

**THE ALTERNATIVE POPE PROJECT**

**WORKING PAPER**

**Francis Schuckardt, the Papacy, and the Apocalypse**



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## Introduction

Bishop Francis K. Schuckardt (1937–2006), founder and leader of the Fatima Crusaders, the Tridentine Latin Rite Catholic Church, also known as Tridentine Latin Rite Church (TLRC), and the Congregation of Mary Immaculate Queen of the Universe (CMRI), was an important figure in early U.S. Catholic traditionalism. Without a doubt, he was also one of the most controversial.

Schuckardt condemned the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and the post-conciliar developments in non-uncertain terms. Towards the end of the 1960s, he publicly declared Paul VI (sed. 1963–1978) an antipope and that the Holy See was vacant, the position that was later referred to as sedevacantism. Schuckardt founded a small religious community in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in 1967, which soon attracted larger groups of followers. In 1971, he was ordained a priest and consecrated a bishop by an independent Catholic prelate.

The group expanded from Idaho and moved its headquarters to Mount Saint Michael in Spokane, Washington state 1978. TLRC was the organization's official name incorporated in Washington state, as they could not register as either the Catholic Church or the Roman Catholic Church, even if they asserted they were nothing less. Thus, they rarely used the name TLRC, and the adherents usually called their group the Mary Immaculate Queen of the Universe Community, of which the Fatima Crusade was the apostolate. In contrast, outsiders, especially after moving to Spokane, often called them the Tridentines.

His adherents saw Schuckardt as the only true Catholic bishop in the era of general apostasy. He even claimed to have been mystically crowned pope to a small group of close disciples. At least from the early 1970s onwards, outsiders, including other Catholic traditionalists, regarded the TLRC as a heterodox group based on a personality cult and with suspicious apostolic succession. On his hand, Schuckardt did not accept other traditionalist groups; only sacraments administered by his group were valid.

Particularly during the early 1980s, even if the number of adherents grew, the situation within the TLRC became progressively chaotic. At least partly due to Schuckardt's severe health problems and the strong medication he took, the bishop's behavior became increasingly erratic, and a power struggle between two factions ensued. After being accused of, e.g., incompetency and sexual abuse in 1984, Schuckardt left or was forced to go, and his long-time associate and Vicar General Denis Chicoine

(1937–1995) took charge of the community. Though most church members sided with the Chicoine faction and others would leave altogether, a small group of clergy, religious brothers, nuns, and laypeople stayed with Schuckardt. Some would follow him to different locations in California and the Seattle area until he died in 2006. By the end, he had no more than around a hundred adherents.

The larger group that stayed at Mount Saint Michael in Spokane after Schuckardt's exit, for some time, was officially known as the Latin Rite Catholic Church or, more often, the Congregation of Mary Immaculate Queen (CMRI), sought help from other traditionalist bishops, only to clash with them after brief periods. CMRI is currently led by Bishop Mark Pivarunas (b. 1958), consecrated in the early 1990s by a Mexican bishop in the Thuc lineage. Today, CMRI is one of the largest sedevacantist groups in the world, which has chapels and provides sacraments in many places in the United States and other parts of the world.

This report, however, focuses on Francis Schuckardt and his group before and after the 1984 split, now led by Bishop Mary Fidelis. Still, I will give a very brief outline of the post-Schuckardt CMRI history.

## Sources and Previous Research

Studying a person like Francis Schuckardt is challenging, as the views on him are highly conflictive. Many former adherents describe him in almost diabolical terms. Others hold that he had once been a faithful Catholic leader who had been transformed into a despot. Contrariwise, those who remained loyal to him after 1984 regarded him as a saintly and innocent victim of persecution. It is telling that Schuckardt is erased from the group narrative of the current-day CMRI. For example, he is not included in the order's official historical overview on their website. In short, they do not want to be associated with him.<sup>1</sup>

Another clear sign of the controversy surrounding Schuckardt is that in 2006 the Wikipedia entry on him raised a more than hundred-page discussion thread. This debate was referred to as “the 2006 edit wars.” Some authors, particularly one of his bishops, still regarded Schuckardt as a faithful Catholic leader and asserted that most criticism against him was slander and lies. Other authors were members of the post-Schuckardt CMRI, and some were ex-members altogether. All sides

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cmri.org/about-cmri/history-of-cmri/](http://www.cmri.org/about-cmri/history-of-cmri/)

accused the others of bias and for presenting unsubstantiated assertions. Ultimately, they had to search for mediation from the Wikipedia administrators. Today, the Wikipedia entry on Schuckardt is meager and hardly useful.<sup>2</sup>

Another problem when studying Schuckardt is that it is difficult to access his group's publications from the 1960s through the early 1980s and almost impossible after the 1984 rift. I have, however, had access to some texts and recorded talks by Schuckardt and his closest associates, as well as some hagiographical accounts.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, several websites still defend Schuckardt against accusations, presenting what they see as the true Catholic faith.<sup>4</sup>

To complement these sources, I use texts by Fr. Joseph Marie Belzac, who remained loyal to Schuckardt after the 1984 split and consecrated a bishop in 2006 but left in 2011. Belzac's "God As My Witness: The Truth About Bishop Francis Schuckardt," published in the early 2010s, is sympathetic to the bishop but not hagiographical. A later text, "The Case Against Moral Certitude of Holy Orders Stemming From Francis Schuckardt" (2016), is more critical, and the author concluded that his own consecration was invalid. He also published a text entitled "Bishop' Mary Fidelis, aka Andrew Jacobs: His Dangerous Theological Aberrations" directed against Schuckardt's successor.<sup>5</sup>

Finding decidedly critical or down-right hostile accounts on Schuckardt is much easier. Among other things, I use a series of tape recordings of talks and sermons given to the community by Denis Chicoine and Fr. Benedict Mary during the dramatic weeks in June 1984 when Schuckardt left or was forced to go. I also use written documents from the same time.<sup>6</sup>

An essential document collection covering the years around Schuckardt's leaving was compiled in the late 1980s by Dennis D'Amico

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<sup>2</sup> For the "edit war of 2006", see [www.en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Francis\\_Schuckardt/Archive\\_1&oldformat=true](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Francis_Schuckardt/Archive_1&oldformat=true)

<sup>3</sup> "Bishop Francis K. Maria Schuckardt", "All Alone with the Immaculate Heart of Mary: To Her Glory, and the Praise of the Most Reverend Bishop + Francis Konrad Maria, ihm," and "Bishop + Francis K. Maria – Validity and Liceity of Orders."

<sup>4</sup> See [www.bishopschuckardt.com](http://www.bishopschuckardt.com) and [www.bishopfks.blogspot.com](http://www.bishopfks.blogspot.com); [www.salvemariaregina.info](http://www.salvemariaregina.info) and [www.marienfried.com](http://www.marienfried.com).

<sup>5</sup> Available on [www.bishopjosephmarie.org](http://www.bishopjosephmarie.org).

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Henry, formerly a CMRI priest, digitized the cassette recordings and included comments, see "Who is right and who is wrong" [www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html](http://www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html) [URL down], cassettes 1 through 5.

under the pen name Ely Jones. He had a decidedly negative view of the CMRI both before and after Schuckardt, and the title says a lot: “The Mystic Knights of Mumbo-Jumbo: My Perspective on the Former Francis Schuckardt Community (CMRI).”<sup>7</sup>

In 1980, journalist Bob Cabbage published an article series on the TLRC in the *Inland Register*, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle’s journal. The articles were also printed in the Diocese of Spokane’s journal, *The Catholic Northwestern Progress*. Eventually, they were brought together in book form and are still among the best studies about Schuckardt and the TLRC during the 1960s and 1970s.

Though published in Roman Catholic newspapers and with an underlying mission to warn the Catholic faithful of a dissident group, Cabbage gives a remarkably multifaceted view based on the TLRC’s publications and interviews with Schuckardt, religious and lay members. Still, he also includes testimonies by ex-members and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and anti-cult groups. Altogether, he interviewed more than 50 people. Cabbage issued a revised edition in 1986, including an appendix on the dramatic events of 1984 and the early post-Schuckardt developments at Mount Saint Michael.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from Cabbage’s coverage, I have used abundant material from the local and regional press, notably *The Spokane Chronicle*, *The Spokane Daily Chronicle*, *The Spokesman-Review*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Coeur d’Alene Press*, and *The Catholic Northwest Progress*. Most pieces were published in the 1970s and 1980s, but there are some earlier and later reports, too. Though the material includes well-researched feature articles, not surprisingly, most focus is on newsworthy conflicts, including the abundant lawsuits in which Schuckardt was involved for decades.<sup>9</sup>

The website [www.tridentines.com](http://www.tridentines.com) is a vital resource, too. A former CMRI member writes it, includes texts about the history of the TLRC/CMRI, and provides a detailed biography of Schuckardt. It is decidedly critical and, not least, focuses on abuse within TLRC/CMRI, the official Roman Catholic Church, and the Catholic traditionalist movement at large. The website also contains abundant source material, mainly newspaper articles.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>, Jason 1983–1988.

<sup>8</sup> Cabbage 1986.

<sup>9</sup> The search for name “Francis Schuckardt” renders more than 550 articles on [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com). Many are syndicated, but about half of them are unique pieces.

<sup>10</sup> See [www.tridentines.com](http://www.tridentines.com)



In her book *Spiritual Blackmail* (2014), Sherri Schettler recounts her 25-year experiences with the TLRC. She came into contact with the group as a teenager in the mid-1970s, later attended its boarding school, and eventually became a nun. She stayed with the main CMRI after the Schuckardt era but left in 2001. The book is a well-pondered account of somebody who lived in this environment before and after the split.<sup>11</sup>

Traditionalist priest Daniel B. Ahern's text "Mount Saint Michael: A Systematic Study" was published around 1993. The author aimed to evaluate the CMRI's canonical and doctrinal status before and after Schuckardt. It is normative but based on various sources: texts produced by the group, recorded talks by Schuckardt, and interviews with current CMRI members.<sup>12</sup>

In his book *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (1997), sociologist Michael Cuneo includes a section about CMRI with brief notes on its Schuckardt origins. It is a well-researched study written in a journalistic style, though sometimes with a decidedly mocking tone. For example, Cuneo describes Schuckardt as

the rock-and-roll outlaw of Catholic traditionalism—the bad influence that people somehow can't bring themselves to stop talking about. During the late sixties and early seventies, Schuckardt almost single-handedly founded an influential community in the Pacific northwest that was characterized by a peculiar blend of Catholic survivalism, paranoia, and lockstep dogmatism.<sup>13</sup>

Cuneo wrote in 1997, and I do not think many people talk about Schuckardt nowadays. Not even traditionalist writings devote many words to him. If they do, they usually present him and his activities as a cautionary tale.

Some information in this report is unquestionable; they are facts. Still, almost every source on Schuckardt builds on very different interpretations and experiences. Though I have used source criticism, it is not possible to find *one* truth as all sources are biased in one way or another. However, I try to present the contradictory narratives to the best of my ability. While placing the narratives in a historical and theological context, I carefully indicate who claims what and try to understand the

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<sup>11</sup> Schettler 2014. As I have used the Kindle edition of this book, I refer to chapter not to page number.

<sup>12</sup> Ahern 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Cuneo 1997: 102–113; notes on Schuckardt on p. 102–104.

internal logic, a way of proceeding often referred to as methodological empathy. Still, Schuckardt will remain a bewildering figure who is difficult to grapple with.

## Background

Francis (originally Frank) Konrad Schuckardt was born in Seattle on 10 July 1937 in a family of German ancestry. His parents were Frank G. Schuckardt (1914–1984), who owned a construction company, and Gertrude née Lux (1914–2007). The family soon moved to Bellevue, a city in the Seattle area where Francis grew up.<sup>14</sup>

Schuckardt attended the O’Dea High School, run by the Congregation of Christian Brothers, between 1951 and 1954. He continued his studies and graduated from the Jesuit-administered Seattle University in 1959 with majors in linguistics and education. During these years, Schuckardt also dedicated much time to extra-curricular activities, such as editing a student journal. Moreover, he was involved in many student organizations, including cultural, religious, and political groups, and he was also a very active member of his home parish. After graduation, Schuckardt worked as a teacher at Bellevue Junior High School.<sup>15</sup>

Feeling a vocation to the priesthood, in 1960, Schuckardt went to Our Lady of the Ozarks College in Carthage, Missouri, run by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI). In recent decades, as the scope of Catholic sexual abuse has been documented, we know that both the high school, the university, and the seminary Schuckardt attended housed many sexual predators. Still, in comparison, the density of sexual offenders at the College in Carthage stands out. In 1961, after about a year there, Schuckardt had to leave the college due to health issues. After exiting the seminary, he once again earned a living as a high school teacher.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout most of his adult life, beginning in the early 1960s, Schuckardt was plagued by severe illness. In 1961, he was close to death from typhoid fever, and in 1963, there was an overwhelming risk that the

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<sup>14</sup> [www.findagrave.com/memorial/71765921/francis-konrad-schuckardt](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/71765921/francis-konrad-schuckardt)

<sup>15</sup> *The Catholic Northwest Progress* 18 May 1945, 30 November 1951, 25 April 1952, 16 October 1953, 21 May 1954, 18 September and 9 October 1959; and *The Seattle Daily Times* 29 October 1958

<sup>16</sup> Cabbage 1986: 32. For notes on the sexual abuses, see [www.tridentines.com/pages/schuckardt](http://www.tridentines.com/pages/schuckardt)

doctors would have to amputate one of his legs due to thrombophlebitis. On both occasions, he prayed to the Virgin Mary and promised that if healed, he would wholeheartedly dedicate his life to her, spreading the message of Our Lady of Fatima. Schuckardt joined the influential Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima in the late 1950s, became a regional director in 1961, and an international secretary a few years later. In fact, he devoted all his time to spreading the Fatima message.<sup>17</sup>

## The Blue Army

The Blue Army was founded in 1947 by Harold Colgan (1894–1972), a parish priest from New Jersey. Suffering a potentially life-threatening heart disease, Colgan had pledged that if he recovered, he would dedicate himself to diffusing the Fatima message. In that way, his story was similar to Schuckardt's. By the mid-1940s, Our Lady of Fatima was a rapidly growing Marian cult, enthusiastically endorsed by Pope Pius XII (sed. 1939–1958). It had transformed it into a paramount symbol of the Catholic Church's anti-communist struggle in the Cold War years. Colgan joined forces with John Haffert (1915–2001), an ardent Fatima devotee who had actively tried to spread the devotion in the United States, including organizing the tours of the pilgrim statue, a copy of the original image throughout the country.<sup>18</sup>

Though the apparitions at Fatima took place in 1917, it was only in 1941 that the only surviving seer, Lúcia dos Santos, wrote down another part of the Virgin's message: three secrets, or, more precisely, one secret with three parts. Two of them were publicly announced at the time. The first was a vision of Hell and an appeal to pray the rosary. The second was the importance of prayers for the conversion of Russia and its consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary that would lead to world peace. The third part was not revealed then but should only be made public later, "when it was better understood."<sup>19</sup>

The Blue Army's fundamental goal was for people to convert and sign a pledge the Virgin, promising to say daily rosaries for the conversion of Communists and Communist countries and wear a scapular "as a symbol of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary." To reach its aim, the Blue Army used a wide range of channels: public lectures,

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<sup>17</sup> "Bishop Francis K. Maria Schuckardt" 2006 and Cabbage 1986: 32.

<sup>18</sup> O'Connor 2022 is the most detailed study on the Blue Army, see also Bennett 2015. On the Cold War Fatimization of Marian piety, see Margry 2020: 29–37.

<sup>19</sup> O'Connor 2022: 5–10.

magazines (including *Soul*) and other imprints, radio and TV, music, and movies. Haffert was a particularly active writer. His most famous book was *Russia will be converted* (1950). Still, the Blue Army could also count with the support of one of the most famous Catholic prelates, Fulton Sheen, who attracted multi-million audiences to his radio and TV shows.<sup>20</sup>

Their mission was successful. By 1953, about five million people in the United States had signed the pledge, and eventually, the Blue Army had tens of millions of adherents internationally. The message promoted had strong apocalyptic components and described the current era as a battleground between light and darkness. At this time, the Virgin's Blue Army waged a spiritual war against the Communist Red Army, mainly through penance, sacrifice, and prayer, not least the rosary. Still, that millions of people signed the pledge did not necessarily mean that the subscribed to the Blue Army's whole ideology; for many it was an act of patriotism.<sup>21</sup>

Many Catholics hoped the third secret of Fatima would be made public in 1960, and the Blue Army had published much on the subject, thinking that it would be the year for a Communist invasion. Still, Pope John XXIII (sed. 1958–1963) chose not to reveal it, and the Blue Army lost momentum. Not surprisingly, the decision gave rise to speculations about the contents. Together with many others, leaders of the Blue Army speculated that it involved the coming of a new great war, more disastrous than any earlier. That part of the Blue Army's activities attracted criticism from church authorities, who were generally weary of too concrete apocalyptic predictions.<sup>22</sup>

Francis Schuckardt became the director of the Blue Army's Pacific Division in 1961 and an international board member in 1963. Knowing several languages and being considered a charismatic speaker, he would be promoted to international secretary. In that capacity, he traveled nationally and internationally, lecturing about the Fatima message and the need to fight Communism with prayer and penance. By then, however, the popularity of the Blue Army had decreased.<sup>23</sup>

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and the post-conciliar development would challenge the type of piety that was central to the

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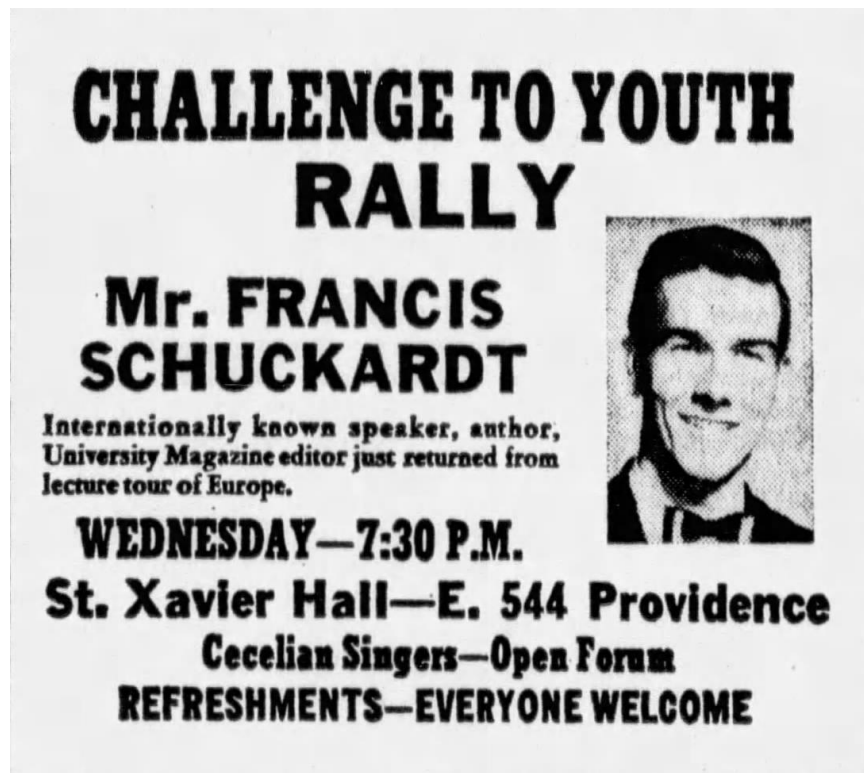
<sup>20</sup> O'Connor 2022: 13–17

<sup>21</sup> Bennett 2015: 268–275 and O'Connor 2022: 17–23.

<sup>22</sup> O'Connor 2022: 27–31.

<sup>23</sup> *The Seattle Daily Times* 12 October 1963, *The Spokesman-Review* 10 October 1964 and 7 April 1965, *The Catholic Northwest Progress* 10 February 1961, 4 October 1963, 20 March 1964, and 23 April 1965.

Blue Army, including such things as scapulars, pledges, and consecrations.<sup>24</sup> Schuckardt became increasingly alarmed by the changes in teachings and liturgy, making his views increasingly public, and his criticism was much more pronounced than the Blue Army's. Though conflicts began to arise before that, in early 1968, Schuckardt was dismissed from his position for publicly condemning Vatican II or, in his view, choosing to quit because of the church's development into a new non-Catholic religion.<sup>25</sup>



### Fatima and Mary Immaculate Queen

Distancing himself from the mainstream Blue Army and the "conciliar religion," Schuckardt, his associate Denis Chicoine, and a few others moved to Coeur d'Alene in northern Idaho in 1967. There, they founded the Mary Immaculate Queen of the Universe Center, which included a

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<sup>24</sup> O'Connor 2022: 30–31.

<sup>25</sup> In an advertisement in *The Arizona Republic* 24 February 1968, Schuckardt is still mentioned as international secretary for the Blue Army.

bookstore mainly selling Blue Army literature. When it opened, local clergy blessed the center. Later, a printing house was added, and the group started distributing their apocalyptically-centered literature. A lay institute called the Oblates of Mary Immaculate Queen was founded on 6 August 1967, still counting on episcopal support. Three men and five women took private vows the following day, but the membership would grow considerably in the next few years.<sup>26</sup>

In 1967, Schuckardt and Chicoine also founded the Fatima Cell Group Movement, later known as the Fatima Crusade, which they regarded as an authentic Catholic version of the liberalized Blue Army. Schuckardt and Chicoine, now known as brothers Francis and Denis, traveled throughout the United States, giving talks focused on the Fatima Message and the signs of end-time: the depravity of the current era. In his mission, Schuckardt could count on his relative fame, having held innumerable lectures as a Blue Army official.

Thus, the Fatima Crusaders' methods were almost identical to the Blue Army's: public speeches, publication of pamphlets, and distribution of cassette recordings. The advertisements for their talks looked very similar to those from the Blue Army time. In the first years, Schuckardt would keep many of the titles of the lectures he had held as a Blue Army representative, even if the talks, as such, would include constant rebukes of the "conciliar religion."<sup>27</sup>

However, Schuckardt and Chicoine's main focus was on the Third Secret, which they thought explained the crisis in the church and the world. While the Holy See decided not to make it public, as other apocalyptically centered Catholics, Schuckardt and Chicoine believed the authentic document had leaked and initially published in the West German sensationalist newspaper *Neues Europa* in 1963. The purported Third Secret focused on conversion and the profound catastrophic developments in the end time, explaining the destruction of the official Catholic Church. Humanity at large had not converted despite the incessant Marian messages. Therefore, "Satan rules even in the highest positions and determines the direction of things." The Devil not only dominated the political system but also the Catholic Church.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cabbage 1986: 32

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. *The Spokesman Review* 30 May 1968, *The Spokane Chronicle* 5 October 1968, *The Cincinnati Enquirer* 10 May 1969, *The News Herald* 12 September 1969, and *The Shreveport Journal*, 20 November 1971,

<sup>28</sup> Cabbage 1986: 12–13, *The Shreveport Journal* 20 November 1971, and [www.fatima.org/neues-europa-1963/](http://www.fatima.org/neues-europa-1963/)

There will also come a time of the hardest trials for the Church. Cardinals will be against Cardinals and bishops against bishops. Satan will put himself in their midst. In Rome, also, there will be big changes. What is rotten will fall, and what will fall must not be maintained. The Church will be darkened and the world plunged into confusion.

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I call on all true imitators of My Son, Jesus Christ, all true Christians and apostles of the latter days! The time of times is coming and the end of everything, if mankind is not converted, and if this conversion does not come from above, from the leaders of the world and the leaders of the Church. But woe! Woe if this conversion does not come about, and if all remains as it is, nay, if all becomes even worse!<sup>29</sup>

To Schuckardt, the Church was living through this time in the late 1960s. The changes during and after Vatican II were clear signs. In 1969, the Order of the Mass changed into what he saw as a sacrilegious rite, which had nothing to do with the true Mass. Still, a faithful remnant, the Apostles of the Latter Days, would prevail even in this time of darkness. His and Chicoine's lectures focused on a "thorough analysis of the Third Fatima Secret," interpreting the signs of the time in light of their understanding of the Secret.<sup>30</sup> Schuckardt and Chicoine's apostolate mainly aimed to create small prayer and study groups known as Fatima Cells that should meet regularly.

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<sup>29</sup> Translation found available on [www.fatima.org/neues-europa-1963/](http://www.fatima.org/neues-europa-1963/)

<sup>30</sup> *The Shreveport Journal* 20 November 1971, *The Spokesman-Review* 10 September 1973, and 23 January 1974, cf. Cubbage 1986: 12–13.

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Are Mortal

**DO YOU UNDERSTAND TODAY'S HEADLINES?**

FALSE ECUMENISM PROMOTING APOSTASY!  
CHILDREN TAUGHT HERETICAL DOCTRINE!  
ABORTION LEGALIZED!  
ATHEISTIC COMMUNISM CONTINUES SPREAD!  
CATHOLIC CHURCH TORN BY HUMANISM, MODERNISM, CONFUSION!  
TRIDENTINE MASS FORBIDDEN!  
SHOCKING IMMODESTY RAMPANT!  
ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT, ONE WORLD CHURCH CLOSER TO REALITY!

**Where Can Man Turn For Hope?**

Where Can We Find An Effective PROGRAM  
Stop The Spreading Forces Of Darkness?

The answer was given to mankind at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. In that year God delivered an ULTIMATUM to the world.

**Come! Hear!**

Mary said: "THE CHURCH WILL BE OBSCURED AND ALL THE WORLD WILL BE THROWN INTO GREAT CONFUSION." Obscure means not clearly expressed; hard to understand due to lack of necessary knowledge; eclipsed; attracting no attention; humble, not easily discovered; hidden by darkness; vague; ambiguous.



**WHAT HAS HAPPENED  
TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?**

**Brothers Denis Chicoine &  
Francis K. Schuckardt**

Directors of the  
Fatima Crusade

Give You Answers  
IN THEIR THOROUGH ANALYSIS OF THE

**"THIRD FATIMA SECRET"**

Schuckardt and his followers were not alone in their harsh criticism of Vatican II and the post-conciliar changes. There was resistance among clergy and lay people in Europe and the Americas. One of the U.S. pioneers was Belgian-born priest and canon law professor Gommard DePauw (1918–2005), who presented severe criticism even before the end of the Council. He published *The Catholic Church and the Conciliar Church*, arguing that the Conciliar Church was a new, different religion. He also wrote a public letter to Paul VI titled "Be Thou Peter!" where he urged the pope to counteract the disastrous changes during the last years. Later, DePauw founded the Catholic Traditionalist Movement, a network of priests who traveled around the country administering the sacraments according to pre-conciliar rites. Another early promotor was Fr. Francis E. Fenton (1918–1995), who formed the Orthodox Roman Catholic



Movement. At a later stage, in 1973, the Priestly Society of St. Pius X, led by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (1905–1991), was established in the United States.<sup>31</sup>

Not building on any close study of Canon Law, but mostly on apocalyptic sources and comparisons between the pre-conciliar and post-conciliar magisterium, probably in 1968, but most certainly in 1969, Schuckardt and Chicoine became some of the first public sedevacantists (*avant la lettre*). Thus, they claimed that Paul VI was a false pope, as a true pope could never accept the conciliar changes. They distanced themselves from other traditionalist groups, as those groups did not explicitly declare the Holy See vacant. In Schuckardt's publications, official Roman Catholic parishes were called "synagogues of Satan," and their communion was referred to as "bread from Satan's table."<sup>32</sup>

Another difference between Schuckardt's group and most others was that adherents moved to live "fully Catholic life" in the area close to him. Thus, many supporters of Schuckardt and his teachings came from all over the United States and settled in the Coeur d'Alene area, which was seen as a traditional Catholic haven during the great apostasy. As the group grew, they established another nearby community: the City of Mary in Rathdrum.<sup>33</sup>

Neither Schuckardt nor Chicoine was ordained, but in the late 1960s, the group could count on the assistance of several estranged Roman Catholic priests who administered the sacraments to the community. Among them were Joseph Pineau (1898–1982), George Kathrein C.Ss.R (1898–1989), Burton Frasier, S.J (1899–1971), Clement Kubesh (1903–1987), and Lawrence Brey (1927–2006). Of them, Pineau, Frasier, and Brey are currently listed as "credibly accused" of sexual offenses against minors. Only Kubesh stayed with Schuckardt in the long run until the early 1980s, while Kathrein would join SSPX.<sup>34</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Fatima Crusade's relationship with the Roman Catholic authorities was strained. When they arrived in Coeur d'Alene in 1967, they counted on some initial support from the diocese. However, as it soon became apparent that the Crusaders condemned Vatican II and assumed a sedevacantist position, in 1970, Sylvester William Treinen (1917–1996), bishop of Boise to which Coeur d'Alene belonged did not mince matters when stating:

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<sup>31</sup> On DePauw, Fenton and SSPX, see Cuneo 1997.

<sup>32</sup> Cubbage 1986: 9–11. See also Schettler 2014, chapter 12.

<sup>33</sup> *The Spokane Daily Chronicle* 10 January 1975.

<sup>34</sup> See [www.tridentines.com/pages/priests](http://www.tridentines.com/pages/priests) and [www.tridentines.com/pages/abuse-CMRI](http://www.tridentines.com/pages/abuse-CMRI)

It is certain that the group in no way has the approval of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise, its school is not a recognized Catholic school, the group is not a part of the national or international Blue Army. No priest has been authorized by the Catholic Church to exercise a spiritual ministry at this group's center or headquarters in the Coeur d'Alene area or elsewhere in Idaho.<sup>35</sup>

The bishop stopped short of excommunicating Schuckardt and his adherents or placing their community under interdict. However, he clearly stated that its activities had nothing to do with the Catholic Church and that the priests there ministered without formal ecclesiastical authorization. On the other hand, the Schuckardt group claimed that Bishop Treinen was not a Catholic but adhered to the new conciliar religion. Thus, an excommunication would have had no significance to them.

## Bishop Schuckardt and His Church

Thus, the group's unquestionable leader, Schuckardt, had remained a layman. In 1971, however, he was both ordained and consecrated by Daniel Quilter Brown, a married man from Ohio, who two years earlier had been made bishop by Hubert Rogers (1887–1976), Metropolitan-Primate of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church (NAORCC). In his turn, Rogers was consecrated by Carmel Henry Carfora (1878–1958), who claimed apostolic succession through Arnold Harris Matthew (1852–1919) and via him to the Old Catholics of the Utrecht Union. By Carfora's death in 1958, the NAORCC split into several factions with confusingly similar names, and Rogers was the leader of one of them.<sup>36</sup>

The contact between Brown and the Schuckardt group began in 1970. In their correspondence, Bishop Brown claimed that despite being consecrated by a bishop of the NAORCC, he was a "Roman Catholic, nothing more, nothing less, who are forced by circumstances to function temporarily without a Pope." Thus, like the Fatima Crusade, he defended a sedevacantist position and was willing to ordain Schuckardt.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bishop Treinen 1970, quoted in *The Catholic Northwestern Progress* 15 December 1978.

<sup>36</sup> "Statement on the Validity of Holy Orders" in Jason 1983–1988: 21–27. On the NAORCC, see Anson [1964] 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Letters from Brown to Schuckardt, September 17, 1970 and July 10, 1971; quotations in 1983–1988: 24.

In later testimonies, Schuckardt claimed that he had initially been reluctant about the validity of the NAORCC lineage, as he considered it a schismatic group. Ultimately, Schuckardt and his closest men decided that Brown should abjure his doctrinal errors and profess the true Catholic faith before proceeding with the ordination. To defend the ordination, they invoked a Canon Law principle known as “epikeia,” the sense of proportion or common sense. In an era of general apostasy and a prolonged Sede Vacante, they believed the faithful remnant needed bishops and priests to save the souls, even if it required unusual actions that generally would not be accepted. According to them, without a true pope, consecrations that needed papal authorization could be carried out anyway. It was a state of emergency where ordinary canonical legislation no longer applied.<sup>38</sup>

While Schuckardt stated that Brown wanted to proceed with the consecration, too, in later testimonies, Brown claimed that he had only planned to ordain Schuckardt but that the latter had been insistent about the episcopate. In any case, the process was very rapid. Between 28 October and 1 November, Schuckardt went from layman to bishop, passing through the minor orders, the subdiaconate, the diaconate, and the priesthood, and finally becoming a bishop. The ceremonies did not take place in Coeur d’Alene but in a rented hall at a hotel in the Chicago area, where only a tiny fraction of the community was present.<sup>39</sup>

Schuckardt’s ordination and consecration were only made known to the whole community in mid-December 1971. While some members left, considering the ordination and consecration invalid and illicit given Brown’s Old Catholic lineage, the majority remained.<sup>40</sup> With the consecration, the Fatima Crusade and the CMRI distinguished themselves from other traditionalist groups that would not consecrate bishops until more than a decade later, and then generally through Vietnamese Archbishop Ngô Đình Thục (1897–1984), whom Schuckardt later referred to as “Madman Thuc.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “Statement on the Validity of Holy Orders” in Jason 1983–1988: 21–27, cf. “What is wrong with the ordination of Francis Schuckardt” in Jason 1983–1988: 7–11.

<sup>39</sup> “Bishop Francis K. Maria Schuckardt” 2006 and Cabbage 1986:47–48.

<sup>40</sup> Cabbage 1986: 29–31

<sup>41</sup> On Thuc, see Lundberg 2020: 70–78.



After his consecration, Schuckardt began to use the name Tridentine Latin Rite Catholic Church (TLRC or TLRCC), of which the CMRI congregation was a part. At the same time, the Fatima Crusade was the church's apostolate. It was, however, clear that Schuckardt did not regard the TLRC as a new, separate church but *the* Catholic Church, comprised of a faithful remnant. Still, to complicate things, the group was officially incorporated as Christ the King Priory in Idaho.

In 1973, less than two years after the consecration, Brown and Schuckardt split. After the consecration, they had never been close, and According to Schuckardt, Brown left the true faith and reverted to Old Catholicism. At the same time, Brown stated that he remained a Roman Catholic sedevacantist. However, he soon realized that Schuckardt believed he was the only true bishop and had only used Brown to receive apostolic succession. After splitting ways, Brown wrote to the community, stating, "Your group has become a personal cult of Francis Schuckardt and cannot call itself Catholic."<sup>42</sup> And yes, Schuckardt's followers believed he was God's instrument to save the Church. Evidence shows.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *The Seattle Times* 19 August 2002, cf. Cabbage 1986: 29–31.

<sup>43</sup> Cabbage 1986: 26.

In a 1972 issue of the traditionalist journal *The Remnant*, one of the priests initially sympathetic to Schuckardt, Lawrence S. Brey, made scattering accusations against the bishop. He thought the community that had grown in Coeur d'Alene had developed into a cult of personality and that Schuckardt and his closest allies controlled every step of the faithful. In Brey's view, Schuckardt had assumed "supreme magisterium and being the ultimate norm of orthodoxy." He considered Schuckardt's consecration both invalid and illicit. In short, according to Brey, Schuckardt had put himself in the position of the pope, seeing himself as the supreme judge. Moreover, Schuckardt claimed that his group was the only true Catholic church, denouncing not only the Conciliar Church but "prohibiting attendance at perfectly orthodox and valid traditional Masses."<sup>44</sup>

## Masons, Jews, and Communists

Schuckardt firmly believed that a Masonic-Jewish-Communist conspiracy had led to a gradual destruction of the world and the church. This did not happen overnight. Progressing Masonic infiltration began with the French Revolution, and Freemasons eventually permeated most of the church and its leadership. Schuckardt claimed that Masons murdered Pope Pius XII in 1958 and that that crime showed that the infiltration had reached the highest echelons of the church.

From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, Schuckardt focused on Paul VI and was convinced he was an antipope. At this time, he did not regard John XXIII (sed. 1958–1963) as an entirely false pope but as a kind of interim pontiff who was neither true nor false and, therefore, untrustworthy in matters of doctrine. Still, the TLRC condemned Paul VI in no uncertain terms. In the journal *Reign of Mary*, Schuckardt called him the "Grand Masonic Luciferian Master." With him, "the true Roman Catholic Church magisterium and the true Catholic laity were exiled into the catacombs where they remain to this day."<sup>45</sup>

In Schuckardt's view, through Cardinal Montini's election in 1963, the Freemasons finally managed to transform the Catholic Church into a "one-world humanistic religion" devoted to the human being, not to God. At the same time, he claimed that the United Nations was a Masonic and

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in *The Catholic Northwest Progress* 12 April 1974.

<sup>45</sup> Cabbage 1986: 10–13

Communist construction to create a one-world anti-Christian government. The time of the Antichrist had arrived.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, the Masonic takeover involved not only the Catholic Church but also the world at large. Schuckardt claimed that Freemasons had dominated the United States since its inception and that all but one of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence were Masons. Thus, the U.S. Constitution was Masonic and therefore incompatible with Catholicism, and the flag was a Masonic symbol that Catholics should not use, much less honor. Thus, the TLRC was undoubtedly not a nationalist group. The general influence of Freemasonry also meant that very few Catholic bishops in the United States, even in the nineteenth century, had been true Catholics. The latter view differed much from many other traditionalist groups' understanding.<sup>47</sup>

As in many other similar thought systems, Schuckardt claimed that the Masonic conspiracy went hand in hand with the Zionist infiltration. He contended that "Talmudic Jews"—the Jews who had survived the fall of Jerusalem—had established a religion characterized by "Egyptian superstition, pagan rites, and blasphemy." Later, they had been transformed into Zionists, and a cabal had as one of the main goals to destroy Christian faith and morals and take over the world. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the early twentieth-century fraud, were considered accurate and an essential source for understanding the signs of the time. In Schuckardt's view, Zionism was also responsible for the Russian Revolution and the World Wars. Thus, there was a close connection between Masons, Zionists, and Communism. Antisemitism, including Holocaust denial, was central in Schuckardt's talks and sermons and permeated the teaching in the TLRC schools.<sup>48</sup>

Similar conspiracist beliefs were common among Catholic traditionalists and were updated versions of old Christian antisemitic discourses. More directly, they built on influential Catholic anti-Semites such as Irish priest Denis Fahey (1883–1954), who, in *The Mystical Body of Christ and the Reorganisation of Society* (1935) and many other publications, asserted that there was an alliance between Jews, Masons, and Communists, that had as their common goal to eradicate Christianity, i.e., the Catholic Church. Fahey's books were made widely available in the United States, and the ideas reached a much greater audience through the popular Canadian-American "Radio Priest" Charles

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<sup>46</sup> Cabbage 1986: 12–13.

<sup>47</sup> Cabbage 1986: 14–15, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 23.

<sup>48</sup> Cabbage 1986: 16, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 20.

Coughlin (1891–1979), famous for his broadcasts during the 1930s and early 1940s, whose anti-communist and anti-masonic message was increasingly overshadowed by virulent antisemitism.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, this belief in a general Masonic-Zionist-Communist conspiracy was prevalent among Catholic traditionalists. Still, Schuckardt's antisemitism was more rampant than many others, and he even lauded Adolf Hitler as a saintly man.

## Institutionalization of the TLRC

During the 1970s, Schuckardt and Chicoine spread the message on the conciliar church's heresies and the sede vacante through public lectures, presentations in Fatima cell groups, tape recordings, and publications. Their active mission led hundreds of people to leave their hometowns for the communities in Idaho, which were presented as havens where it was possible to live a total Catholic life.<sup>50</sup>

Summer camps for young people were held there, trying to attract families, and boarding schools were established to save the young from the perils of the modern era. In her biography, former CMRI nun Sherri Schettler writes that her family, shocked by the post-conciliar developments, heard about the TLRC community when visiting a Fatima cell group meeting at a friend's home in 1975, that she then went to the Crusaders' summer camp, later moved to Idaho to attend boarding school, and eventually took vows in the congregation. It was not an unusual way into the church.<sup>51</sup>

In the mid-1970s, the community in Coeur d'Alene was the biggest. There, they had two convents, a seminary, a girls' high school, a rectory, a chapel, a priory, and a bookstore. In the nearby City of Mary in Rathrum were the Mary Immaculate Queen of the Universe Cathedral, a convent, and a girls' school. Altogether, some 800 members lived in and around the two places.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> On Feney and Coughlin, see Athans 1991 and Warren 1996.

<sup>50</sup> *The Spokane Chronicle* 10 January 1975.

<sup>51</sup> Schettler 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Cubbage 1986: 10.



Schuckardt was the community's only cleric for several years, apart from Clement Kubesh, who was ordained in the Roman Catholic Church well before the Council. Still, during the second half of the 1970s, Schuckardt ordained six priests, including his old brother-in-arms, Denis Chicoine (Fr. Denis Philomena Marie), who became his vicar general.<sup>53</sup> Apart from the bishop and the priests, at that time, the religious community included more than 80 sisters and some 50 brothers.<sup>54</sup>

As the congregation grew and the seminary in Coeur d'Alene burnt down, on 30 December 1977, the TLRC bought Mount Saint Michael in Spokane, Washington, a 200-room former Jesuit seminary, including 735 acres of land. The seminary had closed a decade earlier and transformed into a Jesuit retirement home. The Society of Jesus was unaware that the buyers were Schuckardt's group, as they acted through a corporation owned by a TLRC member. Most of the community gradually transferred from Idaho to Mount Saint Michael, beginning with the male branch of

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<sup>53</sup> *The Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 10 January 1975, 20 September, 1975, 22 September 1977, and *The Spokesman-Review* 29 September 1979. The other priests were Fr. James McGilloway, Fr. M. Joachim Henry, Fr. Raphael M. Ellis, Fr. Mary Benedict (Kevin Hughes), and Fr. Alphonsus Maria (Mark Joseph Barnes). Cf. also [www.tridentines.com/pages/history](http://www.tridentines.com/pages/history).

<sup>54</sup> Cabbage 1986: 10



the order and the boys' schools. The church was incorporated in Washington state as the Tridentine Latin Rite Catholic Church of St. Joseph.<sup>55</sup>

At Mount Saint Michael, members could buy parcels of the land and build houses there. According to the original plan, more than 150 homes would be built in the area that should be named St. Joseph's Village. They also planned retirement homes and a fire station and allocated land for farming. Still, opposition from neighbors and authorities, citing environmental issues and property laws, would drastically restrict the project. Some thirty members bought parcels of land, but eventually, few homes were constructed on the ground.<sup>56</sup>



In an interview in the late 1970s, Francis Schuckhardt stated that some 800 church members lived near the Coeur d'Alene and Spokane communities and another 150 in and around Seattle. The leadership claimed the TRLC had about 5,000 adherents spread over the United States, with more formal centers in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, and Omaha. Still, no resident clergy was outside the core area at the time, while they were visited regularly. Small groups of adherents

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<sup>55</sup> *The Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 26 January 1978, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 21.

<sup>56</sup> *The Spokesman-Review* 23 August and 20 October 1979, cf. Cubbage 1986: 17–20.

lived outside the United States, mainly in Canada, Mexico, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>57</sup>

However, the main form of organization for those living far from Idaho and Washington state was the Fatima cell group, which regularly gathered in members' homes to study the Scripture and pious literature and pray the rosary. Apart from the formal church members, a bigger group of supporters existed. According to Schuckardt, the community had a mailing list containing 10,000 names, many of whom received publications such as *The Reign of Mary* journal.<sup>58</sup> The founding of the Singing Nuns group in 1979 was another means to attract a larger audience. Throughout the years, they have made many recordings and appeared on TV.<sup>59</sup>

As the TLRC moved its center to Mount Saint Michael, the bishop of Spokane, Lawrence Welsh (1935–1999), made a statement. He said the TLRC “cannot be identified as a legitimate expression of the Roman Catholic faith” as they were not in communion with the pope and that Schuckardt claimed to be the final judge of matters of the faith, placing himself in the position of the Roman pontiff. In short, his actions were “against the Holy Spirit.” Welsh also announced that the TLRC’s sacraments were not legitimate, as they had no diocesan authorization, and the ordinations were, at best, illicit, if not invalid. In short, he cautioned all Catholics not to participate in TLRC activities.<sup>60</sup>

## Heaven or Hell

Before the mid-1970s, the mainstream media showed little interest in the TLRC. However, not least after they purchased Mount Saint Michael, local and regional newspapers regularly reported on the group. The writing about the TLRC came simultaneously with the growth of the so-called anti-cult movement, which usually focused on new religious groups such as the Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, and the Children of God.

Groups of people who had lost family and friends to such groups were concerned and organized campaigns. At the same time, so-called cult

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<sup>57</sup> Cabbage 1986: 6–7.

<sup>58</sup> Cabbage 1986: 6–7 and 23–24.

<sup>59</sup> Cabbage 1986: 39, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 28.

<sup>60</sup> Cabbage 1986: 6.

experts claimed that they could clearly distinguish between a religion/church and a cult. In their discourse, expressions such as “brain-washing” and “mind-control” were prevalent, and they often thought that cult members could and should be “deprogrammed.” In some cases, these ideas led to kidnappings and the use of force. That such questionable and even illegal activities occurred and that the cult discourse was flawed should, however, not minimize the value of ex-members accounts who told of traumatic experiences in closed religious groups.<sup>61</sup>

The TLRC was regarded as a closed, odd, extreme, and destructive group from many outsiders’ perspectives. The press reported on Schuckardt’s influence on every aspect of the adherents’ lives, which sometimes led to the splitting of families, and there were many reports about very harsh punishments in schools and communities. Journalists based their articles on lawsuits and ex-members’ testimonies but often let Schuckardt and other clerics respond to the accusations.<sup>62</sup>

A recurring theme in ex-members’ testimonies was accusations that the TLRC and Schuckardt split families. Adherents often chose to leave their homes in other parts of the country and move to Coeur d’Alene or Spokane. Sometimes, only one or a few family members joined the TLRC and moved there, while others stayed home. More often than not, the wife and at least some of the children left for the community while the husband remained. Schuckardt said that marriages between Catholics (i.e., members of the TLRC) and non-Catholics could be annulled. The sacrament was also invalid if a couple had married after Vatican II.

Another scenario was that an entire family moved to the community, but some members left later. Then, the situation became even more problematic as ex-members were apostates; they had actively left the true faith. Like many other closed religious groups, the TLRC practiced shunning, meaning that members were not allowed to have contact with apostates, including family members, as the Schuckardt claimed that they were “tools of Satan” and a “brood of vipers—sons of their father, the prince of lies.” Everything outside the TLRC community threatened the remnant. The faithful were part of the apocalyptic battles of the end-time. Therefore, members had to cut all ties with the outside world to save their souls.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> For the U.S. “cult-wars”, see, e.g., Jenkins 2000.

<sup>62</sup> For a good overview of the allegations against the TLRC and Schuckardt’s defense, see Cabbage 1986: 25–28.

<sup>63</sup> See e.g., Schettler 2014, chapter 15.

Scenarios of this type led to several lengthy lawsuits during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1973, two Ohio brothers sued Schuckardt, claiming that he had induced their wives to leave them to enter a convent in Coeur d'Alene. The crime that Schuckardt was accused of was called "alienation of affections." The brothers won in the district court but then lost in the appellate court. Given the constitutional right to liberty of religion, this was the typical outcome of the legal battles. Cases such as this included custody battles, too.<sup>64</sup>

Another case that led to a series of lawsuits from both sides involved a man who had left his business in Michigan and his wife of 40 years to join the group in Idaho in 1975. He soon concluded that Schuckardt was a despotic fraudster who was only in it for the money. In short, he felt betrayed. On several occasions, he sued TLRC unsuccessfully. Instead, he and his daughter started a very active campaign against the church, picketing outside the TLRC centers in Idaho and Mount Saint Michael with the help of their "Truth truck," on which they posted messages such as that TLRC was a "satanic family-splitting cult." They also posted signs with the message "Will this be a new Guyana?" alluding to the mass suicide/murder at Jonestown. Father and daughter became TLRC's most vocal enemies, and their presence close to the centers sometimes led to confrontations with members. Ultimately, a court placed a restraining order against the man and his daughter, forbidding them to park on the road leading up to Mount Saint Michael.<sup>65</sup>

For Schuckardt, the communities in Mount Saint Michael and Idaho were bulwarks of true Catholicism against a world of total depravity and from a church that constituted a new, non-Catholic religious organization. For this reason, members' knowledge of the outside world was to be curtailed, not only by prohibiting or at least discouraging contact with non-members and particularly ex-members. TLRC members were not allowed to watch TV, read newspapers, or listen to modern music, and church representatives went through their bookshelves in search of prohibited literature. Even books in the church's bookshop were censored. Sometimes, nuns cut out pages from books or pasted pieces of paper over pictures that were considered un-Catholic. In interviews, Schuckardt did not deny these accounts but told journalists that censorship of worldly and religious literature was the Catholic way:

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<sup>64</sup> *The Spokane Chronicle* 18 December 1974, *The Catholic Northwest Progress* 24 January 1975, *The Spokane Chronicle* 7 February 1975 and *The Spokesman-Review* 1 December 1976.

<sup>65</sup> *The Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 29 October 1976 and 19 June 1979, *The Spokesman-Review*, 2 June, 20 June, 1 July and 17 October, 1979.

“Opposition to censorship is American, not Catholic.” He was also convinced that Satan used media as a means to deceive the elect.<sup>66</sup>

The group’s strict dress code was one of the most visible aspects for outsiders, as they could sometimes spot church members in Spokane. Women should wear long skirts in dark colors in and outside the church buildings and always cover their heads. These rules also applied to very young girls. In that way, the female adherents looked like members of a traditional religious order. In interviews, Schuckardt told reporters that the rules were nothing strange but an emulation of the so-called “modesty of the Virgin” in line with the ideals of pre-Vatican II popes. They were not his invention. Male members should wear long-armed shirts and be prohibited from having long hair and sideburns that the bishop saw as symbols for the “Marxist, hippie, and communist revolution.” If they did not comply, they were barred from communion. Even if the rules for women were stricter and more detailed, males should follow traditional ecclesiastical norms and not be influenced by modern fashion trends. Again, Schuckardt stated that these were traditional Catholic norms, not his inventions. Apart from that, all members should wear the scapular and the rosary outside their clothes.<sup>67</sup>

A recurrent theme in ex-members accounts was that discipline in the TLRC schools was very harsh and that draconic corporal punishment was a part of daily life. According to one report, “approximately 35 boys were twice given 40 hacks each with a wooden paddle because they failed class assignments.” Another punishing method was shaving off the hair of girls and boys who had socialized or even talked to members of the other sex. However, TLRC representatives claimed that most of the testimonies were untrue and asserted that they had dealt with some cases where individual teachers meted out too harsh punishments.<sup>68</sup> The use of violence against children could be seen as a part of the TLRC’s focus on what can be called victim spirituality, that suffering was offered to God, and a way to fight the constant threat of the Devil. Such a spirituality and a focus on penitence *can* certainly open up for abuse.

Louis de Montfort’s (1673–1716) *True Devotion to Mary*, an early eighteenth-century work not published until 1842, was a cornerstone of TLRC spirituality. In his work, Montfort treats the Total Consecration to the Blessed Virgin. It is the end of a process where the believers gradually

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<sup>66</sup> Cabbage 1986: 12 and 34, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 20.

<sup>67</sup> Cabbage 1986: 21–22.

<sup>68</sup> Cabbage 1986: 9 and 27. On the shaving of heads, see Schettler 2014, chapter 8.

transform and formally consecrate themselves to Mary and, through her, to Christ. Montfort explained the concept.

By this devotion we give to Jesus Christ in the most perfect manner, inasmuch as it is by Mary's hands, all we can give Him, and far more than by any other devotions in which we give Him either a part of our good works, or a part of our satisfactions and mortifications; because here everything is given and consecrated to Him, even the right of disposing of our interior goods and of the satisfactions which we gain by our good works day after day.<sup>69</sup>

The church members should practice "self-denial and live a life of prayer, penitence, and sacrifice." They were slaves of Mary and Jesus. Only in this way they could walk the path of "Jesus crucified" in a doomed world. This path was demanding. It could include practices like prostrating during Mass, say the rosary with the arms held in a cross position, walking on their knees, spending long hours praying on hard tile floors, wearing hairshirts, flagellation and fasting during long periods of time. There is no doubt that such practices existed; the difference was that Schuckardt claimed that they were not obligatory, and the critics said that it was expected of everyone or even ordered.<sup>70</sup>

Testimonies from ex-nuns speak about constant sleep deprivation and inferior diet, at least during periods when religious women should live from what they could find in dumpster bins. They were not allowed to take medication even to treat severe illness. The refusal to accept medical treatment was interpreted as part of the victim spirituality; they should offer up their sufferings for sinful humanity, for God, and Bishop Schuckardt.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Translation available on [www.cmri.org/about-cmri/marian-spirit](http://www.cmri.org/about-cmri/marian-spirit)

<sup>70</sup> Cubbage 1986: 21, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 16.

<sup>71</sup> For first hand experiences, see Schettler 2014, chapters 16 and 25.



As seen, apocalyptic beliefs purveyed the group's teachings from the beginning. It was clear to them that they were living in the end time, and on several occasions, Schuckardt prophesized the end and the Great Persecution of the faithful Remnant, the date always moving onwards. The members of the church were the true Apostles of the Latter Times. In this end-time, they, the elect, risked being deceived, and the demonic forces would be harsher than ever, "all the legions of Hell [acted] against" them and not least their leader, Bishop Schuckardt.<sup>72</sup> With time, this apocalypticist discourse was combined with a survivalist agenda.

In 1976, Schuckardt summoned about 70 nuns to a convent in the hill of Idaho, telling them the Great Persecution was coming. - - - Schuckardt then announced he was going to build a mission for alcoholics in Canada. He dispatched nuns to buy and homestead the land. They cleared trees and built a log cabin on the 165-acre parcel, an 18-hour drive from Spokane. But the mission work never materialized. Instead, Schuckardt became a survivalist, ordering the cabin stocked with 40 backpacks of provisions and saying the U.S. government was going to be taken over by Masons.<sup>73</sup>

In the 1970s and even more so in the early 1980s, the group was greatly affected by Schuckardt's severe health problems and increasingly erratic behavior, in large part due to his medication and abuse of prescribed

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<sup>72</sup> Cabbage 1986: 12.

<sup>73</sup> *The Seattle Times* 19 August 2002.

drugs. Even so, he made longer journeys to different parts of the United States and abroad though his illness affected the journeys; fellow-pilgrims had to wait for long periods of time; it was a central feature of the journey. In 1978, Schuckardt and others went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and visited Italy, Greece, Germany, and France. Another journey was a three-month trip to New Zealand in 1982. The latter journey attracted much attention from the national media, not least because the group often did not pay their bills at hotels where they stayed. Moreover, the local Roman Catholic authorities gathered to resist the dissident group. Still, the number of adherents in New Zealand remained minuscule.<sup>74</sup>

In 1979, the TLRC bought a large residence for Schuckardt in central Spokane. It was referred to as the Priory. Living a relatively long way from the community at Mount Saint Michael, the bishop became even more invisible to the main community and was surrounded by a small group of brothers who cared for him. With time, Schuckardt did not even appear at important church events, and the community had to wait for him for weeks and months for central celebrations, which required the bishop. Although people left during this period, by the early 1980s, due to the arrival of new adherents, the total membership remained relatively stable, even growing somewhat.<sup>75</sup>



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<sup>74</sup> Cubbage 1986: 38, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 22.

<sup>75</sup> Cubbage 1986: 7 and 22.



1984

During the early 1980s, the situation in TRLC thus became increasingly chaotic. Schuckardt and his closest associates were in the Priory; the others were at Mount Saint Michael and Idaho. It became ever more apparent that there were at least two factions: the small group at the Priory and the ones at the Mount Saint Michael. Almost inevitably, this led to a confrontation. Still, even under these circumstances, the organization was very well developed:

By 1984, Bishop Schuckardt had transformed the original group of Brothers and Sisters who started in 1967 into a large community. The Tridentine Latin Rite Catholic Church numbered about 120 Sisters, 6 active priests, 61 Clerics and Brothers, K[indergarten] – 12th grade boys and girls school, the Knights of the Eucharist, the Knights of the Altar, the Knights of St. Karl the Great, the Altar & Rosary Society, Cana Cell for couples interested in courtship and marriage, the Holy Name Ushers, several Third Orders, numerous Fatima Cells, St. Anne's Home for the elderly and infirm, the Little Daughters of the Immaculate Conception Convent for the mentally impaired, the Singing Nuns, the Kevelaer School for the neurologically impaired, the St. Joseph's Workers Guild, the Mater Dolorosa Guild to aid the terminally ill and arrange for their funerals, etc.<sup>76</sup>

In early 1984, however, a Spokane TV station featured interviews four former seminarians who accused Schuckardt of having sexually abused or molested them and that they had left the congregation for that reason. This interview contributed to a remarkable process leading to a "palace revolution."

In a series of talks and sermons from 27 May to mid-June 1984, Fr. Denis Philomena Marie (Chicoine), vicar general of the TLRC and superior of the CMRI, presented serious accusations against Schuckardt. Chicoine claimed that he had wanted to meet the bishop for a long time and discuss urgent matters, but those living at the Priory hindered him from accessing the building. In the end, guards were stationed there to keep him and others away from the bishop.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> "Bishop Francis K. Maria Schuckardt" 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Chicoine's and Fr. Mary Benedict's talks and sermons, 27 May–18 June 1984, cassette recordings, tapes # 1–5, available through [www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html](http://www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html) [URL down].

Chicoine stated that the impossibility of accessing the bishop was one of many signs showing that Schuckardt could not run the community, and the time had come to deal with it in public. That the bishop was almost invisible was no news. Still, in increasingly concrete terms, Chicoine told a stunned community of Schuckardt's homosexual relations, and sexual abuse committed by the prelate. He also stated that Schuckardt claimed he was the pope and was treated as such by the minority close to him. If the bishop was incompetent, Chicoine, as the vicar general, had to act, replacing a leader who was inept and morally corrupt. In the last few years, the community had been chaotic due to the bishop's incompetence, and Chicoine referred to this period as a "dark night of the soul."<sup>78</sup>

In late June 1984, Chicoine wrote a long letter to the community centered on the same issues as his talks and sermons. In written form, however, his argumentation was more detailed and systematic. Much of the letter focuses on Schuckardt's incompetency in upholding the leadership. There was no question that the bishop was seriously ill, but that was only part of the problem. Chicoine asserted that he had spoken with Schuckardt's physician, who had told him that the bishop could die at any moment due to the high doses of medication, which also caused severe side effects, including hallucinations and confusion. In short, the bishop was on strong medication and constantly overmedicated. It affected him and his judgment, making him incapable of "administering the affairs of the Church and of providing for the spiritual needs of the people."

In his letter, Chicoine also focused on another aspect that made the ecclesiastical situation unbearable. He wrote that Schuckardt's Masses had been constantly canceled at the last minute for several years and rescheduled numerous times due to his illness and drug use. According to Chicoine, in recent years, the postponements had reached "the point of absurdity." 1983, the Ash Wednesday Liturgy and the Christmas Mass were combined, and in 1984, the Easter Vigil was delayed for two weeks. On the last occasion, when the bishop finally appeared, he was visibly affected by the medication and only semi-conscious.<sup>79</sup>

Another point of accusation was that the bishop had homosexual relations with brothers living at the Priory and that he, in that group, had

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<sup>78</sup> Chicoine and Fr. Mary Benedict's talks and sermons talks, 27 May–18 June 1984, June 1984, cassette recordings, tapes # 1–5, available through [www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html](http://www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html) [URL down], cf. Schettler 2014, chapters 26 and 27.

<sup>79</sup> Letter from Denis Chicoine, 21 June 1984, in Jason 1983–1988: 32A–34.

taught that homosexuality was not a sin. Chicoine told the community that a local TV station had aired interviews with former brothers, who testified that Schuckardt had molested them sexually and asserted that their testimony was true. In the letter, he referred to sworn statements from several young men claiming that Schuckardt had sexually abused or molested them. Another very grave aspect was that Schuckardt had heard confessions from the men he abused and molested, telling them that they should not confess to another priest. This behavior was scandalous and sacrilegious. Chicoine stated that he and others had tried to address the matter with the bishop several years ago. On that occasion, Chicoine had threatened to go public, but the men close to the bishop spread the rumor that Chicoine had a nervous breakdown and should not be trusted.<sup>80</sup>

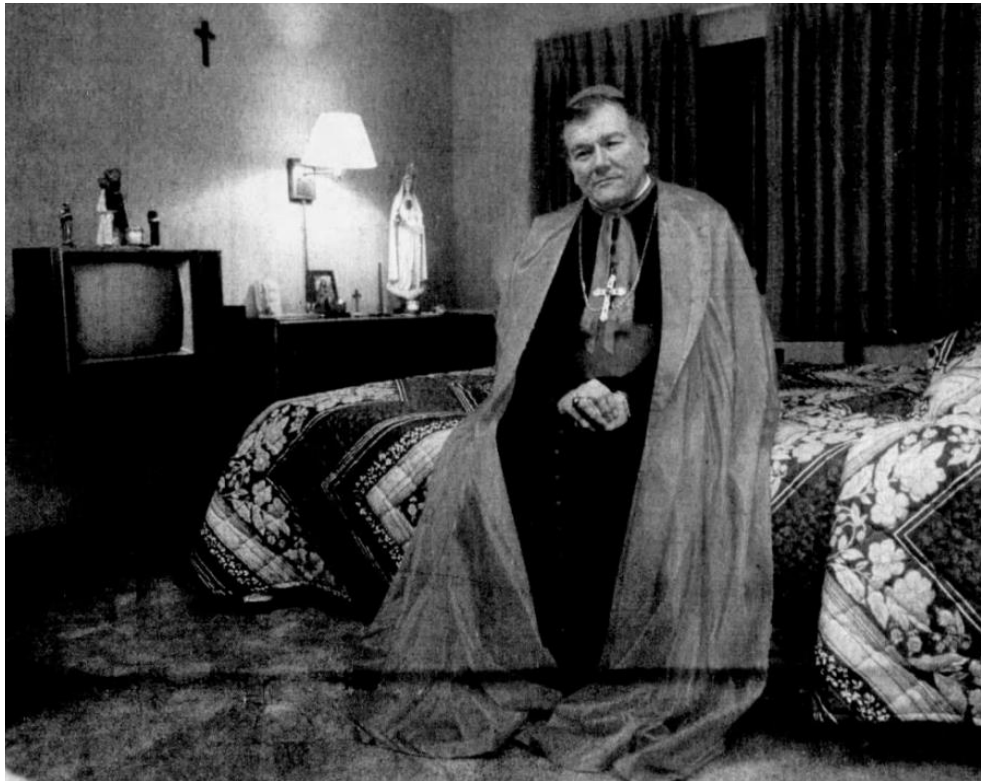
After Chicoine had held his first talks about the situation, on 3 June 1984, Schuckardt left the Priory, first moving to a motel in the city center. The bishop said that he feared for his life. During the night of 4 June 1984, the brothers returned to the Priory and loaded a van with possessions and church files. A group from Mount Saint Michael went there trying to stop what they considered stealing. Some of Schuckardt's associates were armed, and one fired his gun, and the group from the Mount retreated. Moreover, Schuckardt's associates were convinced that the others had access to automatic weapons. Later, law enforcement had to be called in to keep the groups from each other, and the Schuckardt group finally left on 8 June.

Shortly after the bishop left, the group from Mount Saint Michael searched through the Priory. After their inspection, they claimed that the bishop and his men had stolen church property in the form of money and precious objects and had even dismantled the whole chapel at the Priory. They reported to the Sheriff's office that the stolen possessions were worth \$250,000, pressing charges against Schuckardt and his associates. The legal battles between the factions continued for a decade.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Letter from Denis Chicoine, 21 June 1984, in Jason 1983–1988: 35–37.

<sup>81</sup> Chicoine's talk to the community at Mount Saint Michael, June 4 1984, cassette 3, available on [www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html](http://www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html) *The Spokesman-Review* 16 June, 1984, and Cabbage 1986: 35–36. See also Utah Court of Appeals, 1988, no. 880542. *Corporation of the Tridentine Latin Rite Catholic Church of Saint Joseph Washington corporation v. Francis Schuckardt et al.* [www.digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/byu\\_cal/1331/](http://www.digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/byu_cal/1331/) For a list of lawsuits, see <https://www.tridentines.com/pages/lawsuits>



By mid-June 1984, Schuckardt gave an interview denying all accusations the Mount Saint Michael group presented. During this interview, the bishop declared Chicoine excommunicated, a decision that was later put into writing. He claimed that Chicoine and others “started to plot his overthrow” long ago and had regarded him and his close adherents as “incompetent and untrustworthy.” The bishop also stated that he had planned to “have them demoted or replaced” as traitors. In his view, Chicoine and his associates were only driven by greed and the search for power, not by the zeal for the souls. Schuckardt also denied all accusations of sexual misconduct. The bishop also distributed the decree of excommunication and cassette recordings where the bishop defended himself and accused Chicoine of acting without legal cause and of spreading lies.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *The Spokane Chronicle* 2 August 1984. See also Open Letter from Alphonsus Maria Barnes, 27 June 1984 in Jason 1983–1988: 40–44, letter from Chicoine til Alphosus Maria Barnes, 5 August 1984 in Jason 1983–1988 45–46, and Open letter from Chicoine 11 August 1984, in Jason 1983–1988: 47–48. A copy of the excommunication decree is found as appendix 1 in Corporation of the Tridentine Latin Rite Catholic Church of Saint Joseph Washington corporation v. Francis Schuckardt et al. [www.digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/byu\\_ca1/1331/](http://www.digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/byu_ca1/1331/)

The basis for the excommunication was that Chicoine had acted against the bishop without having the authority to do so, that he had stolen church property, and that he had taken recourse to a secular court to deal with ecclesiastical matters. As before, Chicoine argued that Schuckardt was incompetent to function as a bishop and that he had forfeited his authority in such a case. Therefore, his decree of excommunication was invalid.<sup>83</sup>

In the hagiography written about Schuckardt, the author stated that the Chicoine faction wanted to compromise with the true Catholicism that the bishop taught.

[Schuckardt] felt it incumbent upon himself to practice and teach Catholicism 'in its fullness' without compromising any of the teachings of the Church or watering down the truths of the Faith - - This was considered to be radical by most people who grew up in a Church where total Catholicism was never demanded of them. Many quietly rebelled and complained to Chicoine and his associates about this no-compromise implementation of Catholicism. They wanted to attend a Latin Mass on Sunday and to be like 'wordlings' the rest of the week. The Bishop, however, would not compromise."<sup>84</sup>

The two factions' interpretations of the 1984 events and what led to them are irreconcilable. To Chicoine's faction, Schuckardt was a sexual predator, drug addict, and thief. To Schuckardt's group, everything was a lie, and the bishop was an innocent victim suffering for his attempts to defend true Catholicism against traitors.

## The Papal Claim

Apart from declaring Schuckardt incompetent and accusing him of homosexual relations and abuse, in talks and letters in June 1984, Chicoine presented evidence that the bishop had asserted to have been mystically crowned the pope, a claim previously only known to a small minority within the congregation. Chicoine stated that he had found a booklet published with the bishop's authorization. It included a

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<sup>83</sup> Open Letter from Alphonsus Maria Barnes, 27 June 1984 in Jason 1983–1988: 43–44; and Open letter from Chicoine 11 August 1984, in Jason 1983–1988: 47–48, cf. Chicoine's talk to the community, 17 June 1984, cassette # 5 available on [www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html](http://www.jmjsite.com/audiobooks.html)

<sup>84</sup> "Bishop Francis K. Maria Schuckardt" 2006.

hagiography on Schuckardt and the claim that the Virgin had appeared to him while visiting Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in Rome at the time of John Paul I's death in late September 1978. After that, the Virgin presented him with the papal tiara.

Chicoine also referred to sworn testimonies stating that Schuckardt had told several members of the order that he, indeed, was the pope but that they should not tell Chicoine or any of the other clerics, as they "did not have the grace to accept it." There was also written evidence that adherents, religious and laypeople alike, addressed Schuckardt as pope. The papal name Hadrian VII appeared in a booklet containing a hagiographical biography of Schuckardt authored by Sr. Mary Ermynttrude. Chicoine said the booklet included "a chart showing Bishop Schuckardt being mystically crowned as Pope, and told 'under obedience' to have duplicate copies made and displayed in every religious house and school." The plans to print such documents and images led Chicoine to believe that it had only been a matter of time before Schuckardt would have made his papal claims public.<sup>85</sup>

When discussing the papal issue, in his report "Mount Saint Michael: A Systematic Study," Daniel B. Ahern referred to his 1991 interview with Sr. Mary Agnes, who "recounted that one of the sisters since departed from the community, had claimed to have a vision in which she saw Schuckardt mystically crowned pope at St. Mary Major Basilica in Rome. Sister Mary Agnes never heard him explicitly claim to be pope but observed that he did not refuse expressions of papal honor."<sup>86</sup> In an interview, Casimir Puskorius, a former superior general, told Ahern about how he heard about Schuckardt's papal claims:

I had heard rumors to this effect for a year or two before he left but I didn't know what to think of it. He never came out in public and said we had to believe it so I just merely shelved it in my own mind, and wondered after all if it was only a rumor. After he left all the information came out that he did believe that he was crowned the Pope by Our Lady when he was in St. Mary Major Basilica on a pilgrimage. I think he was afraid to come out with it though. As much as he controlled people, I think he knew better not go against the Pope now. Some of his intimates were told that. I have a letter from one of the sisters addressing him as your Holiness and how

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<sup>85</sup> Letter from Chicoine 27 June 1984 in Jason 1983–1988: 34–35; and letter from Chicoine August 5, 1984 in Jason 1983–1988: 45–46, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 22.

<sup>86</sup> Ahern 1993.

wonderful that you were given the Papacy. It wasn't just a secret, it was a super secret.<sup>87</sup>

The testimony of Joseph Marie Belzac is interesting as a complement as he was one of the few religious who left with the bishop in 1984 and remained with him until his death. Thus, he lived close to Schuckardt for almost 25 years, being consecrated just before the bishop died in 2006. Later, Joseph Marie wrote a text dealing with the papal claim.

To my knowledge and contrary to the many public accusations, Bishop Schuckardt never proclaimed that he was the pope. Did he privately believe that he was the pope? Yes, he did.

During a 1978 pilgrimage to Rome, Bishop Schuckardt claimed that he had a vision in which Our Lady of the Snows crowned him pope. He once told me that he could not deny what took place in Rome, but that he was aware of the contradictions regarding it. Besides the fact that a few of the Priory Brothers would address him with papal titles, it really was a non-issue at the Priory and the topic of it rarely if ever came up, at least not in my presence.

Personally, I never believed that he was the pope and nor did I ever treat him as such. Yet, despite this fact he consecrated me a bishop, which should demonstrate to one and all how much of a non-issue it really was to him. It seems that only his enemies have made a big deal about it.<sup>88</sup>

The testimonies include many different views, but they concur on one point: Schuckardt never publicly announced that he was the pope. Still, some community members knew and believed the claim, especially his closest men in the Priory. Chicoine believed that Schuckardt was about to make it public, while Puskorius thought this scenario was improbable; it would pose a significant risk to the bishop's authority. According to Joseph Marie, who belonged to the post-1984 Schuckardt group, the bishop believed he was the pope but that the papacy was a relatively minor issue and that adherents did not have to believe in the claim.

## CMRI after Schuckardt

To distance themselves from Schuckardt, the main community reincorporated in Washington state as the Latin Rite Catholic Church

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<sup>87</sup> Ahern 1993.

<sup>88</sup> Joseph Marie "God is my Witness"

(LRCC), while they more frequently used the name CMRI. With Schuckardt leaving, the group under Chicoine had no bishop who could confirm and ordain. They came in contact with George Musey (1928–1992), a sedevacantist bishop of the Thuc lineage, to whom the community submitted in April 1985. Though Musey said he was almost certain that the CMRI clergy were validly ordained, he conditionally ordained the three remaining priests: Denis Chicoine, James McGilloway, and Benedict Hughes.

The initial good relations between the bishop and the community soon deteriorated. The CMRI had, for example, reformed their rule without consulting the bishop. According to Musey, for CMRI, Schuckardt had become the scapegoat, and though his role in the community had been especially harmful, the problems were more profound and spread than he had realized or could handle. He claimed that “the Schuckardt spirit never left,” and that Chicoine had become “the new guru.” Bishop Musey left in September 1986.<sup>89</sup>

As Musey departed, CMRI searched for a new bishop, and Robert McKenna (1927–2015) was forthcoming. He was another Thuc bishop, though did not subscribe to strict sedevacantism but to sedeprivationism, meaning that he did not believe that the Holy See was empty but that the post-conciliar popes were validly elected but lost their jurisdiction directly as they preached heretical doctrines. When arriving at Mount Saint Michael, McKenna was recently consecrated by French Dominican Michel-Louis Guérard des Lauriers (1898–1988), who Thuc had made a bishop. McKenna initially stated that he would not ordain anyone for five years but did so anyway. He seems to have had a more hands-off approach to the community but left after a few increasingly conflict-filled years.<sup>90</sup>

Denis Chicoine continued as the influential and charismatic superior general until 1989, when the community took a non-confidence vote. Chicoine left for New Zealand and returned to the United States shortly before he died in 1995. 1991 Mark Pivarunas (b. 1958), ordained

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<sup>89</sup> Musey 1985 and *The Spokesman-Review* 11 January 1987, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 28.

<sup>90</sup> Letter from Denis Chicoine to adherents, 7 June 1987 in Jason 1983–1988: 79; letter from Ely Jason to Bishop McKenna, 29 March 1988, in Jason 1983–1988: 63–70; letter from Jason to McKenna 12 April 1988, in Jason 1983–1988: 73–74; and letter from Jason to McKenna 18 May 1988, in Jason 1983–1988: 82–84, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 29.



by Musey, was consecrated in Mexico by another Seevacantist bishop in the Thuc lineage, Moisés Carmona (1912–1992).<sup>91</sup>

## Schuckardt in Exile

When Bishop Chuckardt left Spokane in 1984, he was joined by only a minor part of the religious community: one priest—Fr. Alphonsus Maria—eleven brothers and four nuns.<sup>92</sup> At first, the bishop and his closest associates moved between hotels and motels in five states in the northwestern parts of the United States and crossed the border with Canada. According to the Chuckardt group, they were afraid of being hurt or even killed by members of the much larger group at Mount Saint Michael. Still, after some time, they settled near Greenville in Plumas County, Northern California, close to the border with Nevada.<sup>93</sup>

1984 also meant the beginning of almost a decade filled with bewildering lawsuits between the Chuckardt (TLRC) and Chicoine (CMRI) factions. Some legal cases concerned the funds and objects Chuckardt, and his adherents had brought from the Priory as they left. Still, the other lawsuits dealt with the property rights of the real estate in Spokane and Coeur d’Alene.<sup>94</sup> The property in Washington state alone was worth \$5 million, and the Idaho properties were valued at \$1.5 million. The Chuckardt community lost the cases, as Chicoine was the sole trustee.<sup>95</sup>

Between 1984 and 1987, Chuckardt’s community in Plumas County developed. They had a residence in Lake Almanor Country Club, a boys’ school and a chapel in Canyon Dam, and a girls’ school in Mt. Hough Estate.<sup>96</sup> However, on 9 May 1987, things changed drastically, as

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<sup>91</sup> Cuneo 1997: 102–113, cf. Schettler 2014, chapter 25.

<sup>92</sup> In 1984, the male religious of the Chuckardt group were Andrew Karl Jacobs (Brother Mary Fidelis), Gabriel Gorbet (Brother Isaac Jogues Marie), Michael Mangold (Fratr Phillip Marie), Vladimiar Boridin (Brother Longiuns), Courtney Krier (Fratr Matthew Marie), Raymond Kosch (Fratr Clement Marie), Terry Horwath (Brother Mary Mathias), Joseph Marie Belzak (Brother John Francis Marie). See Utah Court of Appeals, 1988, no. 880542. Corporation of the Tridentine Latin Rite Catholic Church of Saint Joseph Washington corporation v. Francis Chuckardt et al. [www.digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/byu\\_ca1/1331/](http://www.digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/byu_ca1/1331/)

<sup>93</sup> *The Spokesman-Review* 26 August 1984 and 27 July 1986.

<sup>94</sup> *The Spokesman-Review* 27 July 1986, 8 and 12 May 1989.

<sup>95</sup> *The Spokesman-Review* 8 and 12 May 1989.

<sup>96</sup> *The Spokesman-Review* 27 July 1986 and *San Francisco Examiner* 17 May 1987.

a heavily armed SWAT team raided the church's buildings. In the raid, the police collected \$200,000 in gold, silver, cash, and evidence from 15 bank accounts worldwide. Police also found "large quantities of barbiturates, amphetamines, tranquilizers and such prescribed narcotics as Dilaudid, Demerol and Percocet." Still, the reason for using a SWAT team was false reports, purportedly from CMRI, that the group had a large stash of automatic weapons and presented a serious threat. The bishop, ten religious brothers, two nuns, and a layman were arrested but were soon freed or bailed out. In the end, Bishop Schuckardt took a plea bargain and had to attend a "one-day drug diversion class."

It took almost two years before the seized property was returned, and local press editorials claimed that the TRLC was unjustly treated, partly due to their religious views. Very upset by their treatment, Schuckardt and his associates filed a suit against Plumas County seeking no less than \$8 million for "violations of constitutional rights which include unlawful search and seizure, unlawful arrest and imprisonment; conspiracy to violate civil rights; denial of adequate medical care." The county made a plea deal and paid a substantial sum to the TRLC, and the case did not go to court.<sup>97</sup>

During most of the 1990s, the Schuckardt group escaped the media radar, save for some notices on the continuing legal battles with the CMRI. They left Plumas County, and about a hundred people relocated to towns near Seattle: Bellevue, Issaquah, Renton, and Sammamish. The group was known under several names: the Tridentine Latin Rite Church, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Congregation congregation, and Our Lady of Mariefried Church.<sup>98</sup>

In 2002, however, a horrible crime renewed media interest. On 1 September, two nuns were out in the middle of the night praying the rosary on a bike path in Klamath Falls in southern Oregon. There, they were suddenly attacked by a man. Both nuns were raped, and one of them was strangled to death with her rosary. After pleading guilty, the murderer-rapist was sentenced to life imprisonment. Initially, there was some confusion as to whom these nuns were. The Roman Catholic authorities knew nothing about them. After some investigation, it became

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<sup>97</sup> The press coverage is abundant, see e.g., *The Sacramento Bee*, 22 June 1987, *The Lassen County Times* 23 June 1987, *The Sacramento Bee*, 12 August 1987, *The Feather River Bulletin*, 17 February and 23 March 1988, and 18 October 1989.

<sup>98</sup> *The Seattle Times* 19 November 2002.

known that the nuns originated from Bellevue, Washington, and belonged to Schuckhardt's group.<sup>99</sup>

Following up on the crimes in Oregon, *The Seattle Times* journalist Susan Kelleher wrote a lengthy feature article on the group. She attended Mass in Renton, south of Seattle, and was able to talk with several church members. She wrote about the group's history and noted the "ascetic sensibilities of the sect's members, who prostrate themselves during church services and spend at least 90 minutes a day on their knees in prayer." Fr Alphonsus Maria Barnes was the only active priest then, and Schuckhardt had not officiated in public for years.

Asked by a reporter to arrange a personal interview with Schuckhardt, Barnes said the bishop was too ill. Instead, Barnes offered to ask Schuckhardt to appear in a videotape with a current issue of the newspaper, providing proof he is still alive. The video never arrived.<sup>100</sup>

But even without the video proof, Schuckhardt was alive and still the Superior of the Mary, Immaculate Queen of the Universe Congregation, and the Ordinary of the Ecclesiastical Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe of the Roman Catholic Latin Rite Church (RCLRC).<sup>101</sup>

In 2005 and 2006, TV, radio, and press media again focused on Schuckhardt's group. This time, no less than five male church members were charged with rape, abuse, and molestation of young children raised in male communities in Bellvue and Sammamish. The crimes took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>102</sup>

In 2006, Schuckhardt was close to death. Wanting to secure the apostolic succession, on 19 May 2006, he consecrated two bishops: Joseph Marie Belzac and Fr. Mary Fidelis (Andrew Karl Jacobs). After the consecrations, he appointed the latter, his successor, as the ordinary. Bishop Francis Konrad Maria Schuckhardt died on 5 November 2006 in Renton, according to his adherents, in an odor of sanctity.<sup>103</sup> His community summarized his importance.

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<sup>99</sup> *The Seattle Times* 19 November 2002.

<sup>100</sup> *The Seattle Times* 19 August 2002, cf. *Statesman Journal*, 9 April 2003.

<sup>101</sup> "Bishop Francis K. Maria Schuckhardt" 2006.

<sup>102</sup> Religion News Blog, 5, 22, 25 and 30 November, 7 and 21 December 2005, and 25 October 2006, see [www.religionnewsblog.com/category/tridentine-latin-rite-church](http://www.religionnewsblog.com/category/tridentine-latin-rite-church)

<sup>103</sup> "Bishop Francis K. Maria Schuckhardt" 2006.

One man was first, one man was alone, one man's voice was clearly heard when no other voice was clear, complete or even raised. That man was the Most Reverend Bishop +Francis Konrad Maria Schuckardt, ihm. He ... never compromised with the new church of Vatican II, submitted to its errors, altered His faith, or preached heresy. He was (and in prophecy still is) the only one to fully expose the serpent of Vatican II; the back door to the Vatican of many supposedly "traditionalist" groups; and the chaos and deception of the other traditionalists who have no master but their own will and worldly wisdom. His alone was the voice that remained uncorrupted by heresy throughout His life even unto His dying breath.<sup>104</sup>

### After Schuckardt

The small group survived Schuckardt's death and stayed in the Seattle area. It is now known as Our Lady of Marienfried Traditional Catholic Church, named after a series of German apparitions of Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces, in 1946. On its website, the church describes itself as

a traditional Catholic Church that strictly and uncompromisingly practices traditional Catholicism – adhering to all the truths and doctrines as taught by the Catholic Church until the death of His Holiness, Pope Pius XII. Our Lady of Marienfried Traditional Catholic Church completely and totally rejects the false Vatican Council II, the Vatican Council II false popes and the doctrinal errors emanating from Rome since the death of Pope Pius XII. We firmly believe that the Catholic Church is presently experiencing a crisis without historical precedent, and that the solution to this present crisis is to be found in fulfilling the requests made to us by the Mother of God – particularly at Marienfried and Fatima.<sup>105</sup>

After Bishop Joseph Marie left in 2011, Mary Fidelis was the only remaining bishop of the church, once led by Francis Schuckardt.<sup>106</sup>

Our Lady of Marienfried Traditional Catholic Church and Our Lady of Fatima Crusade publishes the monthly *Salve Maria Regina Bulletin*, also available online. Though the church has Mass, the activities center around local Fatima Cell meetings. They have posted a detailed general outline of the group meetings on the Bulletin's website, which could be quoted *in extenso* as it illustrates a central part of the church's spirituality.

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<sup>104</sup> "All alone with the Immaculate Heart of Mary".

<sup>105</sup> [www.marienfried.com](http://www.marienfried.com)

<sup>106</sup> [www.salvemariaregina.info](http://www.salvemariaregina.info)

- I. PRAYER: Approximately 35–40 minutes for the opening prayers which include:
  - a. Come Holy Ghost (*prayer or hymn*).
  - b. The Holy Rosary with meditation on the Mysteries.
  - c. Prayers and hymn for each month as prescribed in the CRUSADER BULLETIN. Click on the *Monthly Fatima Cell Program* link on the left of the page for the current issue.
- II. MEDITATION: Approximately 5 minutes: A short meditation read by one of the members from the book prescribed in the CRUSADER BULLETIN, followed by *silent* reflection.
- III. OFFICERS' REPORTS: Approximately 5–10 minutes:
  - a. The chairman reads any notices or memos received from the Fatima Cell Center or online.
  - b. The secretary reads *brief* minutes of the last meeting. (1–2 minutes)
  - c. The treasurer gives a *brief* financial report. (*A voluntary offering is collected after every meeting. One half at least is used to purchase study materials or to fund apostolic action projects; the other half may be donated to the support of the Fatima Cell Center.*)
  - d. The librarian distributes the study materials to the Cell members and also the *Pamphlet-of-the-Month* to be distributed by the members. These can be printed from the SalveMariaRegina.info website.
  - e. Part of one SALVE MARIA REGINA BULLETIN may read at this time, usually by the chairman or vice-chairman. This is especially important if some part [of] a past bulletin was not covered as a study topic.
- IV. STUDY and DISCUSS: Approximately 60 minutes:
  - a. LIVING THE FAITH: One member gives a pre-prepared report on the first topic listed in the monthly program in the SALVE MARIA REGINA BULLETIN; the 10 minute report is followed by a 5 minute discussion of questions prepared in advance by the person giving the report. All present should join in active discussion.
  - b. LIVING THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA: Another member gives a report on the second topic listed in the Bulletin, followed by questions and discussion, as above.
  - c. COURT OF THE QUEEN: The third report is frequently taken from the Sanctoral Cycle of the Liturgical Year, i.e., the feasts of the Saints.
- V. PLAN OF APOSTOLIC ACTION: Approximately 10–15 minutes:
  - a. Reports are assigned for the next three meetings.
  - b. The librarian is directed to order or print the necessary reference materials for future meetings, and also copies of the Pamphlet-

of-the-Month to be distributed by the members, from the Fatima Cell Center.

- c. The Apostolic Action section of the monthly program is reviewed and discussed and appropriate actions (*individual, family, Cell group*) are planned and details decided upon for their implementation.
  - d. Reports of results in any area of apostolic action (*distribution of literature, signing of Fatima pledges, conversions, visits to hospitals, etc.*) may be given by any member to inspire all present to a greater zeal for souls. (*Reports should be kept brief.*)
  - e. Members are urged to participate in Holy Hours, Vigils of Reparation, special observances of important Feasts of the Church.
- VI. CLOSING PRAYERS and HYMN: As listed in the monthly program. (Approximately 5 minutes.)<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> [www.salvemariaregina.info/FatimaCell/Meeting.html](http://www.salvemariaregina.info/FatimaCell/Meeting.html)

## References

### Press

*The Arizona Republic*  
*The Catholic Northwest Progress*  
*The Cincinnati Review*  
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