

16. Is MDM Schismatic?

No, MDM is not schismatic.

We recognize that Our Lord established St. Peter as the first pope, the Vicar of Christ, the Supreme Pontiff of the Church, and that Peter's successors continue in this role as the visible head of the Church. We submit to the authority of all valid popes. We are in communion with all faithful Catholics, including our Archbishop, even if in good conscience we have to withdraw obedience from some of his decisions because they are gravely unjust.

However, we are not in communion with Jorge Bergoglio because we believe the Lord has made it clear that Bergoglio is not a true pope and is in fact betraying the Church. This fact has led some to believe we are schismatic. But this understanding goes against the common teaching of the Church.

Schism is defined by the Code of Canon Law (Canon 751) as "the refusal of submission to the supreme pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him." Eminent canonists recognize, however, that one who has sincere and reasonable doubts about the legitimacy of the ostensible pope cannot be charged with schism. Such a person is not willfully refusing to submit to one he knows is the pope—true schismatic behavior—but rather refusing to submit to one he precisely believes is not the true pope.

Renowned Jesuit canon law scholars Fathers Francis X. Wernz, S.J. and Peter Vidal, S.J., whose work was praised by Pope St. Pius X and published by the Pontifical Gregorian University, write in their commentary on the 1917 Code of Canon Law: "They cannot be numbered among the schismatics, who refuse to obey the Roman Pontiff because they consider his person to be suspect or doubtfully elected on account of rumors in circulation...."¹

Cardinal Cajetan, the great commentator on the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, states:

If someone, for reasonable motive, holds the person of the pope in suspicion and refuses his presence and even his jurisdiction, he does not commit the delict [crime] of schism, nor any other whatsoever, provided that he be ready to accept the pope were he not held in suspicion.²

¹ Wernz, P. F-X, and Vidal, P. Petri, *Ius Canonicum ad Codicis Normam Exactum*, Universitatis Gregoriana, Universitas Gregoriana, Rome, 1938, Vol vii, 1937, n. 398. Quoted in Matthew McCusker, "Is Archbishop Vigano Really in Schism?" *Lifesite News*, July 29, 2024. (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/is-archbishop-vigano-really-in-schism/#f+979443+1+7>.)

² Cajetan, *Commentarium*, 1540, II-II, 39, 1. Quoted in Matthew McCusker, "Is Archbishop Vigano Really in Schism?" *Lifesite News*, July 29, 2024. (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/is-archbishop-vigano-really-in-schism/#f+979443+1+7>.)

Again, the essential point here is that one cannot be guilty of schism, of refusing to submit to papal authority, if one sincerely believes the current papal claimant is not the true pope and therefore has no such authority.³

Noted canonists have raised the following dilemma. In such a situation, one of two scenarios is true:

1. Either the current occupant of the papacy is in fact not the true pope, and pursuant to canon 1323, one therefore is not guilty of schism for stating that fact, or;
2. The current occupant is the true pope, and one therefore is necessarily in objective error by sincerely believing otherwise, and is not guilty of schism because as canon 1323.2 states:

No one is liable to a penalty who, when violating a law or precept: was, without fault, ignorant of violating the law or precept; inadvertence and error are equivalent to ignorance.

Canonists have explained for one to doubt erroneously, but in good faith, one who appears to be pope—as opposed to one who maliciously refuses to recognize one whom he knows is the true pope— “automatically exculpates someone from being excommunicated for schism.”⁴

Two other notable commentators, Dr. Edmund Mazza and Matthew McCusker, have elaborated on these matters, and their writings and commentary are well worth reading and listening to for a greater understanding of them. In addition, they also discuss some of the weighty reasons why a number of the faithful—clergy, religious and laity—have concluded that Jorge Bergoglio is not a valid pope.⁵ Father Giorgio Maria Faré, an Italian theologian, is among the faithful who have

³ One can, of course, be sincerely mistaken in asserting the false status of a papal claimant, and if so, and having recognized the mistake, would be duty-bound to acknowledge the claimant as true pope and be in submission. We believe that through the Messages God has made the status of Jorge Bergoglio clear (See FAQ No. 8), but in our prayers to be faithful to God’s will, we always ask that we be enlightened to any errors.

⁴ This citation is taken from an interview with Patrick Coffin that is posted behind a paywall. A portion of the interview can be viewed for free. <https://www.patrickcoffin.media/archbishop-vigano-schism-and-francismarc-balestrieri/>

⁵ McCusker has written a series of articles on the status of Jorge Bergoglio, those who are doubtful of his papacy and the question of schism: “Is Archbishop Vigano Really in Schism?” *Lifesite News*, July 29, 2024 (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/is-archbishop-vigano-really-in-schism/#f+979443+1+7.>); “Is Francis the Pope? The Argument from Public Heresy Suggests Not.” *Lifesite News*, August 12, 2024 (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/is-francis-the-pope-the-argument-from-public-heresy-suggests-not/>); “Why ‘Universal and Peaceful Acceptance’ Doesn’t Prove Francis Is Pope,” *Lifesite News*, August 22, 2024 (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/why-universal-and-peaceful-acceptance-doesnt-prove-francis-is-pope/>); “Is There ‘Universal and Peaceful Acceptance’ of Francis as Pope?,” *Lifesite News*, September 11, 2024 (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/is-there-universal-peaceful-acceptance-of-francis-as-pope/>). See Mazza’s interview with Robert Moynihan, “Vigano vs. Pope Francis,” *Urbi et Orbi Communications*, Episode 120 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k9SsYeRmhQ>).

reached this conclusion about Bergoglio and who also concurs with the above understanding of what does and does not constitute schismatic conduct.⁶

As we have stated elsewhere, we believe such concerns are profound and worthy of serious consideration.⁷ So many of Bergoglio's words and deeds have done great damage to the Church. In themselves they raise grave doubts and questions about his claim to legitimate authority.

Our principal reason for believing Bergoglio is not a valid pope is because we believe Our Lord Himself is stating so through the Messages of the Reconquest, calling Bergoglio "the usurper" and the one who is leading the "Great Treason."⁸

May Our Lord, by His Reconquest, renew His Church and bring about true communion among all the faithful.

⁶ See Fr. Faré's paper, "Never Give Up on that Lion: Benedict XVI's Declaratio: A Canonical and Historical Analysis," specifically pp. 11-12 for his treatment of the problem of schism.
[https://www.veritatemincarnate.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Fare_Fr_Giorgio_Maria-
Never_give_up_on_that_Lion.pdf](https://www.veritatemincarnate.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Fare_Fr_Giorgio_Maria-Never_give_up_on_that_Lion.pdf)

⁷ See "[We Must Obey God.](#)"

⁸ See our FAQ: "What is MDM's view of Jorge Bergoglio ('Pope Francis')? Does MDM believe Francis is a valid pope?"