

**Objection 15: The Church and the hierarchy will always be visible. If the Vatican II Church is not the true Catholic Church, then the Church and hierarchy are no longer visible.**

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/Is6srNza9cM>

**Visibility of the Church:**

**Part III: ... and Apostolic Church:**

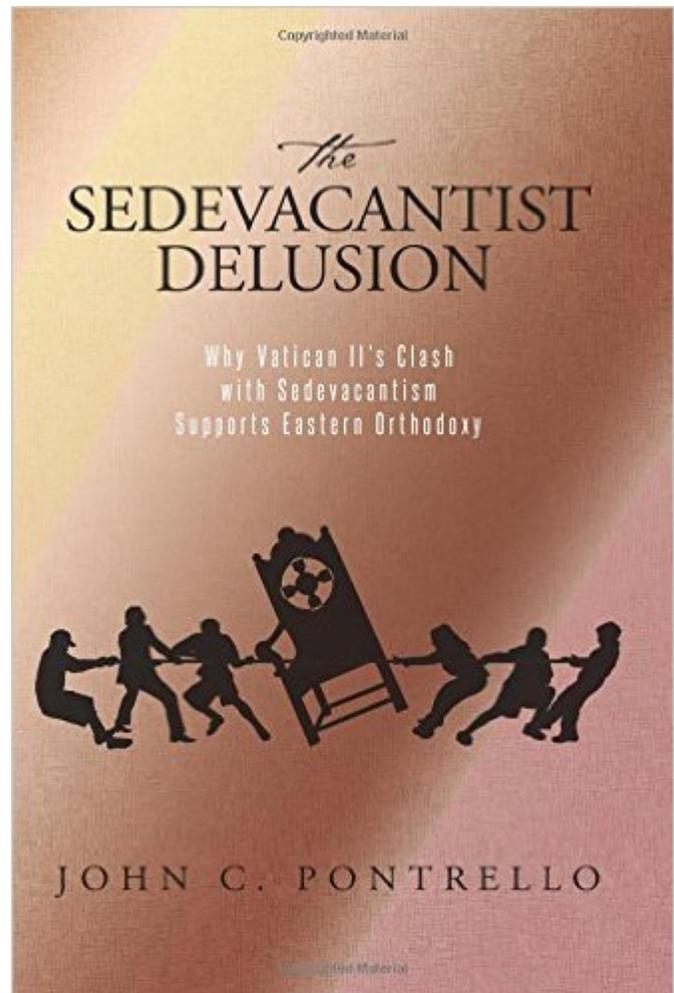
**Summary**

(Pages 226-228)

Non-Sedevacantist Object to Sedevacantism because: *“The Church and the hierarchy will always be visible. If the Vatican II Church is not the true Catholic Church, then the Church and hierarchy are no longer visible.”* <sup>(332)</sup> My position is agreement with this objection; the Sedevacantists do deny the visibility of the Church, most especially concerning the Church’s intrinsic bonds of unity.

Visibility belongs to the essence of the Church and as such is an indefectible property. While indefectibility entails that the Church will always *be* the Roman Catholic Church, visibility entails that it will always *be recognized* as the Roman Catholic Church. The Baltimore Catechism explains that the true Church must be visible because its founder, Jesus Christ, commanded us under pain of condemnation to hear the Church, which He could not in justice do if the Church could not be seen or known. <sup>(333)</sup>

The Catholic Encyclopedia explains the Church is a society that will always be conspicuous and public and that it will always be recognized among other bodies as the Church of Christ. *Material visibility* means it must be a public profession and a society manifest to the world. *Formal visibility* is secured by the four notes of the Church – unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity. Visible unity entails that the Church’s members throughout the world will always be united by the profession of the same faith participation in common worship, and obedience to a common authority. All hold the same belief, join in the same



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religious ceremonies, and acknowledge the successor of Peter as their supreme ruler. The Church must be one essentially and visibly. <sup>(334)</sup>

Catholic apologists Bryan Cross and Thomas Brown explained that the Church's unity is visible since it is the unity of a body, and bodies are both visible and hierarchically organized. The Church's visibility is not reducible merely to the visibility of its members; the Church per se is visible like a human body and must remain perceptible to the senses. <sup>(335)</sup>

Three interdependent bonds of unity are essence, activity, and hierarchy. Unity of the Church must include an essentially unified, visible hierarchy. <sup>(336)</sup> The fourth principle heresy of Sedevacantism is that visible hierarchical unity is accidental to the Catholic Church. Cross and Brown also explained why hierarchical unity requires a singular visible head in collaboration with the Church's teachings that the Roman Pontiff, as Peter's successor, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity of the whole Church. <sup>(337)</sup>

Dimond divided doctrines in order to make them fit his version of Sedevacantism, such as defining the Church's visibility as "*real Catholic faithful who externally profess the one true religion.*" <sup>(338)</sup> Dimond's definition is deficient, misleading, and similar to Protestantism's invisible Church ecclesiology. Dimond also stated that the Church could cease to exist in all geographical locations provided a handful of faithful exists somewhere. Dimond erred about the geographical locations in which the Church may or may not defect and in his understanding of what constitutes defection. Individual sees may defect when their governing sees defect, not necessarily the faithful. Bishops, not the faithful, form an essential part of the Church's constitution. Even if the Holy See relocated to a satellite location, it must remain visible and identifiable.

Because visibility is a permanent property belonging to the Church, Roman Catholic faithful must dismiss prophecies or commentaries interpreted in a way that undermines the Church's indefectible constitution. I addressed and refuted Dimond's contradictory interpretations in favor of the Sedevacantist thesis.

Dimond promotes the first school of Sedevacantism, which is that self-appointed men constitute the legitimate hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Self-appointed men do not belong to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Church even if they attain the power of orders. Apostolicity must include both material and formal elements. The formal element includes full apostolic power. Sedevacantist clergy are deficient of the necessary elements of apostolicity and must rely on an intangible conception of the Church to supply it. If the Church has to supply the components of apostolic succession in order to prevent its expiration, the means instituted by Christ for its transmittance – *succession via a series of persons* – has ended, and the Church would have defected. Sedevacantism destroys apostolic succession and unity, contravenes indefectibility, and begins a new series of bishops. The fifth principal Dimond proposed Sedevacantist heresy is that apostolic authority is accidental to the episcopal order.

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Dimond proposed that ordinary jurisdiction disappeared from the true Church, leaving only supplied jurisdiction. However, the Church teaches that the authority of the apostles and the episcopal order belong to the essential constitution of the Church. At present an apostolic hierarchy possessing ordinary jurisdiction is visibly identifiable to the world in general, or the Catholic Church has defected according to its own terms. Dimond tacitly, albeit correctly, recognized apostolicity in the Vatican II hierarchy under Pope Francis, with whom he communicates.

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**End Notes:**

[332](#): Dimond, The Truth about What Happened to the Catholic Church after Vatican II, 331.

[333](#): “Baltimore Catechism No. 3”

[334](#): Joyce, The Catholic Encyclopedia, 753.

[335](#): “Christ Founded the Visible Church.”

[336](#) IBID

[337](#) Vatican Council II, “Lumen Gentium,” 31.

[338](#): Dimond, The Truth about What Happened to the Catholic Church after Vatican II, 331.