

# Profiting from Crisis? Catholic Traditionalism during the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Thomas Schmidinger*

Lecturer, Institut für Politikwissenschaft, University of Vienna,  
Vienna, Austria

*thomas.schmidinger@univie.ac.at*

## Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, traditionalist Catholic communities have been able to draw worshippers from mainstream parishes that restricted services, thereby profiting from the crisis. In addition, they have used pandemic conditions to advance an ultra-conservative strain of Christian theology that foregrounds the role of believers in the *Ecclesia militans* or “militant Church” by rejecting (in part) state-imposed measures against the pandemic and propagating a critique of vaccination in line with decades of mobilization against abortion and secularism.

The paper focuses on the largest of these communities, the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x and the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter. Focusing mainly on Austria, it details how these communities have sought to leverage the crisis to court worshippers from mainstream parishes and advance their long-term strategic ambitions to destabilize the post-Second Vatican Council status quo within the Roman Catholic Church.

## Keywords

Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x – Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter – Catholic traditionalism – Sedevacantism – religious fundamentalism – COVID-19 pandemic

## 1 Introduction

Traditionalist Catholic communities – particularly the priestly fraternities – have leveraged the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic to recruit new worshippers, bolster their conservative credentials in society and challenge

the Church establishment. In addition, they have used pandemic conditions to advance an ultra-conservative strain of Christian theology that foregrounds the role of believers in the *Ecclesia militans* or “militant Church” by rejecting (in part) state-imposed measures against the pandemic and propagating a critique of vaccination in line with decades of mobilization against abortion and secularism.

This paper focuses on the largest of these communities, the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x (in Latin, *Fraternitas Sacerdotalis Sancti Pii x* or *FSSPX*), established in Switzerland in the 1970s, which has a very strong presence in German – and French-speaking countries, and the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, an offshoot of the former founded in 1988. Using Austria as an example, the paper details how these communities have sought to leverage the crisis to court worshippers from mainstream parishes and advance their long-term strategic ambitions to destabilize the post-Second Vatican Council status quo within the Roman Catholic Church.

## 2 Methodology

The present article<sup>1</sup> adopts a mixed-methods approach, adopting a hermeneutic and critical-theoretical analysis of primary and secondary sources, alongside extensive participant observation. As concerns the former, the analysis draws on current publications of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x and of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter and existing secondary literature.

The principal data gathering method for the analysis was participant observation at services and other events hosted by the two priestly fraternities between October 2020 and December 2021. During this period, the author attended services of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x in all its churches in Vienna, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Carinthia, Tyrol, and Styria. Furthermore, in November and December 2021, the author attended services of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter at the three of its priories in Austria, in Linz, Salzburg, and Vienna. While priests of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter certainly worship in other places, these three sites have the most followers.

In addition to the services, the author also attended a pilgrimage and a coffee party of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x. On the fringes of the services and events of both priestly fraternities, opportunities arose to speak with some

---

1 This article is based on research undertaken in the framework of the research project *Stratex*, funded by the Austrian security research programme *KIRAS* within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism (*BMLRT*).

of the faithful to learn more about their worldview. However, both fraternities declined requests for interviews with member priests. Nevertheless, one priest of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x gave a written statement by e-mail. Additionally, the author was able to conduct one narrative interview with a functionary of an organization of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius based on informed consent before the fraternity issued a blanket instruction forbidding further interviews with the author. Thus, this article draws primarily on participant observation during services, supported by critical analysis of primary and secondary literature.

### 3 The Landscape of Catholic Traditionalism

In 1970, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Marcel François Marie Joseph Lefebvre, who had come to prominence as a severe critic of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), founded the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x, an ultra-traditionalist brotherhood within the Catholic Church opposing the theological and liturgical reforms of the Council. Priests within the fraternity continued to practice the pre-conciliar Latin liturgy. In the decades that followed, the fraternity, named in honour of Pope Pius x (1903–1914), an avowed anti-modernist, has become a hub of Catholic ultra-traditionalism. In 1976, Lefebvre was suspended by Pope Paul vi for ordaining priests without ecclesiastical authorization, and in 1988 he was excommunicated for unauthorized episcopal ordinations by Pope John Paul II. Lefebvre's actions, judged by Pope John Paul II as "schismatic,"<sup>2</sup> led some of the fraternity's priests to separate from it. The Vatican recognized them as the Fraternity of St. Peter, which continues to be loyal to the Pope but otherwise largely adopts the same positions as the Pius fraternity and continues to reject the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

2 On 2 July 1988, Pope John Paul II wrote in his apostolic letter *Ecclesia Dei*: "In itself, this act was one of disobedience to the Roman Pontiff in a very grave matter and of supreme importance for the unity of the church, such as is the ordination of bishops whereby the apostolic succession is sacramentally perpetuated. Hence such disobedience – which implies in practice the rejection of the Roman primacy – constitutes a schismatic act. In performing such an act, notwithstanding the formal canonical warning sent to them by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops on 17 June last, Mons. Lefebvre and the priests Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson and Alfonso de Galarreta, have incurred the grave penalty of excommunication envisaged by ecclesiastical law." (*Apostolic Letter Vatican*). See also: Hünemann, *Exkommunikation – Kommunikation*, p. 30.

### 3.1 *Sedevacantist and Conclavist Groups*

A sedevacantist current within the brotherhood, carried primarily by the most important US priests, including Daniel Dolan, Clarence Kelly, and Donald J. Sanborn, was already expelled from the Pius x fraternity at the beginning of 1983 and thereupon founded the sedevacantist Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius v.<sup>3</sup>

Such sedevacantist groups generally consider popes after the Second Vatican Council to have fallen into the heresy of modernism and therefore reject their authority. Besides the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius v, there are several other sedevacantist bishops, priests, and groups, but none of them has the influence of the traditionalist fraternities of St. Pius x and St. Peter. Furthermore, some groups have chosen to select an antipope, the so-called conclavists. Unlike the sedevacantists, the conclavists do not believe that the papal throne is empty and instead follow an alternative pope. There is a long list of historic antipopes starting in early Christianity and climaxing during the Western Schism in the 14th century. Today, antipopes are mostly the heads of traditionalist Catholic groups who reject the Second Vatican Council but distinguish themselves from the larger traditionalist groups (who remain notionally loyal to the Vatican) by appointing an antipope (whom they see, of course, as the true pope).

However, all these groups are very small, and most are centred in the United States. In Austria, only a few families follow a sedevacantist group around Florian Abrahamowicz (Padre Floriano), who led a priory of the Priestly Fraternity of Pius x near Treviso. In 2001, Abrahamowicz spoke at a ceremony honouring soldiers who died defending Mussolini's fascist Republic of Salò and has publicly defended the Nazi war criminal Erich Priebke. He was expelled from the Pius x fraternity in 2009 for Holocaust denial.

Another sedevacantist group around Father Arnold Trauner, who holds his services in Altenburg in Lower Austria, is linked to the Mater Boni Consilii Institute in Verrua Savoia near Turin, which split from the Pius Fraternity back in 1985.<sup>4</sup> The Mater Boni Consilii Institute advocates the so-called Cassiciacum thesis of the French Dominican Michel-Louis Guérard des Lauriers, according to which post-conciliar popes are duly elected popes, but lack the authority to teach or govern unless they revoke the amendments of the Second Vatican Council. Thus, they represent a somewhat more moderate form of Sedevacantism called Sedeprivationism.<sup>5</sup>

3 Dinges, *We are what you were*, p. 250.

4 Sodalitium (19.05.2019).

5 Pasulka, *Heaven Can Wait*, p. 180.

Some families in Tyrol, Salzburg, and Styria also follow the Palmarian Catholic Church,<sup>6</sup> a small schismatic church that nonetheless occupies a special position on the fringes of Catholic traditionalism. Founded in 1978, the church, which has its episcopal see in El Palmar de Troya in Spain, went well beyond classical Catholic traditionalism when it appointed its first antipope, Clemente Domínguez y Gómez, known as Gregory xvii. Clemente Domínguez claimed that God had blessed the relocation of the seat of the church from Rome to El Palmar de Troya<sup>7</sup> and drastically changed its rites and liturgy. This breakaway church does not follow the old Tridentine Rite and has even adopted a new Bible,<sup>8</sup> putting it at an evident distance from the mainstream Catholic Church and, indeed, the vast majority of Christianity.

### 3.2 *The Priestly Fraternities of St. Pius x and St. Peter*

While the sedevacantist and conclavist groups have few followers in Europe, this is not the case for the two large traditionalist priestly fraternities that are the focus of this research. Between them, they have thousands of followers in Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, and other European countries. They are tight organizations and maintain a number of so-called “Mass Centres,” which celebrate the Catholic liturgy according to the pre-conciliar rites. Moreover, both fraternities are relatively well-endowed, with the material resources to purchase or lease buildings and facilities and to produce publications of all kinds. They thus reach many more people than the abovementioned micro-groups on the fringes of Catholic traditionalism.

The Priestly Fraternity of Pius x represents an extremist worldview seeking a return to the Catholicism of the early 20th-century and a political order that does not recognize the separation of state and religion but instead strives for a Catholic state system. In line with this vision, the Pius x fraternity also rejects the modern secular state, gender equality, the right to contraception, and homosexuality. All groups connected to the fraternities claim to represent a single beatific truth and follow a strictly Manichean worldview that divides the world between absolute cultural, religious and political truths (those of Catholic traditionalism) and heresy. They reject individualism and assume that religions rather than individuals are the bearers of rights.

Christian antisemitism, now officially refuted by the Roman Catholic Church, remains a central tenet within the Fraternity of St Pius x. Franz Schmidberger,

6 Telephone information from the missionary bishop of the Palmarian Catholic Church responsible for Austria, Father Valerio, 17.11.2020.

7 Lundberg, *A Pope of Their Own*, p. 194.

8 The rewritten Bible of the Palmarian Catholic Church is kept secret by the Church itself. However, the religious scholar Magnus Lundberg is in possession of a copy, which he has made available on his blog on the Internet: Magnus Lundberg (07.04.2018).

the second superior general of the Pius x fraternity (1982–1994), and longtime rector of the Sacred Heart Seminary, which trains the next generation of the brotherhood's priests in German-speaking countries, publicly declared that

the Jews of our day [are] not only not our elder brothers in the faith [...] they are [also] complicit in the murder of God as long as they do not distance themselves from the guilt of their forefathers through the confession of the divinity of Christ and baptism.<sup>9</sup>

This rehearses the pre-conciliar accusation of “God-murder,” one of the origins of the idea of the omnipotence of the Jews, a view propagated by modern political antisemitism as well.

In France, in particular, there exists a close relationship between the Pius x fraternity and the extreme right. For example, the long-time leader of the Front national, Jean-Marie Le Pen, repeatedly visited the main church of the fraternity, St. Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, in Paris. The latter's daughter and successor, Marine Le Pen, had her three children baptized there.<sup>10</sup>

In Austria, the relations between the Pius x fraternity and politics are less clear. Supporters of the community vote for different parties but also tend to the political right. The controversial politician Ewald Stadler (initially from the Freedom Party of Austria or FPÖ but later as a member of Alliance for the Future of Austria or BZÖ) was for a long time one of the brotherhood's well-known lay activists. Until 2008, Stadler served as a member of the board of a foundation of the Pius x fraternity. However, by the time he was seated in the European Parliament for the BZÖ in 2013, he had already broken with the Pius x fraternity, after which he went on to form his own party, “The Reform Conservatives” (REKOS).

Ideological overlaps with the extreme right can be found, among other things, in the hostility toward Islam and the rejection of the “multicultural society with its permissive morality,” which, in the view of the Pius x fraternity, “leads to attacks like that of Andres Behring Breivik in 2011.”<sup>11</sup> The hostility against Islam is not only justified with religious resentment but also with accusations of alienation, which are strongly aligned with the extreme right. For example, Franz Schmidberger, described Christianity's supposed capitulation to Muslims as follows:

9 Furlinger, *Der Rückschlag im interreligiösen Dialog unter Benedikt xvi. und die Piusbruderschaft*, p. 148.

10 La croix (10.04.2017).

11 Kühn, *Christlicher Extremismus in Deutschland*, p. 155.

What Islam did not succeed in doing by force of arms in the 16th and 17th centuries, it is now doing peacefully in the post-conciliar era. It occupies Europe; France is flooded by Arabs, Germany by Turks, England, and Scandinavia by Pakistanis.<sup>12</sup>

Here, religiously conditioned hostility against Islam is superimposed onto classic right-wing extremist discourses about threats to the autonomy and freedom of the pious faithful. The German-language publications of the Pius x brotherhood claim that, alongside Jews and Muslims, for centuries, Protestants, Freemasons, and socialists (and more recently, homosexuals) have harassed the Catholic Church from without and disintegrated it from within, but also laid siege to the (Christian) German nation.<sup>13</sup>

The Fraternity of St. Peter (which split from the Pius x brotherhood in 1988) shares with the latter the rejection of the reforms that followed the Second Vatican Council, including the reconciliation of the Church with the secular state and democracy, as well as its homophobic, anti-Muslim and antisemitic positions. Like the Fraternity of St. Pius x, the Fraternity of St. Peter uses the Good Friday prayer for the Jews in its original form, which prays for the conversion of “faithless Jews.” The charge of antisemitism is explicitly refuted on the brotherhood’s website, and the Good Friday prayer for the Jews is justified on the following grounds

It is [...] not problematic to ask for the conversion of the Jews to their true and only Saviour; it would rather be problematic not to ask for it! Whoever has difficulties with this will certainly have difficulties with Jesus Christ Himself. On the other hand, whoever really believes in Him, cannot help but pray lovingly for the people from whom Jesus came according to the flesh so that they may recognize their Messiah, the Saviour of all people.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these ideological similarities with the Pius x brotherhood, the Fraternity of St. Peter is much more moderate towards the papacy and the mainstream of the Roman Catholic Church. It is thus able to reach those ultra-reactionary circles within the Catholic Church who want to avoid a split with Rome at all costs.

<sup>12</sup> Schmidberger, *Die Zeitbomben des II. Vatikanischen Konzils*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Damberg, *Die Priesterbruderschaft St. Pius x. (FSSPX) und ihr politisch-geistesgeschichtlicher Hintergrund*, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Karfreitag.

The ultimate goal is a Church that corresponds to the one that existed between the First and the Second Vatican Councils (i.e., 1870–1965). Both groups ultimately confront the same conundrum – namely, that the papacy has, since the Second Vatican Council, ceded the absolute power it had during this interstitial period. After all, the First Vatican Council established, among other things, papal infallibility in final decisions regarding doctrines of faith and morals, which subsequently led to the secession of the Old Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup> The reform project of both priestly fraternities seeks to restore absolute obedience to the papacy. However, since all popes since the Second Vatican Council have not questioned its reformist principles, both fraternities advocate obedience to a dignitary whose bearers have views they hold to be dangerously misguided. This inherently contradictory relationship of Catholic traditionalism to the papal office runs through the history of both traditionalist movements.

The main difference between the two fraternities is a strategic – organizational one, not an ideological or religious one. Both ultimately want to lead the Roman Catholic Church back to the “right path.” Both reject sedevacantism and recognize the Pope as legitimate (if dangerously misguided). The Fraternity of St. Pius x, however, wants to achieve the desired restoration of the pre-conciliar Catholic Church through a much more confrontational course, which also includes disobeying the Vatican, while the Fraternity of St. Peter wants to achieve this through gradual persuasion within the Catholic Church.

#### 4 The Fraternity of St. Pius x in Austria

As noted, the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x is one of the largest organizations of Catholic traditionalism in Austria. It has parishes in all Austrian provinces, except for Burgenland and Vorarlberg. The Austrian division of the fraternity – which also includes South Tyrol (in Italy), Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Slovakia – currently includes sixteen ordained priests, two friars, and three oblates (a type of religious sister). The centre of the entire division is the Catholic Educational centre in Jaidhof, a small village community in the district of Krems in the southeastern Waldviertel region of the federal state of Lower Austria.

In a total of 13 “Mass Centres” in the Republic of Austria, the Catholic Mass is regularly said according to the pre-conciliar Latin Rite by priests of the fraternity. These “Mass Centres” do not necessarily have their own priest. However,

---

15 Küry, *Die Altkatholische Kirche*, pp. 49–52.



around each Mass Centre, there is a community of followers of the Pius x fraternity, most of whom are based in the surrounding region. Two Mass Centres, including the Priory of Saint Clement Maria Hofbauer at Fockygasse 13, are located in Vienna. In addition to Vienna and Jaidhof (in Lower Austria), there are centres in Linz, Steyr (Upper Austria), Graz, Salzburg, Walchen (Piesendorf, Salzburg state), Innsbruck, Lienz (Tyrol), and Klagenfurt. Followers of the Pius x fraternity in Vorarlberg attend services and events at the Priory of St. Charles Borromeo in Oberriet, located directly on the border with Austria. It is the oldest of the fraternity's priories in German-speaking Switzerland and maintains an elementary school.

The Fraternity of St. Pius x regularly conducts summer camps for children. The Catholic Youth Movement (KJB) is run as a separate youth organization but organizes International Choir Weeks, Austria-wide meetings and cadre training, as well as group leader meetings and other training courses in conjunction with the fraternity. The Sisters of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x also offer distance catechism classes for children, in which kids are introduced to the brotherhood's "truths." In addition, the Pius x fraternity is closely connected to the Catholic Scout Movement of St. Joan of Arc, established in 2005, which began at St. Theresa's High School in Schoenenberg in Germany. In July 2020, a separate Girl Scout group was founded in Austria, called the "Tribe of St. Notburga."<sup>16</sup> The "tribe" comprises girls from different parts of Austria, the majority from the federal states of Upper and Lower Austria, with some hailing from Salzburg, Carinthia and Styria. In total, the "St. Notburga Tribe" has 21 members, although according to its founder, only about 14 to 15 girls attend meetings regularly, which take place about every two months over a weekend. The group is thus still relatively small and is composed of children and young people who come from families that have already grown up in its religious and ideological identity. There are plans to expand youth activities and create a boys' group alongside the existing girls' group.<sup>17</sup>

At the end of the 1990s, the Pius x fraternity in Austria tried to establish its own school in Ternberg near Steyr. The plan was to build a secondary school (St. Joseph's School) with a boarding school for 10- to 14-year-old boys.<sup>18</sup> In December 2014, the organization wrote to its families in Austria and asked them to indicate "to what extent they would be willing to support the founding of a new secondary school with boarding in Jaidhof."<sup>19</sup> However, since there were only eleven binding commitments for the four secondary school classes

16 Katholische Pfadfinder (date of last access: 01.12.2021).

17 Interview with the founder of the "tribe" of St. Notburga, 14.11.2021, Jaidhof.

18 Hofer, *Gottes Rechte Kirche*, p. 52.

19 Katholische Schule der FSSPX.

in the 2016–2017 school year, the General House of the Fraternity in Menzingen (Switzerland) decided that it would be premature to found a school in Austria. While regretting this decision, the Austrian branch of the Fraternity of St. Pius X keeps alive the possibility of founding a school in the coming years.<sup>20</sup>

The Pius fraternity is also active beyond the church gates in Austria. Its functionaries repeatedly speak at demonstrations organized by right-wing Catholic circles, for example, against abortion or the rights of LGBT people. On June 19, 2021, the brotherhood provided a substantial part of a traditionalist Catholic counter-rally against the rainbow parade of various LGBT organizations in Vienna. District Superior Fr. Stefan Frey spoke at the rally, promising an “*Ecclesia militans*” (“militant Church”) and called for what the Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance has referred to as “a kind of Catholic jihad.” Frey asserted that “every Christian” was obliged to “fight for our Lord Jesus Christ, his eternal law and his kingdom, to the point of giving his life.” To Frey’s regret, however, the mainline Church appears “from the official side [...] to want to live in peace, with everyone, even with the enemies of Christ.” Against this attitude, Frey argued, a pious Catholic will only tolerate authority consistent with his exegesis of sacred writings, invoking a “duty to resist.” Frey observed that at the dawn of the Church, the apostle Peter had proclaimed that one must “obey God more than men.” Thus, if “superiors or government bodies command something that is against God and against his holy will, then one must not obey.”<sup>21</sup>

## 5 The Fraternity of St. Peter in Austria

The Fraternity of St. Peter has three branches in Austria, in Vienna, Linz and Salzburg, each with several priests living together in a community, and celebrates the pre-conciliar Latin liturgy in 19 different churches throughout Austria. In addition to the Paulaner church and the chapel of house St. Leopold in Vienna, priests of the fraternity celebrate masses in Graz, Bad Waltersdorf (Styria), Brand (Tyrol), Ehrwald (Tyrol), Innsbruck, Föhrenau (Lower Austria), Haidershofen (Upper Austria), Schardenberg (Upper Austria), St. Konrad (Upper Austria), Köppach (Upper Austria), in two churches in Linz, Rankweil (Vorarlberg), Gortipol (Vorarlberg), Werfen (Salzburg state) and a church and a monastery in Salzburg city. The Austrian part of the Petrus fraternity falls within the “German-speaking area” district, led from Wigratzbad in the Bavarian municipality of Opfenbach. There, a seminary is maintained in

20 Katholische Schule der FSSPX.

21 Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (June 2021).

which, among other things, the Austrian members of the fraternity complete their education.

The fraternity maintains three priories – communities where a group of priests live together and from which various places of worship are served – one each in Vienna, Linz and Salzburg. The Petrus fraternity's largest followings are in these three cities. The community in Linz is by far the largest and best established due to the long history of the community there. In the Minorite Church in Linz, Holy Mass in the Tridentine Rite has been celebrated continuously by a local community since the Second Vatican Council in 1965. While the Linz community was later incorporated into the brotherhood (founded in 1988), it predates it. In the 1960s and 1970s, the masses there were said by the retired cathedral chapel master Josef Kronsteiner, then by other conservative priests who took charge of the small community. According to information from the Petrus fraternity itself, from 1990–1991, priests from the brotherhood in Salzburg became steadily more involved in supporting the Minorite Church until they completely took over the parish in the mid-1990s.<sup>22</sup>

In the Minorite Church in Linz, the Petrus fraternity holds three services every Sunday, and all are well attended. The rococo church, built between 1751 and 1758, fills up with about 150–200 faithful of various age groups, especially for the prayer-singing service at 10:30 am.<sup>23</sup> During weekdays, the fraternity holds two to four daily services in Linz. However, they do not always take place in the Minorite Church but also in the parish centre at Wiener Strasse 262a.

Compared to the large Linz congregation, the congregations in Salzburg and Vienna are much smaller. In Salzburg, two services are held on Sundays and holidays, and one on weekdays.<sup>24</sup> The same is true in Vienna. However, there is an additional service in the capital on Monday evening.<sup>25</sup> In the fraternity's other places of worship, there are usually services only on Sundays and holidays.

Like the Pius x fraternity, the Petrus fraternity is also active in youth and educational work. For this purpose, it maintains a dedicated youth organization, the Christ-Königs-Jugend (CKJ). However, the CKJ is much larger and more widespread in Switzerland and Germany than in Austria, where it is only active in Linz. The CKJ groups in Linz meet at the local branch of the Fraternity, where there are children's groups for first communicants, catechetical classes, confirmation classes and a group for young adults.<sup>26</sup>

22 Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Linz.

23 Participant observation by the author on 12.12.2021.

24 Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Salzburg.

25 Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Vienna.

26 Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Linz. Christ-Königs-Jugend.

## 6 The COVID-19 Pandemic: God's Punishment or Opportunity Structure?

### 6.1 *Strategic Disobedience: Bold Defiance from the Fraternity of St. Pius X*

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020, the Pius x fraternity developed a new line of criticism against the leadership of the Catholic Church. Unlike the Catholic bishops in Germany and Austria, the Pius x fraternity refused to cancel services and submitted to legal regulations only when not doing so would have resulted in immediate sanctions. While other Catholic priests – including the traditionalists of the Fraternity of St. Peter – cancelled services and restricted the administration of sacraments, the Fraternity of St. Pius x declared this to be the “anticipatory obedience” of the official Church, which they themselves refused.

In fact, services continued to be held in Pius fraternity parishes even after the mainstream parishes of the Catholic Church had cancelled regular services. And when mainstream congregations returned to celebrating Mass with social distancing and mandatory mask-wearing and often renounced singing, the congregations of the Pius brothers rejected such restrictions. During one visit to a Mass of the Pius x fraternity in the district seat in castle Jaidhof in Lower Austria in October 2020, it became instantly clear to the author that he stood out, as he was the only one to enter the chapel wearing a protective mask. All the other faithful were crowded into the chapel without masks. Neither chanting nor oral communion was dispensed. In view of the brotherhood's publications on the subject, the uniform behaviour of the faithful may well be interpreted as an explicit demonstration of their refusal to accept measures in force in other Catholic churches at the time.

While other Catholic parishes minimized community life and pastoral care, moved pastoral care to the internet but tried to create as little face-to-face interaction as possible, the Pius x fraternity maintained community life in the first lockdown of spring 2020 and the two additional lockdowns in fall 2020 and the one that began in January 2021. In Salzburg, there was a police operation to investigate one service during the first lockdown in spring 2020, but, in the end, the service was not interrupted.<sup>27</sup>

The cancellations of services by Roman Catholic dioceses were seen only as further evidence of the degeneration of the “mainstream Church.” In the Pius x fraternity's self-image, their behaviour was simply adhering faithfully to the religious obligation of Sunday Mass. Yet the fraternity also refused to

---

<sup>27</sup> Information from the priest of the Salzburg branch of the Fraternity of St. Pius x, Markus Buchmaier by e-mail, 17.11.2021.

enforce other pandemic-related measures that would not interfere with worship. During all visits to the fraternity's services, it became apparent that even where the dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church or the state had made mask-wearing mandatory, none were worn (or only by a few congregants). There was always singing in the masses. Communion was still given orally.

Even during the pilgrimage of the Lienz community to Maria Luggau on October 23, 2021, no masks were worn, although a poster at the entrance to the Basilica of Maria Luggau (a Catholic cathedral not run by the fraternity) explicitly pointed out the mask obligation. Some sermons also preached against vaccination. Wearing FFP-2 masks was not explicitly prohibited. At least in some services, some believers wore masks. Overall, however, they were clearly in the minority in all services.

Not only did the fraternity ignore pandemic-related measures put in place by the state and the Church to protect the community, but – as touched on above – it also criticized the behaviour of the mainstream parishes of the Roman Catholic Church, labelling this a form of “anticipatory obedience,” which in European anti-authoritarian discourse is highly loaded term. A post on the German website of the fraternity by Fr. Gerd Heumesser summarized the group's criticism of the behaviour of the official Roman Catholic Church. In it, Heumesser asks why the Church had chosen to go, in some areas, beyond the official requirements even at an early stage in the pandemic. He posed a series of provocative questions that made clear his view that the German bishops were cowered: “Did the German bishops only accept the state COVID-19 regulations without resistance because the Church in Germany is socially insignificant anyway? Has the Church gone along with the pandemic measures simply because its bishops are too insignificant for their protest to be heard?”<sup>28</sup>

He subsequently acknowledges that it was unclear how dangerous the virus actually was at the beginning of the pandemic and that a certain caution was therefore understandable. After all, “experts” (put in quotation marks in the original text) forecast a potentially dramatic situation. For this reason, one could understand the COVID-19 measures of the dioceses in the first lockdown. However, in the second lockdown, according to Heumesser, the situation was different:

In December 2020, a glance at the official statistics of deaths was enough. There was nothing to be seen of a ‘pandemic’ here. In 2020, 4.57% more people died in Germany than in 2019 and only 3% more than in 2018. In addition, it was clear in December 2020 that this virus is harmless for the

---

28 Priesterberuderschaft St. Pius. Was die Corona Krise zeigt (July 12th 2021).

vast majority. Infection would only be truly dangerous for a very small at-risk group.<sup>29</sup>

Given that the virus had been confirmed to be extremely dangerous for only a tiny segment of the population, Heumesser goes on to ask:

Why then did many parishes nevertheless voluntarily forgo church services at Christmas? Why was oral communion denied? Why in some parishes was Holy Communion provided in cardboard boxes for collection? Why were visits to the sick discontinued? Why were there very few Corpus Christi processions? If fear of the virus is not sufficient as an explanation here, what is the reason for these measures?<sup>30</sup>

According to Heumesser, the pandemic had simply laid bare

what has been more or less latent for a long time: the lack of faith of many clergy. A crisis often acts like a magnifying glass; it clarifies how a person thinks. In this crisis, this applies to the individual priest as well as to the German Church as a whole. The pandemic has revealed that many priests don't care about celebrating Holy Mass, and it revealed more clearly than before what the state of faith in Christ's presence in the sacrament of the altar is.<sup>31</sup>

Heumesser argues the pandemic also made visible the attitude of German clergy toward prayer:

If the "pandemic" is as murderous as the media would have us believe, then prayer would be urgently needed. If clergy cancel services because they are convinced of the dangerousness of the virus, then they should urgently pray for the end of the "pandemic."<sup>32</sup>

Similar criticism was also found on the Austrian website of the Pius x Fraternity. For example, in a video posted to the site, Fr. Johannes Regele, who has been prior in Jaidhof since September 2020, criticized the Church for having abandoned many faithful Catholics. Regele criticized not only the cancellation of

29 Priestbruderschaft St. Pius. Was die Corona Krise zeigt (July 12th 2021).

30 Priestbruderschaft St. Pius. Was die Corona Krise zeigt (12.07.2021).

31 Priestbruderschaft St. Pius. Was die Corona Krise zeigt (12.07.2021).

32 Priestbruderschaft St. Pius. Was die Corona Krise zeigt (12.07.2021).

masses and the administration of the sacraments but also the vaccinations, which in his view, were rushed through. Moreover, he argued (in an astounding lack of scientific understanding of the mRNA technology underpinning most COVID-19 vaccines), the vaccines must have been created with cell lines derived from immoral origins, namely aborted children.<sup>33</sup> A local media outlet in Lower Austria also reported on the Pius brothers' criticism of vaccination and related this to the extremely low vaccination rate in Jaidhof.<sup>34</sup>

Already in June 2020, Regele had criticized the Catholic Church for cancelling the Corpus Christi procession at a demonstration of right-wing conservative Catholics against LGBT rights ("March for the Family") in front of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna.<sup>35</sup>

Given the scepticism about vaccination and the demonstrative rejection of coronavirus containment measures practised in other Catholic communities, it is little wonder that dozens of clergy contracted COVID-19 in November 2020 at the seminary of the Society of St. Pius x in Zaitzkofen (in Germany). A total of 50 people tested positive for the virus, after which the seminary was quarantined.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, the coronavirus pandemic is also interpreted as a lesson from God. In an interview with the Austrian News Agency in April 2020, Fr. Stefan Frey (whose speech to an anti-LGBT rally during the pandemic was mentioned earlier) said: "I think God wanted to teach us a lesson and is calling us to give up our illusions and return to reality."<sup>37</sup>

## 6.2 *Towing the Line: The Partial Acquiescence of the Fraternity of St. Peter*

Unlike the Fraternity of St. Pius x, the Fraternity of St. Peter partially complied with the pandemic-related measures set out by the state and the Church. As in other churches, every other pew in the Petrus fraternity's churches was blocked. At their masses, about half the faithful wore masks. However, Communion continued to be consumed orally.

In its publications, the fraternity seeks to have it both ways, criticizing anyone who rejects all precautionary measures (without explicitly mentioning the Fraternity of St. Pius x) and those state measures seen as unreasonably restricting religious freedom. Likewise, criticism is levelled at those theologians who

33 See, for example, the video: Ein Jahr mit Corona – wie lautet die Antwort des Christen auf diese Herausforderung?

34 Niederösterreichische Nachrichten (NÖN, 15.12.2021).

35 Gloria TV (date of last access: 12.12.2021).

36 Spiegel Panorama (09.11.2020).

37 Kleine Zeitung (12.04.2020).

exclude God “from the fight against evil.”<sup>38</sup> According to this view, the secular state rests on foundations that it cannot itself guarantee and cannot afford to suspend religious services permanently without changing its own character:

Christian worship must not be pushed into virtual space. The pious must not be concerned with egoistic access to the means of salvation. Rather, the Christian life is nourished daily by the Eucharist, and it must be extended to as many as possible.<sup>39</sup>

### 6.3 *Common Cause: Vaccine Criticism and Conspiracy Theories*

In the environment of the Fraternity of St. Peter, similar to the Fraternity of St. Pius X, and other Christian extremist groups, a strong rejection of COVID-19 vaccinations has developed, which was justified by the erroneous reference to stem cells derived from unborn children. Fr. Bernhard Kaufmann, a priest connected with the Fraternity of St. Peter, gave a speech against the vaccines at the “March for Life” on May 30, 2021, in Bregenz (Vorarlberg), because they would contain or be tested on “embryonic cell lines.” He said he was not aware of any vaccine that did not involve this “consumptive embryo research.” Fr. Kaufmann then called on those gathered to “inform themselves on the Internet” so that they could avoid “participating in things of which they would later say, I should not have done that since I oppose it!” In the course of his speech, the priest even claimed that for stem cell harvesting, already viable children in the advanced stages of pregnancy would be delivered by Caesarean section and then eviscerated alive. This image, reported with a shudder, is strongly reminiscent of antisemitic ritual murder legends historically prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to groups that can be clearly distinguished in terms of organization, individual traditionalist priests – who are not always so clearly singled out – are increasingly appearing in public. In Tyrol, for example, a brochure distributed by Ferdinand Schnaiter from the parish of Gerlos – who was authorized by the archbishopric of Vaduz (Liechtenstein), which has a reputation as an ultra-conservative, and by the Maria Loreto Monastery in Salzburg – caused a stir when it warned of the imminent rise of a “medical dictatorship.” The Maria Loreto Monastery is linked to the Fraternity of St. Peter. However, the pamphlet, which announced that Bill Gates had hatched a “criminal plan to enslave mankind,” was not officially published by the Petrus fraternity. Most

38 Conrad FSSP, *Glaube versus Gesundheitsamt*, p.10.

39 Conrad FSSP, *Glaube versus Gesundheitsamt*, p.10.

40 Youtube (date of last access: 01.12.2021). Meanwhile this video has been removed.



probably, it was the work of Ferdinand Schnaiter alone. The brochure opposes “mask terror” and “criminal genetic manipulation” and claims that “aborted children” were used to develop the vaccines.<sup>41</sup>

Schnaiter, however, is not an isolated case. The pastor of Zell am Ziller, Ignaz Steinwender, also made several public appearances as an opponent of vaccination<sup>42</sup> and also appeared on the FPÖ’s online TV channel (FPÖ-TV) in this context.<sup>43</sup>

A splinter group of Catholic traditionalists around Alexander Tschugguel, calling itself “Catholic Resistance”, also regularly participates in various demonstrations of opponents of compulsory vaccination and the Corona measures. Tschugguel, who otherwise opposes abortion, achieved notoriety on the scene when he stole several statues representing Pachamama (a deity from the Andes) from a Roman church and threw them into the Tiber River during the Amazon Synod in 2019.<sup>44</sup> He comes from a noble Tyrolean family and was one of the founding members of Stadler’s REKOS.

## 7 Courting Disaffected Conservatives into Traditionalist Ranks

For many conservative believers, the pandemic actually accentuated their need for meaningful connection with the Church and their community of worship. As churches largely curtailed their offerings precisely due to the crisis, suspending services altogether in the first lockdown of 2020, some of these conservatives found a new home in the churches that refused to curtail their services. In the course of field research for this paper, it became apparent in several parishes visited in 2021 that there were several new worshippers who were not yet familiar with the pre-conciliar Latin Mass. In one service in Steyr, this was explicitly mentioned as a problem by the priest, who exhorted the faithful to quickly familiarize themselves with the procedures of the Roman Rite.<sup>45</sup> In the parish at the Pius X brothers’ headquarters in Jaidhof, which the author visited in autumn 2020 and again in autumn 2021, it became clear that attendance at Mass had almost doubled over the period.<sup>46</sup>

41 Brochure “*Herr rette uns, wir gehen zu Grunde!*”.

42 Der Standard, *Katholischer Widerstand* (25.01.2022).

43 Youtube, FPÖ TV (27.11.2021).

44 Tagespost (04.11.2019).

45 Participating observation at the Pius Fraternity service in Steyr on 10.10.2021.

46 Participating observation at the Pius Fraternity services in Jaidhof on 15.11.2020 and 14.11.2021.

In December 2020, District Superior Frey told the Austrian daily newspaper, *Der Standard*, that the Fraternity of St. Pius x had drawn a significant influx of new worshippers during the crisis, and is quoted as saying: “These new worshippers come from all walks of life – young, old, business people, caregivers – who are suddenly gripped by panic about the future.”<sup>47</sup> Frey also told the newspaper

We have been overworked in the last few months because people want to talk and confess. Many couldn't go to confession in other churches and were then tipped off that they should try us. We've replaced the confessionals with confession rooms, where two metres of space is always guaranteed.<sup>48</sup>

Frey told the paper that he does not see any danger of infection via oral delivery of the Eucharist. In decades as a priest, he claimed, he has “hardly ever” touched the tongue of anyone receiving communion with his fingers.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike some other small communities, the Fraternity of St. Pius x did not dare launch a frontal attack on the COVID-19 measures adopted by the Austrian federal government at the beginning of the crisis. However, Fr. Frey told Austrian media that it would have been possible to find a regulation for the churches similar to that for supermarkets, where people were trusted to use their good judgement.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, by the time of the aforementioned rally against the Rainbow Parade in June 2021, Frey had become more explicit and aggressive. After calling for disobedience against the state when “superiors or government bodies command something that is against God and against his holy will,” he mentioned pandemic-related measures as one such example.<sup>51</sup>

## 8 Conclusion

The pressure on vaccination refusers and the compulsory vaccination decided by the Austrian parliament in January 2022 seem to have triggered a radicalization of both fraternities' positions against the state's pandemic measures and further alienated traditionalist Catholics from the wider society,

47 Der Standard: Konservative Piusbruderschaft (31.12.2020).

48 Der Standard: Konservative Piusbruderschaft (31.12.2020).

49 Der Standard: Konservative Piusbruderschaft (31.12.2020).

50 Kleine Zeitung (12.04.2020).

51 Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (June 2021).

including mainstream Catholics. Conversely, the pandemic-induced crisis has not only produced a growing following, especially for the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius x but also to a relative increase in the importance of Catholic traditionalism within the Catholic Church. While partial church closures and fears of infection have accelerated the decline of mainstream Roman Catholic communities, traditionalist communities have benefited from the health crisis. Adherents and members of these groups are well aware of this increase in importance and see the opportunity to move one step closer to their goal of taking over the Church again.

### Bio

Thomas Schmidinger is a political scientist and social and cultural anthropologist. He teaches at the University of Vienna and the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria. Research projects with the Department of Applied Sociology of Law and Criminology at the University of Innsbruck, among others. Since October 2022 visiting professor at the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH) in Erbil (Iraq).

### Bibliography

- Conrad FSSP, Sven Leon: *Glaube versus Gesundheitsamt*. Informationsblatt der Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus (5/2020), pp. 8–10.
- Damberg, Wilhelm: *Die Priesterbruderschaft St. Pius x. (FSSPX) und ihr politisch-geistesgeschichtlicher Hintergrund*. In: Peter Hünermann (ed.): *Exkommunikation oder Kommunikation? Der Weg der Kirche nach dem II. Vatikanum und die Pius-Brüder*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder 2009.
- Dinges, William: *'We are what you were': Roman Catholic traditionalism in the USA*. In: Mary Jo Weaver/R. Scott Appleby (eds.): *Being Right. Conservative Catholics in America*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1995, pp. 241–269.
- Fürlinger, Ernst: *Der Rückschlag im interreligiösen Dialog unter Benedikt XVI. und die Piusbruderschaft*. In: Til Galrev (ed.): *Der Papst im Kreuzfeuer. Zurück zu Pius oder das Konzil fortschreiben?* Münster: LIT 2009, pp. 141–154.
- Greschat, Martin: *Die christliche Mitgift Europas – Traditionen der Zukunft*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2000.
- Hofer, Thomas M.: *Gottes Rechte Kirche. Katholische Fundamentalisten auf dem Vormarsch*. Wien: Ueberreuter 1998.
- Hünermann, Peter: *Exkommunikation – Kommunikation. Schichtanalyse der Fakten – Theologische Beurteilung – Wege aus der Krise*. In: Peter Hünermann (ed.):

- Exkommunikation oder Kommunikation? Der Weg der Kirche nach dem II. Vatikanum und die Pius-Brüder (Quaestiones disputatae)*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder 2009, pp. 13–68.
- Kühn, Alexander: *Christlicher Extremismus in Deutschland. Das Verhältnis der Partei Bibeltreuer Christen, Christliche Mitte, Priesterbruderschaft St. Pius und Zeugen Jehovas zum demokratischen Verfassungsstaat*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag 2016.
- Küry, Urs: *Die Altkatholische Kirche: Ihre Geschichte, ihre Lehre, ihr Anliegen*. Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk 2017.
- Lundberg, Magnus: *A Pope of Their Own: El Palmar de Troya and the Palmarian Church. Uppsala Studies in Church History n*. Uppsala: Uppsala University, Department of Theology 2020.
- Pasulka, Diana Walsh: *Heaven Can Wait: Purgatory in Catholic Devotional and Popular Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015.
- Schmidberger, Franz: *Die Zeitbomben des II. Vatikanischen Konzils*. Vortrag gehalten am 9. April 1989 in Mainz vor der Bewegung „actio spes unica“. Stuttgart: Priesterbruderschaft St. Pius x. 2008.

### Online Resources

- Apostolic Letter Vatican: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_motu-proprio\\_02071988\\_ecclesia-dei.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_jp-ii_motu-proprio_02071988_ecclesia-dei.html) (date of last access: 16.08.2022).
- Gloria TV: *Marsch für die Familie*, 13.06.2020, [www.gloria.tv/post/hApWUyvw8KdK3eEDDiNjMRzC](http://www.gloria.tv/post/hApWUyvw8KdK3eEDDiNjMRzC) (date of last access: 12.12.2021).
- Der Standard: *Katholischer Widerstand: Wenn Impfen eine Sünde ist*, by Vanessa Gaigg and Lara Hagen, 25.01.2022, [www.derstandard.at/story/2000132634392/katholischer-widerstand-wenn-impfen-eine-suende-ist](http://www.derstandard.at/story/2000132634392/katholischer-widerstand-wenn-impfen-eine-suende-ist) (date of last access: 27.01.2022).
- Der Standard: *Konservative Piusbruderschaft: Konservative Bruderschaft sieht stärkeren Zulauf durch Corona-Krise*, by Conrad Seidl, 31.12.2020, [www.derstandard.de/story/2000122818582/konservative-bruderschaft-sieht-staerkeren-zulauf-durch-corona-krise](http://www.derstandard.de/story/2000122818582/konservative-bruderschaft-sieht-staerkeren-zulauf-durch-corona-krise) (date of last access: 12.12.2021).
- Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes: *Religiöse Extremisten demonstrieren im Zentrum Wiens*, June 2021, [www.doew.at/erkennen/rechtsextrémismus/neues-von-ganz-rechts/archiv/juni-2021/religioese-extremisten-demonstrieren-im-zentrum-wiens](http://www.doew.at/erkennen/rechtsextrémismus/neues-von-ganz-rechts/archiv/juni-2021/religioese-extremisten-demonstrieren-im-zentrum-wiens) (date of last access: 03.12.2021).
- FSSPX: *Katholische Schule der FSSPX in Österreich*, by P. Stefan Frey: [fsspx.at/de/katholische-schule-der-fsspx-%C3%B6sterreich](http://fsspx.at/de/katholische-schule-der-fsspx-%C3%B6sterreich) (date of last access: 06.12.2021).
- Katholische Pfadfinder: <https://fsspx.at/de/katholische-pfadfinderschaft-st-jeanne-darc> (meanwhile removed).
- Kleine Zeitung: *Für österreichische Piusbruderschaft eine „Lektion“ Gottes*, 12.04.2020, [www.kleinezeitung.at/international/corona/info/5799404/Coronavirus\\_Fue](http://www.kleinezeitung.at/international/corona/info/5799404/Coronavirus_Fue)

- r-oesterreichische-Piusbruderschaft-eine-Lektion-Gottes (date of last access: 12.12.2021).
- La croix: *“La jeunesse très catholique des candidats à la présidentielle”*, by Bernard Gorce, 10.04.2017, [www.la-croix.com/Religion/Laïcité/La-jeunesse-tres-catholique-candidats-presidentielle-2017-04-10-1200838526](http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Laïcité/La-jeunesse-tres-catholique-candidats-presidentielle-2017-04-10-1200838526) (date of last access: 28.01.2022).
- Magnus Lundberg: *The Text of the Palmarian Bible*, 07.04.2018, <https://magnuslundberg.net/2018/04/07/the-text-of-the%E2%80%8B-palmarian-bible> (date of last access: 10.12.2021).
- Niederösterreichische Nachrichten (NÖN): *Impfung als Moralfrage?*, by Franz Aschauer, 15.12.2021, [www.noen.at/krems/jaidhof-impfung-als-moralfrage-jaidhof-coronavirus-corona-impfung-print-305901327](http://www.noen.at/krems/jaidhof-impfung-als-moralfrage-jaidhof-coronavirus-corona-impfung-print-305901327) (date of last access: 22.12.2021).
- Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Linz: *Über uns*, [www.fssplinz.at/index.php/home](http://www.fssplinz.at/index.php/home) (date of last access: 03.12.2021).
- Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Linz: *Christ-Königs-Jugend*, [www.fssplinz.at/index.php/ckj-linz](http://www.fssplinz.at/index.php/ckj-linz) (date of last access: 03.12.2021).
- Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus: *Karfreitag*, by P. Bernward Deneke, <http://petrusbruderschaft.de/pages/themen/liturgie/karfreitagsfuerbitte.php> (date of last access: 06.12.2021).
- Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Salzburg: *Mess- und Beichtordnung*, [www.sankt-sebastian.at/seiten/gottesdienstordnung.html](http://www.sankt-sebastian.at/seiten/gottesdienstordnung.html) (date of last access: 10.12.2021).
- Priesterbruderschaft St. Pius: *Was die Corona Krise zeigt*, by Pater Gerd Heumesser, 12.07.2021, <https://fsspx.de/de/news-events/news/was-die-corona-krise-zeigt-67408> (date of last access: 12.12.2021).
- Priesterbruderschaft St. Petrus, Vienna: *Messordnung*, [www.sankt-leopold.at/seiten/messordnung.html](http://www.sankt-leopold.at/seiten/messordnung.html) (date of last access: 10.12.2021).
- Sodalitium: *Eintritt ins Institut Mater Boni Consilii*, by Hw. Pater Arnold Trauner, 19.05.2019, [www.sodalitium.biz/de/eintritt-ins-institut-mater-boni-consilii-von-hw-pater-arnold-trauner](http://www.sodalitium.biz/de/eintritt-ins-institut-mater-boni-consilii-von-hw-pater-arnold-trauner) (date of last access: 28.02.2022).
- Spiegel Panorama: *Corona-Ausbruch bei Piusbrüdern in Regensburg*, 09.11.2020, [www.spiegel.de/panorama/bayern-corona-ausbruch-bei-piusbruedern-in-regensburg-a-977194b1-7eb4-41f2-ad45-dfba292b87d9](http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/bayern-corona-ausbruch-bei-piusbruedern-in-regensburg-a-977194b1-7eb4-41f2-ad45-dfba292b87d9) (date of last access: 22.12.2021).
- Tagespost: *Entwendete „Pachamamas“: Lebensrechtler Tschugguel bekennt sich*, 04.11.2019, [www.die-tagespost.de/kirche-aktuell/weltkirche/entwendete-pachamamas-lebensrechtler-tschugguel-bekannt-sich-art-202734](http://www.die-tagespost.de/kirche-aktuell/weltkirche/entwendete-pachamamas-lebensrechtler-tschugguel-bekannt-sich-art-202734) (date of last access: 28.01.2022).
- Youtube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1YYD0qE8gw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1YYD0qE8gw) (meanwhile removed).
- Youtube: *FPÖ TV: Pfarrer Ignaz Steinwender über die Freiheit und den Glauben in der Corona-Krise*, 27.11.2021, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCCbaCNcnfk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCCbaCNcnfk) (date of last access: 27.01.2022).