

Objection 5: The Church cannot exist without a pope, or at least it cannot exist for forty years without a pope, as sedevacantists say ...

Extract taken with the author's permission from:

[The Sedevacantist Delusion: Why Vatican II's Clash with Sedevacantism Supports Eastern Orthodoxy](#)

- by John C. Pontrello (August 2015)

<https://youtu.be/gwR34sZuPqA>

On the Vicoration of Christ:

Part II: Glitches in the System:

Summary

(Pages 98-100)

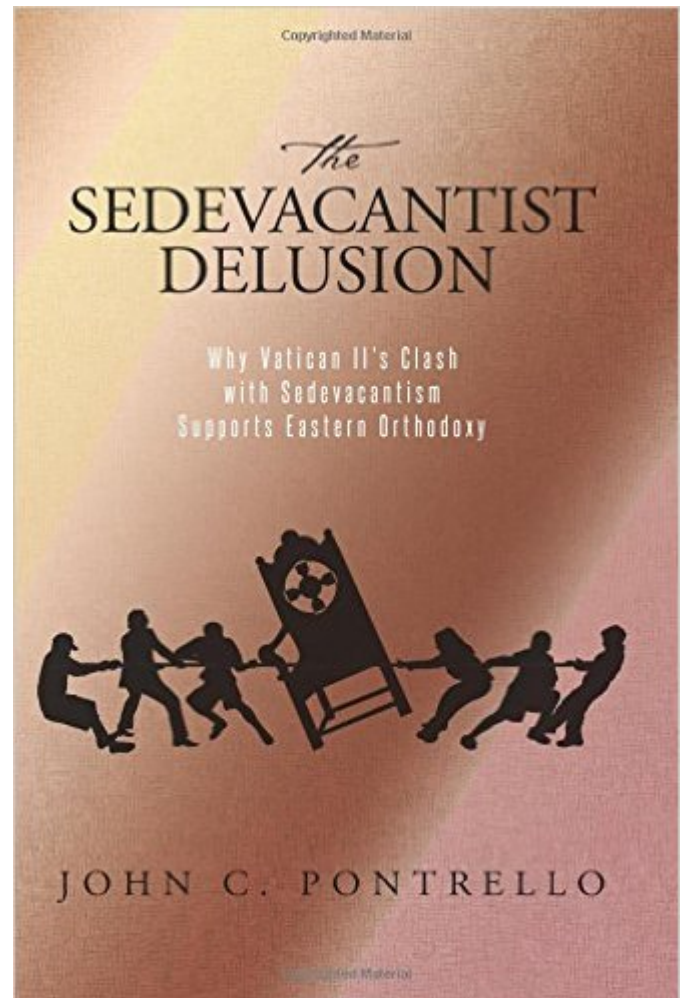
Note: The use of "Dimond" in the following text refers to Frederick "Michael" and Robert "Peter" Dimond, the Dimond brothers running the MHFM today.

Non-Sedevacantists object to Sedevacantism because *the Church cannot exist without a pope, or at least it cannot exist for forty years without a pope, as Sedevacantists say.* ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾

My position is in agreement with this objection because Catholic ecclesiology makes the Roman Pontiff indispensable to the Church. The Sedevacantists respond to this objection by contending that the Roman Pontiff is not always necessary to the Church and presenting papal interregnums or routine vacancies of the papacy as evidence.

The Sedevacantist position rests on the fallacious argument that the Roman Catholic Church is presently enduring a papal interregnum that began approximately in 1958. Sedevacantists such as Dimond attempt to manipulate others into accepting that Sedevacantism is essentially the same thing as a papal interregnum by disguising the theory's real implications, but this attempted connection is a misrepresentation. Sedevacantists are not really proposing that the Church is experiencing a papal interregnum, but they deceptively call it one.

Sedevacantism is essentially a movement within traditional Catholicism that theorizes that the indefectible Catholic Church has defected. Examples of some of the tenets of Sedevacantism that prove this include that the Church's hierarchical structure has disintegrated; that the Church's capacity to elect a Roman Pontiff has been incapacitated; and that the Mystical Body of Christ has mutated into the end-



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times, apostate Church of the Antichrist. None of these things, as well as numerous others addressed in objection one, can be misconstrued as a papal interregnum.

Dimond correctly points out that the Church does not have a teaching that limits how long a papal interregnum can last. It follows that the Sedevacantists must also accept that a papal interregnum could last one thousand or more years. The logical sequence of Sedevacantism is that the Vicar of Christ is accidental to the Catholic Church. This I identified as the second principal heresy of the Sedevacantists.

Roman Catholic Apologists Bryan Cross and Thomas Brown explain why visible hierarchical unity belongs to the essence of the Church and why a visible hierarchy must have a visible head to be essentially one. Cross says that a visible head belongs to the essence of the Mystical Body of Christ because the body must have unity essentially, not merely accidentally. [\(180\)](#)

The dogmatic teachings of the Church make the Roman Pontiff essential, not accidental. Consequently Dimond attempts to rework the dogmatic teachings of the papacy. The reader was forewarned of Dimond's error that confounds the First Vatican Council's teaching that the apostolic primacy is the underlying basis for unity, with the same council's teaching that the Roman Pontiff must exercise the primacy for the actual realization of unity.

Because Sedevacantism necessarily entails that a defection of the Church occurred, Sedevacantism was only a visible position before the defection but not after. Sedevacantism arrived too late and is now impotent thanks to the leadership of the traditional Catholic movement, which essentially stranded the Catholic faithful in dead-end positions.

The Sedevacantists' failure to elect a legitimate Roman Pontiff in fifty-seven years confirms that the leadership within traditional Catholicism was never to be trusted and that today's Sedevacantist movement is untenable. If these were not true, divine providence would have arranged for a valid pope at the time of the revolutionary Second Vatican Council to uphold the deposit of faith and maintain unity of the Church. That God provided no such pope supports one of the premises of this work – that Francis is the true pope. Any future Sedevacantist-initiated pope is automatically disqualified.

The perpetuation of the Church during papal vacancies runs contrary to the principles of organic life, which must die if it loses a vital organ. That the Church continues to exist and function without its visible head and source of unity is an indication that the papacy is not the original foundation of Christ's Church. The real foundation of the Catholic Church preceded the Roman claims on the papacy.

If the divine prerogatives ascribed to the papacy were true, the Church would collapse without its visible head; popes would appoint their successors; there could never be a break in papal succession; divine authority would never ascend from inferiors who never possessed it; and authoritative papal encyclicals defining the Church of Christ would never confound the Vicar of Christ with the Vicar of Peter.

Father O'Reilly's theological opinion is contradictory to the teachings of the First Vatican Council. The best explanation is that theologians contradict dogmatic councils when dogmatic councils contradict history.

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Finally, while it is contradictory to propose that the Church can be without a Roman Pontiff for thirty-nine or fifty-seven years, in reality the Church could probably exist indefinitely without him. The fact that the Church can function without a pope does not support the Sedevacantist thesis; it weakens the mythological claims on the papacy.

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End Notes:

[179](#): Dimond, The Truth about What Happened to the Catholic Church after Vatican II, p. 308 (Obj. 5)

[180](#): “Christ Founded a Visible Church”