself. Pray for unity in the Church.