

Palmar de Troya

Holy Catholic Apostolic Palmarian Church**

Magnus Lundberg

1968 (March 30): Four girls reported having seen a "very beautiful lady" at the Alcaparrosa field, just outside Palmar de Troya, a town in Spanish Andalusia. The apparition took place by a mastic tree (*lentisco*), and the woman was identified as the Virgin Mary.

1968 (April onwards): Several other people, most of them women, claimed to have received apparitions at the site. The stories attracted large groups of people from the region, other parts of Spain, and from abroad.

1968 (October 15): Clemente Domínguez Gómez and his friend Manuel Alonso Corral from Seville visited Palmar de Troya for the first time.

1969 (July onwards) Clemente and Manuel began to travel frequently to Palmar de Troya.

1969 (August 15): Clemente fell in ecstasy by the mastic tree.

1969 (September 30): Clemente had his first vision (of Christ and Padre Pio).

1969 (December 15): Clemente had his first vision of the Virgin Mary.

1970 (February 2): Clemente placed an image of the Holy Face of Christ (La Santa Faz) by the mastic tree

1970 (April 13): Clemente received the stigmata for the first time.

1970 (May 15): Some 40,000 people gathered at the Alcaparrosa, an all-time high.

1970 (18 May). The archbishop of Seville, Cardinal José María Bueno Monreal issues a formal denunciation of the apparitions.

1970 (July 16): The Virgin blessed a well in the Alcaparrosa field, whose water was claimed to have healing effects.

1971: Clemente and Manuel Alonso traveled through Spain, Portugal, France and Italy to spread the messages from Palmar.

1972 (March 2): An image of the Virgin as the Divine Shepherdess (La Divina Pastora) was placed by the mastic tree.

1972 (March 18): The archbishop of Seville reiterated his denunciation of the apparitions and forbade all kinds of Catholic cult activity at the Alcaparrosa field.

1972 (May 9): Clemente proclaimed that Paul VI would be succeeded by both a true pope and an antipope.

1972 (September 12): An image of Our Lady of Palmar was placed by the mastic tree.

1972 (December 8): A group of Palmarians wrote to Pope Paul VI in search of support.

1972: Clemente and his closest followers began to refer to themselves as Marian apostles or Apostles of the Cross and form cenacles (prayer groups).

1973: Clemente and Manuel traveled to Rome.

1973: Clemente and Manuel traveled to North and South America.

1974: Clemente and Manuel made a new journey to the Americas.

1974: Clemente and Manuel acquired the Alcaparrosa field. A more elaborate shrine and a surrounding wall was constructed.

1974 (December 8): A new report about the heavenly messages to Clemente was sent to the pope.

1975 (May 30): Christ ordered Clemente to begin the construction of a larger sanctuary.

1975 (November 20): The Spanish leader, General Francisco Franco, died.

1975 (November 30): Christ appeared to Clemente telling him to found a new religious order.

1975 (December 22) The new order, the Carmelites of the Holy Face, was founded.

1975 (December 24): Archbishop Pierre-Martin Ngô-Dinh-Thuc arrived in Seville.

1976 (January 1): Archbishop Thuc ordained four priests at Palmar de Troya, including Clemente and Manuel.

1976 (January 2): Archbishop Bueno declared the ordinations irregular.

1976 (January 11): Thuc consecrated five bishops at Palmar de Troya, including Clemente and Manuel.

1976 (January 14): Archbishop Bueno declared the consecrations irregular and the newly consecrated bishops suspended.

1976 (January 15): All involved in the consecrations were excommunicated by the papal nuncio to Spain.

1976 (February onwards): The Palmarian bishops consecrated a long series of bishops.

1976 (March 11): The bishops were arrested for wearing the cassock without being Catholic priests.

1976 (May 29): Palmarian bishops were involved in a car accident in the Basque country. Clemente was seriously wounded, and he lost his sight.

1976 (August 4): Clemente receives a message that he would become pope after the death of Paul VI.

1977 (January 20): The Virgin announced that Clemente should change his name to Father Fernando.

1978 (August 6): Pope Paul VI died.

1978 (August 6): While in Bogotá, Colombia, Clemente claimed to have been crowned pope by Christ and that he had taken the name Gregory XVII.

1978 (August 9): Clemente was back in Spain, and the Holy See was formally moved from Rome to Palmar de Troya. The Holy Apostolic Catholic Palmarian Church is founded.

1978 (August 15): Gregory XVII was crowned pope by four newly appointed cardinals.

1978 (August 17): The first canonizations in a very long series took place.

1978-1980: Gregory XVII issued forty-seven papal documents, including dogmatic definitions, decrees and exhortations.

1979 (June-August): Together with a group of twelve bishops, Pope Gregory made an apostolic journey through Europe and to the Holy Land.

1979: Pope Gregory and other church leaders made an apostolic journey to the Americas.

1980 (March 30): The Palmarian Council was inaugurated. After its opening session, the Palmarian *Credo* was published.

1981: The Palmarians applied to become an officially recognized religious organization for the first time, but they were denied registration by the Ministry of Justice on several occasions.

1982 (May 19): Gregory XVII and a number of bishops visited the relics of Teresa of Avila in Alba de Tormes. It was rumored that they planned to steal them, and they were attacked by a large group of people.

1982 (July 30-31): Gregory XVII issued a series of apostolic decrees about relics and images in Roman Catholic churches and announced that they were totally devoid of value for Roman Catholics and only powerful to Palmarians.

1983 (October 9): The much briefer Latin-Tridentine-Palmarian mass order replaced the Tridentine rite.

1985: The Palmarians appealed to the Spanish Supreme Court against the decisions of the Ministry of Justice.

1987 (November 2): The Supreme Court gave the Palmarian church official status as a religious organization. Through this decision, the church achieved separate legal status.

1992 (October 12): The Palmarian Council was concluded. The *Treatise on the Mass* was main result.

1995 (March 30): The cardinalate was suppressed.

1997-2001: The First Palmarian synod was held. *Sacred History or Holy Palmarian Bible* was its main result.

2000 (October 24): Gregory XVII named Manuel Alonso, Father Isidoro María, as his papal successor.

2000 (November 5): Gregory XVII excommunicated eighteen bishops and seven nuns. Some of them founded an independent Palmarian group in Archidona, Andalusia.

2001: The final five-volume edition of *Sacred History or Holy Palmarian Bible* was published.

2003 (March 24): The Palmarians sold their remaining real estate in Seville, and all friars and nuns move to Palmar de Troya.

2005 (March 21): Pope Gregory XVII died.

2005 (24 March). Father Isidoro María was crowned pope and took Peter II as his papal name.

2005-2011: Peter II issued a series of apostolic decrees.

2011 (July 15): Peter II died.

2011 (July 17): Father Sergio María, Ginés Jesús Hernández Martínez, was crowned as the third Palmarian pope. He took Gregory XVIII as his papal name.

2012 (January 6): The second Palmarian Council was inaugurated.

2014: The Cathedral-Basilica of Our Crowned Mother of Palmar was finished.

GROUP/FOUNDER HISTORY

Palmar de Troya, located about 40 kilometers south of Seville, close to Utrera, was settled in the 1930s. By the late 1960s, the town had about 2,000 inhabitants, most having relocated from other parts of Spain. The majority of them were day laborers on big agricultural estates, *latifundios*. Anne Cadoret-Abeles, who conducted anthropological fieldwork there in the late 1960s and early 1970s, noted the lack of communitarian spirit resulting from virtually all inhabitants being newcomers. The town had electricity but still lacked a medical doctor and running water, and its school remained undeveloped. It was ecclesiastically marginal as well, having neither resident priest nor permanent church building. When the curate from the neighboring town of Gudalema de los Quintero did arrive, religious services were held in a private home or at an industrial compound. Few townspeople went to mass regularly, and Palmar de Troya was considered something of a mission field (Cadoret-Abeles 1981). Nothing indicated that, beginning in 1968, this town would be the center of an important religious movement, when apparitions of the Virgin Mary and Christ were reported.

The Religio-Political Context

Although the religious situation in Palmar de Troya was very weak, it was not extreme. In many rural parts of southern Spain, the share of Catholics who practiced their faith by going to church regularly was low. Only a small minority fulfilled the church's precepts: confessing and taking communion at least once a year. Priests were rare guests and, due to their working conditions, day laborers had few possibilities to attend religious services. From the 1940s onwards, there were attempts to catechize rural inhabitants in Andalusia and other regions through popular missions as the clergy claimed that most inhabitants were only nominal Catholics with deficient knowledge of the church's teachings. The great majority's religious practice was almost reduced to the rites of passage: baptism, marriage and burial. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, sociologists made studies of religious beliefs and activities in Spain. They found that in Andalusia, about one fifth of the Catholics attended mass on a regular basis, but among the rural workers, only seven percent were active churchgoers and anticlericalism was very common.

Francisco Franco's (1892-1975; r. 1939-1975) Spain is often looked upon as a very religious society, where the so-called National Catholicism was a dominant ideology, implying that church and state were closely intertwined. The Generalissimo was the country's leader for almost four decades. He successfully assumed power during the Civil War (1936-1939), which the nationalists described as a crusade against the anticlerical Second Republic, communism and freemasonry. Many clerics were killed by republicans during the war: 13 bishops, 4,184 diocesan priests, 2,365 male religious and 283 nuns, and in several areas dominated by the Second Republic, the church had to go underground and priests went into hiding. The Catholic hierarchy, including the Vatican, drew parallels between the situation in Spain and the religious persecution in Mexico and the Soviet Union.

After their victory in 1939, the nationalist regime wanted to strengthen Catholicism's role in society. They wished to "re-Christianize" Spain. Not surprisingly, the official church celebrated the end of the Second Republic. Franco now defined Spain as a totalitarian state, which can be described as an autocratic dictatorship. He referred to himself as Head of State, Generalissimo or El Caudillo (The Leader; thus mimicking Der Führer and Il Duce). After the end of the war, numerous groups of political opponents were executed, put to forced labor, or imprisoned in concentration camps; others were forced into exile. Franco consistently opposed any kind of regional independence, by counteracting languages such as Catalan, Galician and Basque; strengthening the central power; and making Castilian the only acceptable language. Though influenced by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, Spain officially remained neutral in World War II.

In the “organic laws” (i.e. constitution) of the Franco era, Spain was declared a confessional Catholic state, and following a long discussion, a concordat with the Holy See was signed in 1953. Religious minorities, such as Protestant communities, were actively, and during periods even violently, repressed as they were not allowed to show any public manifestations of their faith. A law that guaranteed some freedom of religion for minorities was not issued until 1967, following the Second Vatican Council. It is safe to say that this development was not welcomed by the Caudillo. Freemasons were regarded as a particularly serious threat to society and religion, and a special Tribunal for the Suppression of Freemasonry was founded in 1941.

In the nationalist rhetoric, Spain was a providential nation, being a faithful Catholic bulwark against liberalism and communism, under the strong leadership of its great Caudillo. His longevity as a leader had much to do with his ability to balance different rightist groups: conservatives, authoritarian monarchists, Carlists and members of the Fascist Falange.

During the Franco years, the Catholic church had many privileges and much influence. Its hierarchy took part in many official ceremonies, and the state contributed to the salaries of the clergy and other ecclesiastical expenses. Catholicism had a great power over the school system, and ecclesiastics were given a prominent role in the state censorship of printed texts and movies. Many clerics were pleased with the situation. Nevertheless, the marriage between state and church was not always a harmonious one. The church hierarchy’s support of the Caudillo was not unanimous or consistently enthusiastic, and there was a clear element of power struggle. Many higher ecclesiastics thought that Franco had too great religious influence and threatened the “Liberty of the Church.” In the 1940s, the Vatican opposed the idea that all bishops should swear an oath of loyalty to the Caudillo, and many Spanish bishops were cautious about influence of the fascist Falange, whose corporatist ideology they thought would diminish the church’s influence.

Particularly after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), a growing number of Spanish bishops became more critical of the regime, and as part of the same development, the state turned more anticlerical. Not that all bishops wanted a democratic society, but they thought that Franco was unsuitable to lead a modern state. They wanted someone more competent, who could deal with the major societal problems, but not necessarily a radical change of the political system. In the later part of Franco’s rule, a number of so-called technocrats, who were members of Opus Dei, had substantial influence over the politics and economy, several being ministers. Despite its relatively small membership, Opus Dei thus had a powerful role in Spain from the late 1950s onwards, contributing to the economic development of the country. Still many Spanish people remained very poor.

The episcopal opposition against Franco in the 1960s was led by the president of the Bishops Conference, Cardinal Vicente Enrique y Tarancón, while some bishops continued to laud Franco until the end, or at least remained loyal to him. Many younger ecclesiastics increasingly criticized the regime for abuses against civil rights and supported greater independence for regions, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country. A special prison for “rebellious priests” was opened towards the end of the 1960s. Still, many priests clearly sided with the Generalissimo until his death, including the 6,000 members of the *Hermandad Sacerdotal del Clero*. (For a very good analysis of the twentieth-century Catholic church in Spain, see Callahan 2000. On Vatican II, see O’Malley 2010 and for the Spanish bishops’ role there, cf. Laboa 2005. For a good and very comprehensive biography on Francisco Franco, see Preston 1994).

Early Apparitions at Palmar de Troya

Such was the religio-political context in the late 1960s, when the Palmar de Troya apparitions entered into the religious scene. Given its marginal status, the press hardly ever reported anything from the town, but that would change in the spring of 1968. On March 30, four school girls, Ana, Josefa, Rafaela and Ana, aged between eleven and thirteen reported seeing a “very beautiful lady” when picking flowers by a mastic tree (*lentisco*) on the Alcaparrosa field, less than a kilometer from the town center. The woman was identified as the Virgin Mary. In a testimony, one of the girls described the event:

We saw the face of a very beautiful lady, with dark brown, beautiful eyes. At the beginning, we thought that it was a hangman or a bull with green horns, but later we saw that it was the face of a lady. It was very round and rosy, with a green thing around her (head) and she was dressed in a brown mantle. She smiled at us. It was the Virgin (Cited in Garrido Vázquez 2004; my translation).

The purported apparition was the beginning of a religious phenomenon that soon would attract large crowds, who came there as pilgrims to pray the rosary and meditate on the Stations of the Cross, waiting for miracles to come. A simple cross was made by pieces of the tree, thus indicating the holy place (*ABC*, 14, 23, 27 April and 14 May, 1968; Gómez Burón and Martín Alonso 1976:35-37; Garrido Vázquez 2004).

Modern Marian apparitions often take place in a context of social and economic crisis. The location is generally poor and marginalized and the seers are lay people and frequently young girls, who at the time of the first apparition are involved in every-day activities (Bromley and Bobbitt 2011). In this sense, Palmar de Troya was very typical. In the Palmarian case, however, the young girls were soon out of the picture; they did only claim to have a few very similar visions in the next couple of days (Garrido Vázquez 2004).

Nevertheless, from April 1968 onwards, other people asserted to have mystical experiences close to the mastic tree, which almost disappeared as pilgrims took leaves and pieces of wood as relics. Several women and men fell into trances, claiming that the Virgin Mary appeared and spoke to them, particularly on a low hill, later known as Mount Christ the King. Most of the ecstatic were not natives of Palmar de Troya, but came from other locations in the nearby area. Among the most important seers at this early stage were Rosario Arenillas from Dos Hermanas, María Marín from Utrera and María Luisa Vila from Seville. The first two came from poor circumstances, while the third was an affluent woman. Some males also had visions, including natives from Palmar de Troya such as Antonio Anillos, but during the first years, these three women were the most prominent seers (CESC; Alfaro 1975; Gómez Burón & Martín Alonso 1976: 38-41; Vidal 1976: 37-43; Cardoret-Abeles 1981).

The heavenly messages received at Palmar de Troya at this early stage were often very brief and general. The Virgin told the seers that she was their mother and that all people should frequently pray Our Father and the rosary. Prayers and conversion to traditional Catholic faith were the only ways to calm divine ire and save humanity in that time of darkness and perdition. They also claimed to receive communions from Christ himself, – a communion host (sometimes bloody) miraculously appeared in their mouths, and pilgrims reported that they had observed strange solar phenomena at the field, the sun appeared to be dancing. Photographs were taken and messages were recorded and written down (CESC; Alfaro 1975; Cadoret-Abeles 1981).

Initially a local and regional attraction, the stories rapidly spread to other parts of the country, and even abroad. By mid-1968, newspapers reported the growing hordes of people who visited the place; on certain days, particularly on the 15th of each month when the Virgin usually made important statements, they numbered to thousands (*ABC* 14, 23 and 27 April and 14 May 1968; cf. Molina 1996: 21-26 and Vidal 1976).

Clemente Domínguez y Gómez

By the end of 1969, Clemente Domínguez y Gómez (1946-2005) had become one of the most influential seers at Palmar de Troya. Later many would look upon him as the seer par excellence, while others would consider him a fake, or something in between. After failing to enter the priest seminary and not being accepted into the Dominican order, he became an office clerk, working for a Catholic company in Seville, from where he was fired. Clemente was not one of the pioneer seers at Palmar de Troya, but had visited the site in October 1968 without being convinced. However, reading texts and listening to lectures about the apparitions, from the summer of 1969, and on an almost daily basis, he went to Palmar de Troya together with his friend, the lawyer Manuel Alonso Corral (1934-2011), who also lost his job in the period (DH; PR; cf. Molina 1996: 31-40).

According to official Palmarian hagiography, Clemente had an ecstatic experience at the Alcaparrosa field on 15 August 1969 and one and a half month later, on September 30, he received his first vision, of Christ and the recently deceased Italian Capuchin Padre Pio, a favorite among Catholic traditionalists. It was one and a half years after the initiating apparition to the four girls. On 8 December, he began receiving visions of Virgin Mary (DH; PR; cf. Vidal 1976:45-54). Thus, the messages to Clemente were not only from the Virgin, but also from Christ, often in the form of the Holy Face (as in the Shroud of Turin), and a growing number of saints. In fact, an image of the Holy Face was soon placed at the apparition site. Later images of the Virgin as the Divine Shepherdess and as Our Lady of Palmar were put there, too (CESC).

At the site, loudspeakers were set up so that the crowds would be able to hear the messages that the seers conveyed. Even if Clemente was the recipient of the heavenly communications, it was his friend Manuel Alonso, who recorded them on tape, transcribed them and distributed them to pilgrims. He would continue to do so during their entire life together (Gómez Burón and Martín Alonso 1976). It is clear that Clemente was the charismatic figure and the recipient of the heavenly messages, while Manuel was the organizer and distributor.

Modern Marian seers are often lay people troubled by personal problems. Most of the original seers at Palmar de Troya were poor, some were illiterate, and Clemente and Manuel had recently become unemployed. Marian apparitions usually take place in an underprivileged and devoted environment (Bromley and Bobbitt 2011). Palmar de Troya was indeed a marginalized town, but, as has been shown, it was not a deeply Catholic setting. Yet most of the seers were devote Catholics even before the supernatural events, and the majority of them, and especially those who claimed to receive messages after 1969, were not natives (Cadoret-Abeles 1981).

In a number of visions to Clemente, the Virgin blessed Spain and all those who believed in the messages from Palmar. She had a universal mission to save humanity. In this mission, she was seconded by Christ, who also appeared frequently at the site. These messages concurred with the other seers' testimonies. Soon, however, the communications received by Clemente began to include a more outspoken and detailed criticism of the post-Vatican II church.

In various apparitions, the Virgin and Christ let him know that there was only one true mass: the Tridentine Latin rite must be reinstated, and the *novus ordo* mass promulgated in 1969 was nothing less than blasphemy, as was hand communion. Other salient themes were that freemasons and communists infiltrated the church at all levels, including the Vatican, and that a general schism was near. Nevertheless, according to Clemente, Pope Paul VI (1897-1978; r. 1963-1978) was free of guilt as he was drugged and held hostage by the masonic and communist curia. They forced him into making modernist statements, for example, by establishing ecumenical contacts with heretics

and speaking before the United Nations, understood as the masonic world organization (MC, messages March 15, September 5, and November 23, 1970; February 8 and 24, April 25, July 30 and September 27, 1971; January 26, March 9, April 2, and May 9, 1972).

In a few messages, even as early as 1971 and 1972, Clemente claimed that an antipope would succeed Paul VI, when he died. At that same time, a true pope would appear and govern the remnant, the small group that held fast to the traditional teachings of the magisterium and wholeheartedly practiced traditional forms of piety (MT, messages March 23, April 25, September 15, 1971; August 16, 1972). In a 1971 message from the Virgin to Clemente, it is stated:

The Vatican is in the hands of Freemasons and Marxists. Freemasons and Pharisees have infiltrated the curia. They are the ones who obstruct the way of the Vicar of Christ. It is necessary to realize what will happen: there will be floods of blood on St. Peter's Square. In this very moment, Communism and Freemasonry are preparing to make a decisive thrust and Marxism will usurp the church and sit on the throne (MT, message September 27, 1971).

Apart from the apparitions, in 1970 Clemente claimed to have received the stigmata. On his forehead could be seen a bleeding cross, his hands and feet were wounded, and on his side appeared another wound from which blood poured out. Allegedly, he would experience the stigmata on three more occasions until 1973 and offered his pain for the good of the church and the pope. On the last occasion, witnesses testified that Clemente had bled no less than sixteen liters (CESC; Vidal 1976).

The large number of detailed messages and testimonies about the stigmata strengthened Clemente's authority as the main mouthpiece of Christ and the Virgin, and a conduit for their harsh and unequivocal criticisms of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. Still, other seers, too, reported to have received the stigmata and continued to receive heavenly communications. At the site, the seers, including Clemente, also had an important role blessing religious objects, and at a given time, they could carry several kilos of rosaries in their hands, asserting that the Virgin loaded them with heavenly power (CESC).

The Virgin and the Apocalypse

A leitmotif in the messages given to Clemente was that the end of the world was near; they had a clearly apocalyptic content. It is an important theme for many Catholic traditionalist groups, which have evolved from Marian apparitions. According to sociologist Michael W. Cuneo, such groups can be identified as Catholic Marianists, Mystical Marianists and Mystical Apocalypticists (Cuneo 1997). To understand the messages at Palmar de Troya and the development of the movement, it is important to

put them in a context of modern apparition movements. It becomes clear that Palmar de Troya focus on themes similar to other apparition stories, but there are also more unique features.

Through an interview study, Amy Luebbbers identifies several characteristics in the world-view of Catholic apocalyptic believers in the United States, when describing the end-times: Traditional society is in crisis with decline in morals, particularly as regards sexuality. The Catholic church is deep in crisis after Vatican II, and only a small remnant keeps on to the traditional faith. Personal conversion is necessary in this time of crisis. There is a clear duality of good and evil, and the forces of Evil are everywhere to be seen. The Devil works through different means, such as modern technology, trying to control society and lead people astray, but true apparitions and prophets is an important antidote. In this context, the faithful remnant's response should be constant prayer (Luebbbers 2001).

In his important monograph on varieties of Catholic traditionalism, *The Smoke of Satan*, Cuneo identifies a more detailed "three-stage scenario" of the events in the end-time, which is common in traditionalist apocalyptic discourse. It is a model in which the Palmar de Troya messages fit well. The opening act is "the first chastisement", when most Christians will apostatize and live a life far from traditional faith and morals. At the same time, horrendous natural disasters and wars will fall upon humanity. True believers will be reduced to a small number and maltreated for their fidelity, communism will gain a stronghold over humankind, and a false pope will be installed in the Vatican, while a true pontiff will lead the church militant in confronting its enemies. After the victory of the faithful will come a "period of peace and virtue," when large hordes of people will convert and submit themselves to the true pope. The third and last phase will be another chastisement, when many people will revert to unfaithfulness and sinful behavior. Thereafter a final world war will bring the world to its end (Cuneo 1997).

Many modern Marian apparitions have contained similar apocalyptic messages about the future of the world and church (For Marian apparitions in general, see Hierzenberger and Nedomansky 1996; see also relevant entries in the *Marienlexikon* 1988-1994). The Palmarians regarded many of them as important stations towards the final and most important apparitions at Palmar de Troya. A most influential precursor was the apparitions at La Salette near Grenoble in 1846. In her "secret message" to the two children seers, the Virgin declared the imminent end of the world, which would be preceded by general apostasy. In this situation, many clerics would lead the faithful into heresy and even the Roman curia would be filled with apostates. The answer was to pray. The apparitions at Portuguese Fatima in 1917 were important, too. They had a clear apocalyptic and anti-Communist stance, underlining the necessity of traditional piety to placate divine ire. There was also a need to consecrate Russia to the Sacred Heart of Mary. At Fatima, there were reports of solar miracles and mystical

communions, where communion breads suddenly appeared in the mouths of seers. Particularly from the 1940s, the cult of Our Lady Fatima got a huge international influence (Perry and Echeverría 1988; Zimdars Swartz 1991; Introvigne 2011).

Apart from the events in Palmar de Troya, the Spanish twentieth-century apparition story, which had greatest importance for the Palmarians, were those in Garabandal, Cantabria (1961-1965). In the Virgin's messages to the children seers, she admonished people to return to traditional forms of Catholic devotion and convert, so that that divine chastisement would be averted. Virgin Mary wanted to warn and assist humanity in this end-time, if they only would listen. She pointed out that the church was moving in a disastrous direction, to large extent leaving traditional piety behind. At Garabandal, there were also testimonies of many types of prodigies, including miraculous agility – people were seen moving unusually rapidly or levitating, and communion hosts appeared in the seers' mouths. The events attracted many pilgrims, increasingly from abroad, but they were repeatedly denounced by the diocesan bishop (Zimdars-Swartz 1991). The Palmarians, however, looked upon the events as nothing less than the penultimate chance for people in the world to convert, while Palmar de Troya provided the very last opportunity.

Though not as central as Garabandal, the Palmarians saw the apparitions in the Basque village of Ezkioga (1931-1933) as important messages from heaven. The first evidence of communications from the Virgin and different saints came in June 1931, two months after the proclamation of the Second Republic, the exile of the king and the increasing anticlericalism. As in many other places, the original seers were children, but later hundreds of men and women would soon claim to receive visions and fall in trances. In a matter of weeks, crowds of up to 50,000 people gathered at the site on some days, many claiming to have seen prodigious things. Some of the later apparitions at Ezkioga had a clearly apocalyptic content: there was an imminent threat of divine chastisement through famine, natural disasters, wars and epidemics. One of the seers was able to tell that Antichrist had been born in 1923. She claimed that after the first chastisement there would be only one religious order, the Cross bearers (*Crucíferos*), whose first members would come from Seville. At that time, a great monarch would appear and lead the faithful in the final battles against Satan; an idea that became very central to the Palmarians as time passed. Though there was clerical support of Ezkioga, the church hierarchy's reaction to the events was decidedly negative. Eventually, in September 1933, the bishop of Vitoria formally denounced the purported apparitions and other miracles (Christian 1996).

Yet another set of apparitions that the Palmarians held high were those at Heroldsbach, outside Nuremberg in West Germany (1949-1952). In these messages, there was a clear focus on the threat of Communism, a coming great war, an escalating moral decline and a general apostasy. Heroldsbach was just one of the more than a hundred local apparition cases reported to Catholic authorities in Western Europe between the end of

World War II and the mid-1950s, but for a short period, it became an unusually popular pilgrimage. In three years, the four woman seers at Heroldsbach claimed to have received some 3,000 apparitions and no less than 1,500,000 people arrived as pilgrims to the small Bavarian village. The apparitions and the cult were unequivocally denounced and unusually harshly counteracted by the local church hierarchy, and a very large number of people were excommunicated (O'Sullivan 2009).

Two other apparition cases prior and parallel to Palmar de Troya should be mentioned, too. Both took place in the United States, both were very apocalyptically focused and both met strong opposition from the local church hierarchy. The first case was the apparitions to Ann Mary Van Hoof in Necedah, Wisconsin, beginning in 1949 and continuing through the 1950s. The messages told about the threat of Communism to the United States, the coming of World War III and the necessity of constant prayer. The messages also had a clearly anti-Semitic content, pointing to a Jewish world conspiracy. The connection with Fatima was evident, and the messages were similar to other contemporary European cases. The apparitions to Van Hoof were accompanied with other prodigious events: crucifixes were glowing and things levitated. She also claimed to experience "invisible stigmata" and became a "victim soul", chosen to suffer vicariously for humanity. At one occasion in 1950, no less than a 100,000 people gathered in the small town, and the diocesan authorities had to intervene. They declared that the presumed apparitions were false and finally an interdict was imposed on the seer. Today the shrine is attached to an Old Catholic church (Zimdars-Swartz 1989).

The other set of apparitions started in the same year as the ones in Palmar de Troya: 1968. They were received by Veronica Leuken at Bayside, New York until her death in 1995. She was regarded both as a "victim soul", being plagued by different illnesses, and as "voice-box," communicating heavenly messages. The messages from Christ, the Virgin and a large number of saints at Bayside include many of the familiar themes: the imminent divine chastisement, the impending invasion of the Soviet Union, the general threat of communism, future wars and natural disasters. A more unusual aspect of the messages was that a "Ball of Redemption," would crash into the earth and that the fire would kill the sinners. Another important part of the cult was miraculous Polaroid photos, which according to the followers revealed hidden secrets about the end of the world. The apparitions and the cult were counteracted by the diocese, but no clear negative verdict was promulgated until 1986. The Baysiders constitutes a highly international network, or, in fact, several networks. Devotees meet at Flushing Meadows, where they have moved their vigils after being forbidden to gather at the Roman Catholic church in Bayside (Laycock 2015).

Thus in the beginning, the heavenly messages to Clemente Dominguez closely followed a series of apocalyptic apparition traditions, even if the criticism of the modern Catholic Church was even harsher and more detailed than in La Salette, Fatima, Ezquioga, Garabandal and Heroldsbach. An obvious reason was the reforms following Vatican II.

As regards the level of criticism against the church hierarchy, the cases of Necedah and Bayside are more similar to Palmar de Troya. Still, the urges for conversion and prayers as ways to avert divine chastisement were present in all cases as was the idea that only a small remnant would be faithful until the very end.

Catholic Traditionalism in the 1970s

Though the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar development were welcomed by many Catholics around the world, they also gave rise to traditionalist opposition from both clerics and laypeople. In general, these groups were against the Council's teachings about freedom of religion, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and not least the introduction of the new mass order in 1969. They doubted that a true Catholic hierarchy would make such changes, and saw modernist, masonic and communist conspiracies. Many more or less organized groups of this kind existed in Europe, the Americas and in other places (Cuneo 1997).

The most influential of the Catholic traditionalist groups, the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), was founded in 1970, led by Archbishop Marcel Lefèbvre (1905-1991) and based in Ecône, Switzerland. The Society had a very critical stance against the new directions of the Council, not least the introduction of the new mass order. Lefebvre was one of the theologians behind the so-called Ottaviani intervention, sent to Pope Paul VI in 1969, which argued that the *Novus Ordo Missae* meant a clear break with the traditional Catholic mass offer and resembled a Protestant form of worship. The priests belonging to the SSPX only celebrated mass according to the Tridentine rite. They opened up seminaries on both sides of the Atlantic, not least in the United States and France, but had little influence in Spain.

At first, the ordained members of the SSPX were incardiated in dioceses by local bishops (i.e. they were given pastoral tasks within a particular bishopric). However, in the mid-1970s, Lefebvre ordained priests directly for the Society and special mass centers and churches were opened. Though very critical, they officially held that Paul VI was the true pontiff and they formally remained in the Roman Catholic Church, though Lefebvre later, in 1976, would be suspended, after ordaining a long series of priests against the explicit instructions of the Holy See. The group has no canonical status in the church and when consecrating bishops of their own in 1988, Lefebvre was excommunicated by the Holy See, which regarded the group as schismatic (Cuneo 1997; Introvigne 2004; González Sáenz 2014).

Nevertheless, the pope question would give rise to many internal debates in the Society of Pius X and other similar groups, and from the late 1960s onwards, a minority would leave them and become sedevacantists instead. The latter claimed that the conciliar popes, John XXIII (1881-1963; r. 1958-1963) and Paul VI, were manifest heretics, and could thus not be true pontiffs. To them the Holy See had been vacant since the death of

Pius XII (1876-1958; r. 1939-1958) (Introvigne 2004; Zoccatelli 2009, Introvigne & Zoccatelli n.d. b). Still in spite of secessions there is no doubt that the Society of Pius X remains the largest dissident traditionalist group in the world.

The Palmarian movement was part of both a long sequence of apocalyptically centered apparition traditions from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, where laypeople played a crucial role as “voice-boxes”, and the much more clergy-dominated stream of Catholic traditionalism that grew in the post-conciliar context. Still, the two parts would be closely intertwined in the Palmarian case.

Spreading the News and Getting Money

During the early 1970s, the Palmarian seer par excellence, Clemente Dominguez received new heavenly messages on a continuous basis. They were recorded by Manuel Alonso, written down, copied and distributed. Some of them were translated into English, French and German as part of the diffusion of the news beyond Spain’s borders. A newsletter, *Ecos del Palmar*, was printed from 1972 onwards. An obvious reason for the documentation was to spread the news to as many people as possible, looking upon them as a final word of warning from heaven. The group around Clemente regarded most Catholic bishops as apostates, whom together with the large majority of nominally Catholic priests, female religious and laypeople, needed to convert (Alonso and Canales 1976:145-58).

To be able to make longer mission journeys and institutionalize the cult, Clemente and Manuel needed money and therefore devoted much time and effort to secure sufficient funding. Donations at the site and the selling of collections of printed messages and objects of piety were important, but the Palmarian movement could also count on much more substantial bequests. According to testimonies, Manuel Alonso was very good at convincing people to contribute large amounts for their cause. One of the most generous donors, with whom they established contact in 1972 was a Spanish baroness, over ninety years-old at the time, who also was an ardent supporter of Garabandal. Another donor was a very wealthy woman from Wisconsin, who remained a main benefactor until her death in 2001, and yet another was man from the same region, who has continued to give substantial financial support. Still, the sums that Clemente and Manuel managed to get from ordinary followers were very substantial (Garrido Vázquez 2004, 2008; *Diario de Sevilla* October 5, 2003).

The capital influx meant that Clemente and Manuel could travel widely on both sides of the Atlantic. Beginning in 1971, they went around most of Spain and other parts of Western Europe to win people in traditionalist circles for the cause of Palmar. They visited Rome, trying to convince members of the curia. Manuel Alonso later claimed that they met Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviano, one of the most vocal critics of Vatican II,

who promised to forward a letter from them to Paul VI (Alfaro 1975; Alonso and Canales 1976:145-58).

In 1974, Clemente and Manuel made a long journey together with Carmelo Pacheco Sánchez, a Roman Catholic priest who was their closest companion. They went to France, Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Yugoslavia and Italy before returning to Spain. From 1971 onwards, the leaders also made several journeys to the Americas, to the United States, Canada, Mexico and many countries in South America, trying to raise interest and find economic support. In fact, until 1978 the leaders made almost ten journeys to the New World. Also, during the journeys Clemente received visions, some at famous apparition sites. The messages were thus no longer limited to the site of Palmar de Troya; the Virgin obviously followed him around (Alonso and Canales 1976:150-58).

In the early 1970s, the Palmarians could count on the support of some people who were influential writers on matters Marian. One of them was Francisco Sánchez-Ventura y Pascual, the founder of the *Círculo* publishers in Zaragoza, the *María Mensajera* magazine and a great Garabandal devotee, who even owned the apparition site there. He wrote a book on the Palmarian messages in 1970, but later clearly distanced himself from Clemente and Manuel (Sánchez-Ventura y Pascual 1970). Another was José Luis Luna, an Aragonese priest, often just referred to as Padre Luna, who was a great devotee and continuously travelled to Palmar de Troya in the early 1970s and published a tome on the apparitions in 1972. This work, *La Madre de Dios me ha sonreído*, became something of a best-seller in translations to French and German, but Luna later denounced the direction the apparition movement had taken under the leadership of Clemente and Manuel (Luna 1973; cf. Luna 1976).

The Archbishop's Denunciation of the Apparitions

The apparitions received no clear support from the local parish priests who visited Palmar de Troya on a regular basis, though one of the nearby curates publicly stated that that something “strange was going on in Palmar de Troya,” and he did not know what to believe. However, another, younger parish priest was more critical, but the basic way of handling the stories was silence (*ABC* 27 April 1968). Thus, although there was some initial clerical interest, or at least bewilderment, the Palmarian seers could not rely on local ecclesiastical support.

Still, according to church law it was up to the diocesan bishop to decide whether the apparitions should be regarded as veracious. The official church's reaction was quite typical (Bromley and Bobbitt 2011). Their basic way of dealing with the matter was to remain silent. However, seeing the growing popularity of the cult and realizing that it would not fade away the ordinary took a decidedly negative position, claiming that the apparitions were false. This was in line with the new policy from the 1950s onwards,

when the number of apparition stories increased exponentially and bishops were more likely explicitly to publically condemn them (O'Connor 2009).

Palmar de Troya belonged to the archdiocese of Seville and it soon became clear that the Palmarians could not count with any support from the archbishop, Cardinal José María Bueno Monreal (1904-1987; r. 1957-1982). By the 1960s, Bueno had become increasingly critical of the Franco regime and led a group of bishops, who met with the Generalissimo. Their criticism was unusually concrete and harsh. Based on Catholic social doctrine, they pointed out that the state's politics were a source of injustice. They emphasized the harsh conditions for day laborers in southern Spain and the widespread poverty on the countryside. At Vatican II, Bueno was one of the few Spanish bishops who stood out from an old and conservative episcopacy, unprepared for the changes. He was no theological radical, but he wholeheartedly embraced the conciliar reforms, and systematically implemented them in his archdiocese. Thus, he was certainly no ideal partner for a group of traditionalists, who saw the Vatican II as the main root of evil (Callahan 2000:501-20).

For two years, between April 1968 and May 1970, Archbishop Bueno made no official statements about the events at Palmar de Troya. The ecclesiastical authorities received information about the messages and the growing cult, but it seems that there were no large-scale investigations into the matter. It was the bishop's choice to consider if apparition accounts were worthy of such an enquiry. At this time, a steady stream of pilgrims kept coming to Palmar de Troya and it was reported that as many as 40,000 people were present on May 15, 1970, including many sick and handicapped people in search of a miracle. Three days after this all-time-high, Bueno finally published a document, where he briefly commented on the purported apparitions, stigmatizations and prodigies. He did not mince words when stating that they did not have a supernatural origin, but were signs of "collective and superstitious hysteria" and forbade Catholic priests to celebrate mass there (Archbishop Bueno's letter, dated May 18, 1970, in Vidal 1976:62-63).

The Palmarian group was naturally not pleased with the decision and shortly after, Clemente allegedly received a number of messages from Christ and the Virgin, stating that the Bueno and the Spanish episcopacy at large were modernists (Alfaro 1975). After the cardinal's decision, they wanted to involve the Holy See. In early July, Clemente was at a papal audience in Rome. There, he ran forward and fell on his knees before the pope handing over a note about the apparitions to a prelate that was present and asked him to forward it to the Holy Father (*El País* May 9, 1976; Vidal 1976:65).

In 1970, there were no established criteria for the Holy See's handling of reports about private revelations and apparitions. It was a matter for the diocesan bishop to investigate the possible supernatural nature of such events, even if he could consult the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (earlier, The Holy Office). A "qualified group of

faithful” could also approach the Holy See in this matter. However, in special circumstances the Holy See could intervene on its own initiative. Having discussed the matter for a couple of years, in 1978 the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith issued their “Norms regarding the manner of proceeding in the discernment of presumed apparitions or revelations.” It was approved for internal use alone and not officially published by the Holy See until 2012, even if parts of the content had been known for a long time.

The document includes many of the traditional criteria used by twentieth-century Catholic bishops to judge the veracity of apparitions. The positive criteria have to do with the “moral certitude” or “probability” of the events as well as the personal quality of the seer (e.g. psychological status and morality). They also include the requirement of coherence with church doctrine and that the event should have given rise to “healthy devotion and constant spiritual fruit” in the form of conversions and increased prayer activity and charity. The negative criteria include manifest error concerning the facts, doctrinal errors, but also evidence of a search for personal profit or psychological disorders, as well as tendencies of collective hysteria (Sacred Congregation 1978).

The gist of the archbishop Bueno’s statement on Palmar de Troya was reiterated in 1972. In a decree, printed in several newspapers, he explicitly forbade all kinds of public worship at the Alcaparrosa field, ordering Roman Catholic priests not to be present, let alone celebrate any religious services there (Vidal 1976:81). As an answer to the second declaration, Manuel Alonso drew up an extensive letter, which was signed by more than 300 pilgrims. It included a summary of the apparitions to a number of seers, but with particular focus on Clemente’s role. The author claimed that the archbishop’s decision had been made without prior investigation and that some of his assistants were part of a conspiracy hostile towards them (CESC). However, the diocesan hierarchy did not change its opinion; the purported apparitions and other supernatural events were not to be supported by any Catholic as they led people astray from the true faith.

There is clear evidence that individual Catholic priests were present at Palmar de Troya, both before and after the archbishop’s denunciation and that Tridentine masses were celebrated regularly at the site from 1969 onwards. The clerical support group included both Spaniards and foreigners, who were critical of the post-conciliar developments and attracted by the anti-modernist and apocalyptic messages. Still, the seers and leaders of the growing Palmarian movement were laypeople and so were almost all pilgrims. Clemente’s supporters formed prayer groups (cenacles) and began to refer to themselves as Marian apostles or Apostles of the Cross (MC, messages January 29 and September 24, 1974).

Institutionalization and Schism

Being successful in their fund raising endeavors, in 1974, Clemente and Manuel could eventually acquire the apparition site: the 15,000 square meter estate of Alcaparrosa and could thus physically control the site and develop the cult as they wished. After the purchase, they built a somewhat more elaborate shrine. It was a kind of hangar, covered in plastic, where images of Our Lady, The Holy Face, St. Joseph, Padre Pio and Saint Ferdinand were kept. They also constructed a high wall around the church compound, and housing for pilgrims was bought or built nearby (Alfaro 1975; Vidal 1976:103; *El País* May 12, 1976; Molina 2006:71-78, 100-04).

The Palmarians' steps towards greater institutionalization followed the normal procedure for modern Marian apparition movements. In their analysis of thirteen European and North American cases, David G. Bromley and Rachel S. Bobbitt observe that the process involve “mobilizing the key resources necessary for organizational viability: a stable location and financial base, organization and leadership, a network of supporters, and a means of systematizing the revelatory process and ritual observances” (Bromley and Bobbitt 2011:14). Nevertheless, the degree of institutionalization of the Palmarian movement would soon become unusual.

In a vision to Clemente on November 30, 1975, ten days after the death of General Franco, the Virgin Mary and Christ announced the forthcoming foundation of a new religious order that would replace all the existing ones, providing a synthesis of them. The idea to found a new order had been present in the heavenly messages, at least since 1974, and the members of the new order were seen as the Apostles of the Last Times (MC, message November 30, 1975; Alfaro 1975; Vidal 1976:130-32). This expression was used in the eighteenth-century prophesies of Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, popular in Catholic apocalyptic and millennialist circles (Introvigne 2011). The members were also referred to as the Cross Bearers, a name used in the end-time messages from Ezkioga.

The new Palmarian order, the Carmelites of the Holy Face, was indeed founded on December 22, 1975. It included four classes of members: priests, brothers, sisters and tertiaries, laypeople, all wearing a brown habit and a scapular with images of the Holy Face of Christ and Our Lady of Palmar (MC, message December 22, 1975). Not surprisingly, Clemente became the general of the Order. The Palmarians, however, still lacked priests of their own. Of course, Archbishop Bueno of Seville would not ordain any for them, but to be able to claim apostolic succession was necessary for a group as theirs. A traditionalist bishop had to be found.

The solution to the ordination problem came with Vietnamese Archbishop Pierre-Martin Ngô-dinh-Thuc (1897-1984), by then living in Italian exile. After one of the Vatican II sessions, he had been unable to return to his home country, where his brother, South

Vietnamese president Ngô-dinh-Diem, had been killed, as was another brother, a powerful provincial leader. After a solid education in Europe, including three doctorates, Thuc was consecrated bishop in 1938 and became archbishop of Hue in 1960. While living in exile in Europe, he was replaced in Hue and instead made titular archbishop of Bulla Regia, but served as an assistant pastor in a small Italian town, upset and bewildered by the changes in the post-conciliar church (Beltrán y Bachero 1989:420-21. On Thuc, see also, Ruby 2002).

Thuc came to Palmar de Troya through the mediation of Maurice Revaz, who taught canon law at the Society of Pius X's seminary in Ecône. Revaz convinced Thuc that he was elected by the Virgin to save the Catholic church from perdition. With short notice, the Vietnamese prelate therefore travelled to Seville and Palmar de Troya, where he arrived on Christmas Eve 1975 (Molina 1996:100-04). In his autobiography written in the late 1970s, Thuc claims that Revaz came to his home in Arpino just saying: "Excellency, the Holy Virgin sends me in order for me to send you to central Spain immediately to render her a service. My car is ready for you at the parsonage's door and we will depart immediately depart in order to be there for Christmas." According to his own testimony, Thuc then answered "If it is a service that the Holy Virgin required, I am ready to follow you to the end of the world, but I must inform the priest because of the Christmas Mass and must pack my bag" (Thuc [1976] 2006).

An interesting question is what type of relationship there was between the Palmarians and the Society of Pius X at the time. Individual members of the Society seem to have been attracted by the antimodernist messages from Palmar, and an Argentinean editorial connected to them printed a collection of messages together with a very positive evaluation (Alfaro 1975). This, however, does not prove a clear connection on the organizational level. Still, according to Noël Barbara, a French sedevacantist priest who reportedly had talked about the matter with Archbishop Lefebvre himself, Revaz and an English-speaking priest had come to Ecône directly from Palmar de Troya in order to speak to the archbishop. They asked if the prelate was willing to come to the site, where the Virgin was waiting for him, and whether he could consecrate a number of episcopal candidates that she had chosen. In short, Lefebvre did not want to go to Palmar de Troya, but suggested that they should approach Archbishop Thuc instead, explaining: "He is orthodox and he is not at present occupied. Go and seek him out. He will most certainly agree with your request" (Barbara [1993] 2006:67-68). According to this testimony, it was Lefebvre himself, who pointed the Palmarians in Thuc's direction.

In the last days of 1975, Archbishop Thuc was present in Seville and Palmar de Troya, celebrating Tridentine masses. On New Year's night, 1976, he ordained Clemente Dominguez, Manuel Alonso, and two other men to the priesthood. Archbishop Bueno of Seville knew about Thuc's presence and intentions and tried to contact him, hoping to convince him not to ordain any Palmarians, but to no avail (Letters from Bueno,

published in *ABC* January 2, 15, 1976; Letter from Thuc, January 1976 in Vidal 1976:144-49).

The priestly ordinations, however, was just the prelude. Clemente claimed to have received various messages from the Virgin telling him that the church had an urgent need for traditionalist bishops (MT, message December 25, 1975; MC, message January 10, 1976). Less than two weeks later, on January 11, 1976, Thuc consecrated five of the Palmarians, once again including Clemente and Manuel. The other three were Roman Catholic priests who had served in Spain, Ireland and Sweden, respectively (Beltrán y Bachero 1989:422; Boyle 2007). With the episcopal consecrations, the Palmarians had secured their much sought-after apostolic succession and could start making bishops of their own. About a year after the first consecrations, the Virgin appeared announcing that Clemente from now on should be called Father Fernando and from the very beginning, it was clear that he was the primate of the new and growing episcopal college (MC, message January 20, 1977).

Ecclesiastical Response to the Consecrations

While the local hierarchy had been slow to comment on the apparitions, their reaction to the ordinations and consecrations was immediate. When informed that the ordinations to priesthood, in fact, had taken place, Bueno declared them illicit (*ABC*, January 2, 1976; answer from Thuc, January 1976 in Vidal 1976:144-49). Following the episcopal consecrations, he declared them irregular and all those involved to be suspended *a divinis* and thus barred from performing any clerical acts, while again denouncing the purported apparitions at Palmar de Troya (Bueno's pastoral exhortation, dated on January 14 was published in *ABC* January 15, 1976).

The papal nuncio, Luigi Dadaglio, went to Seville where he on January 15 declared the Palmarian bishops and Archbishop Thuc excommunicated from the time of the consecrations (*ipso facto*) in the absence of necessary licenses from the Holy See and the ordinary (Letter from the nuncio in Vidal 1976:150-51). In September 1976, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome declared the clerics suspended *ipso iure* (according to Canon Law), but made no clear statement about whether the consecrations were invalid or substantially valid though illicit. The most probable interpretation is that the Congregation regarded them as valid but illicit (Sacred Congregation 1976; Beltrán y Bachero 1989:423-24).

Sometime after the excommunication, Thuc changed his mind and was reconciled with Rome, but later he consecrated bishops for other traditionalist groups, and was excommunicated once again (Beltrán y Bachero 1989:425). The numerous bishops who today claim their apostolic succession from Thuc, "Thuc-ites," are very diverse, including both Palmarians, sedevacantists, Old Catholics and independent bishops. Still, the status of the Thuc consecrations is a matter of discussion in traditionalist circles, not

least because of his Palmarian ordinations and the fact that he reconciled with Rome on several occasions. In a declaration from 1982, he defended the sedevacantist position and regretted his role in the Palmarian affair, but at his death in 1984 it seems that he once again was in communion with John Paul II, though some traditionalists claim that the proofs are falsified. It is, however, safe to say that the last decade in Archbishop Thuc's life was eventful and bewildering and that he probably consecrated more than a dozen bishops (For the Thuc line of succession, see Boyle 2007).

The Building of a Palmarian Episcopal College

In the months after the consecration of the Palmarian bishops, the Andalusian and national press continuously covered the rapidly unfolding series of events, and no less than six journalistic books about Palmar de Troya were published within a year (Alonso and Canales 1976; Barrios and Garrido Conde 1976; Cebolla López 1976; Gómez Burón and Martín Alonso 1976; Lama 1976; Vidal 1976). At this early stage, it was still possible to interview representatives of the church, and Manuel Alonso remained the main spokesperson. Soon, however, it became increasingly difficult to get access to the Palmarian hierarchy, and the media's interest faded away after 1976. Only a few journalists continued to have some contacts with the leadership for a couple of more years (Molina 2006).

Two events later in 1976, however, would interest the Andalusian press. On March 11, the Palmarian bishops, no less than twenty-six at the time, were detained by the police for wearing the traditional black cassock, without being Catholic priests. Clemente and Manuel had to spend one night in jail. This legal process was described in detail in the newspapers (*ABC* March 13, 18, 19, 20, 23, 1976; April 7, 14, 15, 1976; cf. Vidal 1976: 164-168). As consequence of the legal process, the Palmarian prelates went in exile to France for three weeks. For a short period, they ceased to use the cassock, but later wore it again, obviously without any problems as they were legally regarded as clerics, though illicitly ordained (*ABC* April 8, 30 and May 1, 1976; cf. Vidal 1976:168-74).

Another exception from the decreasing interest was the news about a car crash involving Palmarian bishops in late May 1976. In the accident, the windshield broke and glass splinters severely hurt Clemente's eyes. He became blind as his eye globes had to be removed at hospital, and the expression "the blind seer" was coined. Still, he was convinced that the Virgin would restore his sight (*ABC* May 30, 1976; cf. Cebolla López 1976; Vidal 1976:177-82; Molina 2006:127-32).

After the foundation of the Order, the institutionalization of the Palmarian movement was rapid. By 1976, they had already developed a quickly growing ecclesiastical hierarchy, and in less than two years, they consecrated ninety-one bishops. Most of them were from Ireland (twenty-five percent) and Spain (twenty percent), but there were also French, English, Australian, Austrian, Yugoslavian, Swiss, Nigerian,

Argentine, Canadian, Hungarian and German bishops. Several were from the United States and some from Canada (Beltrán y Bachero 1989:429, cf. Boyle 2007).

The normal procedure in this period was that Clemente claimed to have received a private apparition from the Virgin or Christ, asking him to consecrate more bishops. In the messages, it was also clearly pointed out who should be made bishops. An effect of this *modus operandi* was that males who entered as friars in the Carmelites of the Holy Face could become bishops within months, weeks or even days (see, e.g. MC message January 27, 1976). A small minority of the consecrated Palmarian bishops (fifteen percent) were or had been Roman Catholic priests, others had attended seminary, while most were laymen with little or no theological education. According to Clemente, referring to heavenly messages, the church was in a state of emergency and there was no time for a lengthy education. The age span in the group of the first ninety-one bishops was between sixteen and seventy-three years, while most were in their twenties or thirties (*ABC* November 22, 23, 1976; Beltrán y Bachero 1989:422, 426-29).

At this time, the Palmarians did not consider themselves a separate church but as among the few true adherents of the Roman Catholic church. Still, they thought that they needed to create a college of bishops, faithful to what they regarded as traditional Catholicism. That would save the church from total perdition in the end-times (MC, message January 27, 1976). Though the Palmarians consecrated numerous bishops, a number of them left the order almost immediately, sometimes within a couple of months. Some of them went by their own choice; others were excommunicated and literally thrown out on the street (Molina 2006:119-24). Among many other things, Clemente's frequent visions implied constant changes in the outward appearance of the clergy. They changed their religious habit on several occasions. Sometimes the messages dictated that clerics should have tonsure and grow beards; later they were ordered to shave. These rapid changes can be observed in photographs from the time (Molina 1996).

The growing number of clerics and nuns were housed in several large buildings that the group acquired or rented in central Seville from 1976 onwards. One of the houses became the headquarters of the order and other buildings were separate convents for men and women. In the headquarters, a former hotel, there were more than twenty altars, and mass was celebrated on each of them several times a day. From Seville, members of the order travelled on a regular basis to the apparition site in Palmar de Troya (*ABC* November 23, 1976).

The Papacy

As we have seen, already in the beginning of the 1970s, Clemente Domínguez claimed that Pope Paul VI would be succeeded by both a true pope and an antipope. At that time, his claims were quite general, but later he stated that *he* would become the next

pope after the death of Pope Paul, and that he would be named Gregory XVII. Heavenly messages from 1971 and 1972 asserted that due to the masonic and communist infiltration in the church, there would soon be a great schism. After the death of Pope Paul VI, the followers of the true pope would be forced “down in the catacombs”, as the heretics led by the antipope would persecute them (MC, messages February 8, April 5, September 27, 1971; March 9, May 9, and September 5, 1972). In 1976, the messages became even more concrete and it is implied that there would be a time when the Catholic Church would not be Roman anymore (MC, messages April 4 and August 4,i 1976).

As for the status of Pope Paul VI, the Palmarian stories changed over time. Some claimed that he was drugged or held a prisoner in the Vatican and was replaced by an actor, and that he needed to be rescued. Other messages asserted the he was already “mystically present” at Palmar de Troya through bilocation. At the same time, it was claimed that Paul VI would soon arrive there in person to lead his faithful episcopal college, thus escaping the masonic and communist curia of Rome and all the bishops who had apostatized since the council (MT, messages 1971-1978; Alfaro 1975). These were not original Palmarian ideas, but first appeared in 1969 in locutions to a Mexican nun, María Concepción Zúñiga López, the founder of Franciscan Minims of the Perpetual Help of Mary and held by the large Mexican traditional “Holy City,” known as Nueva Jerusalén, founded in 1973. Similar ideas also appeared in the heavenly messages to Veronica Leuken at Bayside in 1975 (Laycock 2015:122-24; on Nueva Jersalén, see Leatham 2003).

Pope Paul VI died on August 6, 1978. According to the Palmarians, he was poisoned to death. At that time, Clemente was in Bogotá together with a group of bishops trying to recruit new friars. A couple of days before, they had been detained by the Colombian immigration office, and they were waiting to be extradited from the country (*El Tiempo* 3 Aug 1978). Just hours after the demise of Paul VI, Clemente claimed to have become pope not by conclave election, but by direct divine intervention. Everything was prepared for the event and Clemente had already become the vice-vicar of Christ, according to an apparition at the beginning of 1978. At the mystical coronation on August 6, Christ himself placed the tiara on Clemente’s head in the presence of St. Peter, St. Paul and the recently deceased Pope Paul VI, saying:

My dear son, my very beloved Vicar: This is the fulfillment of the prophecies. The martyr of the Vatican [Paul VI], the sublime martyr, has died. He was forced towards death, by permission of the Most High. In this way he has been set free from his prison. Now he reigns with me. He has undergone all his purgatory during his pontificate. His was a pontificate full of sorrow and bitterness. He was cruelly martyred by my enemies; and these enemies are members of the Roman curia. Now he rejoices in heaven with great glory as reward for his life of martyrdom during his pontificate. Now he will become the great intercessor of the

Order of Carmelites of the Holy Face. He is filled with joy because he never committed the error of condemning the Order of Carmelites of the Holy Face. In his heart, he has always approved the Order, he approved the episcopate of Palmar de Troya and he always saw this episcopate as the continuation of Holy Church. Thus he has died in great happiness, knowing that the Church will continue on by means of Palmar de Troya (HP, message August 6, 1978)

The papal election was confirmed by a long series of other apparitions, featuring a host of saints. Clemente, Father Fernando, took Gregory XVII as his papal name, the name of “Great pope of the end times.” His motto would be “The Glory of the Olives,” which was mentioned in the so-called Prophecy of the Popes by St. Malachy (HP, message August 6, 1978). This work was published for the first in 1595, but attributed to a twelfth-century Irish archbishop and has great importance for many Catholic apocalyptic groups.

Having returned to Seville, on August 9, Gregory XVII proclaimed that the Holy See had moved from Rome to Palmar de Troya. Due to its apostasy, the Roman era of the church was over. He declared Pope John Paul I (1912-1978; r. 1978) and, later, John Paul II (1920-2005; r. 1978-2005) antipopes and precursors of the Antichrist (HP 9 Aug 1978; see also DP 9 and 24-25). The Holy Catholic Apostolic Palmarian Church was established. The Virgin appeared to instruct the pope that nothing of this should be made public at this time and that he should be rather invisible in the church’s life, only appearing infrequently before the faithful. In fact, not much was written in the press at the time. Gregory XVII decided that a consistory should be held, where he elected twenty-four cardinals, finally, on the night of August 15, four Palmarian cardinals placed the tiara on his head at a ceremony (HP, messages August 9, 15 1978).

Exactly one year after the translation of the Holy See from Rome to Palmar de Troya, on August 9, 1979 Gregory and a group of bishops sat in a minibus outside the Sanctuary of the Miraculous Medal in Paris. There, the Virgin Mary gave an unusually long message to him, twenty closely written pages in some editions. As to confirm the move of the Holy See and Gregory’s position, she told him:

My son: now you can see how rotten and corrupt the official church, the Roman Church is. Through her fornication she has become the Great Whore. It is she who is in pact with the enemies of Christ. It is she who respects all religions. It is she who preaches truths and lies at the same time. This Roman church is now nourished by a beast, the usurper John Paul II—the true church is no longer Roman. The true church is Palmarian, as you have preached yourself, assisted by the Holy Ghost. It is no longer possible to be Roman [Catholic], as the Holy See has been moved by the order of Christ (MT, message August 9, 1979; my translation).

John Paul II was “the Apocalyptic Goliath”, who would be conquered by “the Apocalyptic David”, Gregory XVII. The long message from the Virgin is very interesting, revealing much about the Palmarian self-understanding and the nascent conflicts between church representatives in different countries.

Pope Gregory did not only claim universal spiritual power, but universal temporal power, too: he would become the emperor of the coming Hispanic-Palmarian Empire and great caudillo of the faithful warriors in the fight against Antichrist and the conquest of Russia. This empire would be Hispanic, as Spain had been faithful to Christ and the Virgin on many occasions through history. In fact, Spain was identified as the Second Israel, and Gregory XVII claimed that he had “Jewish blood in his veins” and that Judaism was Spain’s original religion (MT, message August 9, 1979; cf. DP 26).

Long parts of the message from the Virgin include denunciations of Irish Palmarians, who wanted Irish leaders, too. The Virgin defended the position of the pope and his two closest men, both Spaniards. These brothers-in-arms were, of course, Father Isidoro María, his old friend Manuel Alonso and Father Elias María, Carmelo Pacheco. The Virgin described them as a perfect team: the pope as the head and the others as his right and left arms. They were “three apocalyptic bulls who attack heretics with their mystical horns”. After Latin, the Virgin considered Spanish the most eminent language. It should be the order’s official language and she ordered all Palmarian Catholics to study it, so that they would be able understand the church teachings, though many documents were translated into other languages. Still, the profoundness of the doctrine could only be grasped in Spanish, an almost divine tongue. That was a matter of controversy, especially since the pope claimed that English was mainly a Protestant language and had been much used to denounce true Catholic faith throughout the centuries (MT, message August 9, 1979).

Sedevacantism and Alternative Popes

Gregory XVII was neither the first nor the last modern person to become an “alternative” pope. Towards the end of the 1960s, shortly after Vatican II, some traditionalist dissenter groups claimed that the modern Roman Catholic Church had fallen so far from orthodoxy that the Roman pope could not be the true pontiff. These groups asserted that Pius XII was the last true Vicar of Christ; thereafter, the Holy See had been vacant, the position called sedevacantism. Early proponents of this view were Francis Schuckhart from the United States and Joaquín Saénz y Arriaga. A variant of this thesis is known as sedeprivationism, which was developed by French theologian Michel-Louis Guérard des Lauries. This thesis implied that the popes from John XXIII onwards “materially, but not formally” had become popes. With time, these groups generally consecrated bishops of their own, often with direct or indirect help of Archbishop Thuc (Introvigne 2009; Introvigne and Zoccatelli n.d. a). The Palmarians differed from sedevacantists and sedeprivationists in that they believed Paul VI was a

true pope, though made powerless by the curia. They also believed that the Holy See did not become vacant after his death, because the Palmarian pope was divinely chosen shortly after his demise.

Since the late 1960s, dozens of men have claimed to be elected pope either through divine intervention or through conclave, but most of them have had very few adherents. With the possible exception of Canadian Gaston Tremblay (1928-2011), who as leader of the Apostles of Infinite Love also called himself Gregory XVII, there is no doubt that the Palmarian popes have had the largest following. Still, the Canadian Gregory did not consistently refer to himself as the pope, it was certainly not as central for him as for his Spanish namesake. His church, based in St. Jovite outside Quebec, but with many members in the Francophone Caribbean adheres to an apocalyptic Catholicism rooted in the apparitions at La Salette, but completed with numerous apparitions to their pope. Still, it has some unexpected features as the church ordains women to priesthood (Cuneo 1997; Introvigne 2009; Introvigne and Zoccatelli n.d. a). Obviously, the Palmarians did not want anything to do with the Canadian Gregory and his group. For them, the only true pope and the only true church was at Palmar de Troya.

Getting and Loosing Members

Palmarian church activities were in no way restricted to Spain. In the early 1980s, there were missionary bishops in France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Great Britain, Nigeria but also in the United States, Canada and in various countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, particularly Argentina, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, Chile and Colombia. In Oceania, there were communities in Australia and New Zealand. Some of these places had separate chapels and resident clergy. On most locations where the number of members was low, Palmarians formed so-called cenacles in private homes, and were visited by clergy on an infrequent basis. It is hard to estimate the membership in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but it must have amounted to a couple of thousand (Personal communication with ex-members).

During the Palmarian church's existence many bishops, priests, nuns and lay people have left the church voluntarily or been excommunicated, while new people have entered. Still, except for at the very beginning, most new members were children of Palmarian couples and not people coming from outside. Today the church is smaller than it used to be, and the faithful are concentrated in Spain (Palmar de Troya) and Ireland (Dublin). There are communities in other countries too, such as the United States, Germany, Austria, France and Switzerland but resident clergy there are few and far in between. Though it is hard to estimate the current membership, it is unlikely that it exceeds a thousand, bishops, priests, nuns and lay people included (Personal communication with ex-members).

No official documents show the overall member changes in the Palmarian Church. Still, for bishops, there are internal data that give a clear indication. Overall, 192 men were consecrated Palmarian bishops between 1976 and the death of Gregory XVII in 2005. During these three decades, no less than 133 have either left the order or been expelled, twenty-seven died in office, and only thirty-two bishops remained as of 2005. Thereafter the number seems to have decreased even more. The female branch of the order, which on its height included more than a hundred nuns, was probably down to thirty or forty by 2005, and the decline has continued (Personal communication with ex-members).

The late 1990s and early 2000s was a very turbulent time in the church, filled with secessions and expulsions. The crisis had to do not only with the new teachings of the church, but also with the behavior of the pope and other leaders. In a 1998 sermon, Pope Gregory XVII commented on the situation, claiming that the group of true believers would be even smaller in the near future

There will come terrible times, worse than the ones which have lived through until now. In fact we are already living in these terrible times. The apostasies by friars, nuns and lay people are frequent. In other cases We have had to expulse people. One has to be either inside or outside. One cannot have one foot inside the Church and the other outside. One has to have both feet inside the Church (Gregory XVII, Sermon 20 July 1998; my translation).

The pope's morals became an apple of discord. In 1997, Gregory XVII apparently made a public statement, confessing that he had had sinned against the vow of chastity during his time as the leader of the order. According to many former members, including bishops, homosexual relations between clerics in the higher strata had been common. Despite the very clear teachings of the church, these acts were in no way counteracted by the main leaders, quite the contrary. On the same occasion, Pope Gregory also confessed to immoderate drinking and eating habits. Even if it has not been possible to find a written document with the confession, in a sermon three years later, the pope made clear reference to his earlier aberrant behavior, but claimed that he had mended his ways:

One could accuse Us ... of scandals related to the excess of drinking and to some aspects related to chastity: this is true, this is true. But in these last years, from October 1997, three long years, you should know for certain, that We, as far as We know, We have not committed a cardinal sin of any kind (Gregory XVII, Sermon October 27, 2000; my translation).

Gregory XVII had made public confessions earlier in this pontificate, too. In fact, in one of his official pontifical decrees from 1980, he confessed that he has been committed to

gluttony and was guilty of numerous acts of unchaste behavior. In this context, he saw his blindness as a blessing that helped him counteract his sinful urges (DP 27).

The five-volume *Sacred History or the Palmarian Bible* (SH), printed in sections between 1999 and 2000, and in a complete edition in 2001, became another very serious point of discord. A result of the Palmarian synod, the Bible further developed the church's earlier teachings. It was a thorough and very detailed reworking of the biblical books, many parts are not included at all, based on the continuous private revelations to Gregory. The goal of the revision was to establish the true meaning of the texts, exactly as the divine author had conceived them, taking away the numerous errors introduced by humans during millennia. This made it very different from traditional Bibles. *Sacred History* also contains a treatise on the Trinity, a large set of rules, known as the Palmarian Morals and a history of the popes (Gregory XVII, Sermon July 20, 1998). When the new Bible was made public, the faithful were ordered to destroy their traditional Bibles and only read the Palmarian version. Criticism against this development led to further secessions and excommunications (Personal communication with ex-members).

Closing the Gates of the Apocalyptic Ark

Interestingly enough, at the time of the secessions and expulsions by the turn of the millennium, there was one feature of papal religious behavior that changed. Not since the Palmarian Council was inaugurated in 1980, when teaching had become more formalized and institutionalized, had Gregory XVII fallen into *public* ecstasy, receiving heavenly messages before the eyes of the faithful. Still, after 2000, it happened again. For example, there is a video recording showing the pope's entry in the Basilica in Palmar de Troya on January 1, 2001. Under a canopy and surrounded by bishops, he is falling in ecstasy for a couple of minutes, kneeling, smiling and making the sign of the cross, thereafter waking up, looking bewildered. Images of this and other ecstasies just after the turn of the millennium were distributed to the faithful (see, e.g. a leaflet with the title "Cristo está con su vicario" (Christ is together with his Vicar) with photos of the ecstasies on January 1, 2001 and a leaflet with photos of an ecstasy on February 21, 2002).

These public ecstasies were certainly a way to present evidence for that Christ and the Virgin was on Gregory's side in the Palmarian schism, thus defending his papal authority. According to the pope, the faithful members of the visible church under his absolute rule were about to enter the Ark of salvation, whose doors soon would be closed. In a sermon on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his papal election in 2003, he stated

Gregory XVII is now in Noah's Ark as the new Noah, the apocalyptic Noah. The only thing that is lacking is that Christ says, "Close the door to the Ark", and not

as it used to rain [in the time of Noah], but according to this age, this era, as God's way to punish this misled humanity (Gregory XVII, Sermon August 6, 2003; my translation).

In a 2005 apostolic letter, the themes of martyrdom and isolation from non-Palmarians are central. The Palmarian faithful must be willing to give his or her life for the church (bloody martyrdom), but every day should be characterized by heroic fulfillment of the will of God, even if outsiders will persecute and ridicule them (un-bloody martyrdom). According to the pope, the church once again was being forced to live in the catacombs. These "spiritual catacombs" are the Palmarian teachings and morals that distinguish the faithful from the fallen world.

In their view, the church militant is minuscule, but it consists of the only people that obey the divine (and papal) will. To remain faithful Christians, church members were ordered to break with non-Palmarian family members (in particular, "apostates" who had left the church), and contact with people at work or in school should be kept to an absolute minimum.

[I]t is essential that we valiantly break with all that can stain our souls. If the integrity of our Palmarian Catholic Faith so requires, we should break valiantly with our own family, however close and dear they may be to us, with our friendships and with many other things around us. In brief, we must dispense with all that combats our Faith, God's Law and Church dispositions that is if we truly wish to be Palmarian faithful. . . . See how His Holiness Pope Gregory XVII, zealous guardian of souls, ever on the watch and wide-awake, is further modelling and purifying our Christian lives, and ever further straightening the way we are to follow, with the aim of isolating us from the worlds seductive depravities (Gregory XVII, Apostolic letter January 24, 2005; my translation).

All contact with ex-members was thus strictly forbidden, and photos and other memorabilia of them should be burnt. Many former Palmarians, who have grown up in the church, but left as teenagers or young adults testify that they can meet their Palmarian parents, siblings or old friends on the street, but that not even their parents greet them. They also hang up the phone when trying to call them and do not answer any letters. If the family members who still belong to the church would interact with ex-members, they would be automatically excommunicated. The total shunning of "apostates" is thus an absolute rule, and there are many testimonies about this way of acting that make the life of former Palmarians even more difficult (Personal communication with ex-members).

Observations by the Turn of the Millennium

In the last years of the 1990s and first years of the 2000s, I spent much time in Seville and could make some observations of the secretive Palmarian church, which still had its headquarters in the city, close to the Plaza del Museo. Their residences and convents were carefully closed and windows were covered. Still, it was sometimes possible to see groups of Palmarian clergy walking the streets dressed in the black cassock; if more than two, they were always in line. Friars and nuns could also be grasped when they, on a daily basis, went from Seville to Palmar de Troya. For a short while, the garage doors were opened and a caravan of minibuses exited.

In that period, it was also possible for outsiders to attend evening mass at the cathedral-basilica in Palmar de Troya, if the guards at the gate thought that you met the Palmarian dress regulations. In July 2001, two others and I had the possibility to go there. We were two men and one woman, clad according to Palmarian norms, or so we thought. I wore a black suit and buttoned up white shirt. The woman wore a very long skirt, dark pantyhose and her head was covered with a shawl. The two of us could enter, but the third could not. He wore dark chinos that we thought were strict enough. That was a mistake, as his trousers had a fifth pocket, which the guard said was Jeans-related and thus a sign of intolerable modernism. It would be a sacrilege to enter the holy site dressed in that way.

The day we visited the basilica was very hot, as is normal in southern Andalusia in the middle of the summer: forty-three degrees Celsius. The two of us who were let in passed the guard and walked down the plaza towards the cathedral. At its entrance, we were met by a bishop and a nun. We were placed on different sides of the aisle. I sat on the left side and she on the right. We had to be on our knees the whole time we attended church, about two hours, overlooked by the bishop and the nun. It was certainly no option sitting down on the benches, even if our knees were aching and we felt dizzy in the heat.

At the front was the imposing main altar with images of the Holy Face and Our Lady of Palmar. There were also a dozen lateral altars. As we entered the basilica, religious services were already going on. At the main altar, a bishop celebrated series of brief masses, and two other bishops assisted him. Mass turns were read on several of the lateral altars, too, all celebrants being bishops. There were very few lay people present and those attending were well spread out in the church building, dressed in different shades of brown. Most of them were elderly people on their knees, scapulars around their neck, praying the penitential rosary. In short, there were more bishops than laypeople present in the cathedral. To the right of the main altar, there were some thirty or forty very strictly clad nuns, their faces totally covered, whom could only be grasped behind grills.

After about two hours we left, but the religious service continued, probably well into the night. Just before leaving, we talked to the bishop and the nun, who handed over booklets and images. From this brief visit to the Palmarian cathedral, we could see that the interiors were very richly decorated, that long mass turns were celebrated and that many bishops and nuns were present, but that the number of lay people was low, a situation that could be explained by the fact that it was an ordinary weekday.

Pope Peter II

Holy Week in 2005 was a crucial time in the history of the Palmarian Church, as Gregory XVII died on March 21. In later years, he had become increasingly invisible in the life of the church and only appeared in Palmar de Troya on very special religious festivities, being carried in his gestatorial chair, tiara, miter or white biretta on his head. At his death, there was no conclave as he had already named Father Isidoro María his successor. The latter was crowned on March 24, taking Peter II as his papal name (*ABC* March 23, 24, 27, 2005). It is not known whether he regarded himself as Petrus Romanus, the last pope in the history, according to the prophecies of St. Malachy.

In his first apostolic letters, the new pope defended his position as the true successor of Gregory XVII the Very Great who was immediately canonized (Peter II, Apostolic letters 1 and 3). Peter II never claimed to receive any private apparitions, but he had worked in tandem with Clemente since 1969, by critics often being looked upon as “the brain behind it all” or an eminence grise (*ABC* March 23, 24, 27, 2005). He mainly looked upon himself as the defender of teachings already promulgated by the Palmarian council and synod. Thus, he made few dogmatic definitions, but quite frequently issued apostolic letters. In the first three years of his pontificate about twenty such documents were sent to the members (Peter II, Apostolic Letters).

Under Peter II, the Palmarian church became more closed and exclusive than ever before, even it was a matter of degree and not of kind. Messages about the necessity to break with the surrounding world and live according to strict Palmarian norms are present in every apostolic letter. One sign of the increasing secrecy was that digital presence of the Palmarians now became null. By the turn of the millennium, they had still managed a website, but it was not updated for a long time. Now it was closed down entirely.

On a number of occasions, Peter II reiterated the idea that the Palmarian Church is the only hope in a world totally dominated by Satan. Not only the “apostates,” but also lukewarm members were accused of destroying the church from within; they were “woodworms”. Membership demanded much from an individual. They must destroy their TV sets, videos, mobile telephones and computers in order not to be infected by the “repugnant moral leprosy rampant in the world,” as the pope phrased it (Peter II, Apostolic letter 15).

The only reading material that the faithful should have access to are the documents of the church. Other books should be handed over to the church authorities to be destroyed. There are also indications that members should destroy all Palmarian material printed before 2000, when the new Palmarian Bible became a central confessional document (Peter II, Apostolic letters 2, 6 and 9-10). Collections of early heavenly messages were re-printed in the 2000s, and revised versions of the catechisms, prayer books and the *Treatise on the Mass* appeared in the first year of Peter II's pontificate. According to their titles, all publications had been revised "in light of the teaching of the Palmarian Bible." Moreover, texts on stick-paper containing new rules were distributed to members in order to be taped into existing church publications (see, e.g. PKO; PG; TM; personal communication with ex-members).

To distinguish the church from the world around, the Palmarian popes have decreed a long series of rules that members should obey. During the papacy of Peter II, the number of detailed regulations increased considerably and many of the older ones have become even stricter. From its beginning, the Palmarian church has had a strict dress code, applicable both inside and outside the church buildings. In fact, clothes have an enormously central place in the church's teaching, as they are considered tangible signs of membership, decorum and obedience. Not to be clad according to the norm inevitably leads to excommunication. The first papal documents 1978-1980 contained rules for dressing, as did a special apostolic decree 1985, but the norms have continuously been revised and made stricter. They are now compiled in a document called "Norms of Palmarian Christian Decency" (DP; Gregory XVII, Apostolic decree October 9, 1985; NP).

For males, the dress regulations include a ban against the use of jeans and shorts, and pants should be loosely fitting and have no pockets in the trouser legs. In fact, there is a general prohibition against denim, a symbol of satanic modernism. Shirts should have long sleeves, have no printed images or texts, always be buttoned up, socks should be worn at all times and sport shoes are prohibited, as are shirts and sweaters with texts or images. Men should not have long or dyed hair and not have earrings. Women should cover their heads both inside and outside of church. Their dresses should be long-sleeved and not close fitting, and skirts should not be shorter than thirty-five centimeters above the ground and have no slits. Blouses should be buttoned up. From the age of fourteen, females must always wear dark stockings covering most of the legs. They should under no circumstance use pants or even a pajama, as it is considered men's wear. In practice, many Palmarian women use long dark-brown or black clothing that almost reach the ground (NP).

There are many other rules that distinguish Palmarians from what they see as the total moral depravity of the surrounding world. Church members are forbidden to visit beaches or swimming pools, attend nightclubs or discos, or listen to modern music or see movies (including cartoons) where characters are not dressed in the Palmarian way.

They are not allowed to vote in general elections or enter the church buildings of other denominations, nor to attend baptisms, weddings or funerals of non-Palmarians, including close relatives. Even more far-reaching is the general ban against talking to people not dressed in the Palmarian way, or non-Palmarians at large. Taking part in or looking at sports where the players are not dressed according to Palmarian norms is also banned (Peter II, Apostolic letters, 1-20, 2008-2011)

Some rules are very precise: Birthday candles are prohibited, as are Christmas trees and images of Santa Claus. Parents are not allowed to say that Christmas presents are from Santa Claus, as he does not exist, and gifts should not be given on December 25 but on January 6. If members do not conform to these norms, excommunication awaits them (Peter II, Apostolic letters). To give an example of how the rules can be phrased, it might be illustrative to quote the ban against listening to modern music:

Modern music, i.e. rock and all its derivatives, and suchlike, is the work of Satan himself. By means of that music, free rein is given to all man's lower passions. Hysteria, fanaticism, drug addiction, excessive drinking and many other psychical and physical disorders are fomented. Modern music is contrary to God's Infinite Beauty, the Sound Morals and to good taste in art. Consequently, it is a grievous peril for man; and so he is obliged to avoid all co-operation with and influence from such music, and openly reject it. It is a moral sin to have tapes or disks of that music, or to listen to it with attention. It should be born in mind that to hear is not to listen; so there is sin when, the music having been noted, it is expressly listened to. ... All those who still have any disks, mobile telephones or other apparatus forbidden by the Church, should hand them in quickly to their Missionary Bishop to be destroyed. ... We impose this duty under pain of excommunication reserved to Us. We hope that those who have been followers of satanic modern music beat forever in mind that this perversion is strictly forbidden by the Church" (Peter II, Apostolic letter 18, February 2, 2008).

Pope Gregory XVIII

After six years in office, Peter II died on 15 July 2011. His successor was Bishop Sergio María, the former military officer Ginés Jesús Hernández Martínez (b. 1959), who after briefly attending a Roman Catholic seminary had become a Palmarian bishop in 1984. After the death of Father Elias María, in 1997, he became "number three" in order and as Secretary of State under Peter II, he had been "number two," and was publically named his successor on March 3, 2011. The new Palmarian pope was crowned on July 17, taking the name Gregory XVIII. At that occasion, he also canonized his predecessor. By his side, he has a Swiss Secretary of State, Bishop Eliseo María. Shortly after the coronation, Gregory XVIII convened a new Palmarian Council to begin in January 2012 (SHP, *El Correo de Andalucía*, 30 July 2011; Mayer 2011).

During the pontificate of Gregory XVIII, the Palmarian economy seems to have improved considerably. He seems to be at least as good a fundraiser as Manuel Alonso was in the first decades. After a decade-long long standstill, the works on the cathedral speeded up considerably. In early 2013, the Andalusian press claimed that the church's monetary influx had increased much and that the order had opened up of missions in France, Switzerland and Vietnam, while supporters in the United States and Germany also provided large sums. Photos from 2014 and 2015 show a finished basilica, the façade embellished with a series of new statues, St. Francisco Franco with his halo at the center. The construction work that began in 1978 is thus finished (*El Correo de Andalucía*, July 30, 2011; *ABC*, March 11, 2013; *Andalucesdiario.es*, July 11, 2013; *El Mundo*, October 7, 2014; *ABC*, January 3, 2015).

Though there seems to be new money at Palmar, the number of members remains very low. At one of their big religious feasts, on January 1, 2015, journalists were allowed to enter. One of them mentioned that only twenty nuns were present, less than a fifth of the members that there used to be when the church was at its strongest. It is a clear indication of a continuing membership crisis. Still, due to the great secrecy it is very difficult to get a clear image of the state of things (*El Mundo*, October 7, 2014; *ABC*, January 3, 2015).

Doctrines/Beliefs

Doctrinal Texts

From its foundation in 1978, the Palmarian Church has been very text centered. It has published many documents that can serve as sources for a study of their theology. However, because of the increasingly closed nature of the church, it is not easy to get access to the texts and very little is found in research libraries. They have to be acquired in other, sometimes, complicated ways. Palmarian documents have often been published in parallel English, Spanish and German versions, but there are translations into French, Portuguese, Polish and Italian as well. They give evidence of a successive doctrinal development from a rather typical, though clearly apocalyptically-centered Catholic traditionalism, to a very different belief system.

Before 1978, the Palmarians published little apart from the long series of heavenly messages, in total covering many hundreds of pages, selections of which have been printed in many different languages. The first sizeable documents issued after the foundation of the independent church were forty-seven pontifical decrees (DP/PD), dated between 1978 and 1980; from Gregory XVII's election to the pontificate in August 1978 until the opening of the First Palmarian Council in March 1980. They were first printed separately, but later were brought together in book form.

The *Credo* (CP) of the Palmarian Church is of great importance, too. In contrast to traditional Christian creeds, it is a very lengthy and detailed document, in some editions covering more than forty pages and should be read by the faithful only once a month, on the 30th. The Creed was read at the first session of the Palmarian Council on March 30, 1980, but it was later revised.

The council's main result, however, was the *Treatise on the Mass* (TM), which was developed during more than a decade and not finished until 1992. It is above all a development and allegorical interpretation of biblical texts from the perspective of the sacrifice of the mass, including detailed biographies of Christ and the Virgin. The basic outline more or less follows the order of the books in the Bible, but the text is interspersed by papal teachings on a variety of subjects, breaking the chronological account.

In the *Treatise*, much emphasis is also put on establishing exact dates for biblical events. The Palmarians assert that the world was created 5,200 years before the birth of Christ; or to be more precise, he was born on December 25 in the year 5199 after the creation of the universe. Within this timeframe, the *Treatise* indicates the years, date and even the hour of events. One example is the dating of the Deluge. It is stated that the animals started to enter the Ark on December 25, 2241 years after the creation, that it started to rain on January 1, 2242, that the water reached its maximum height on May 29, and that Noah and all the others could exit the Ark on January 1, 2243 about noon (TM, chapter 35, volume 87)

The Palmarian teachings further developed at the First Palmarian synod held at the turn of the millennium (1997-2001). A result of the synod was a new *Catechism* (PKO) that exists in three versions, from basic via mediate to advanced level. Still, the most important outcome was the five-volume *Sacred History or Holy Palmarian Bible* (SH) of more than a thousand pages, printed in 2001. It elaborated further on the teachings in the *Treatise on the Mass*. According to Pope Gregory, he and the Synod cleansed and re-interpreted the biblical books so that they would concur with the intentions of its divine author, taking away errors inserted by humans throughout the millennia.

After the publication of the *Sacred History*, the doctrinal contents of the Palmarian faith have not developed much. However, in the very beginning of his pontificate, Peter II issued slightly revised versions of central texts such as the *Treatise on the Mass* (TM), the *Palmarian Catechism* (PKO) and the *Palmarian Devotionary* (DPA). Though not contributing with many new doctrines, the second pope's sermons and apostolic letters are important sources to understand the views of the church in the 2000s, when the apocalyptic messages became even more central than before, and the church became even more closed to the outside world. Regretfully, I have not been able to consult any apostolic letters or sermons from the pontificate of Gregory XVIII, but there are new and slightly revised versions of central works such as the catechisms and the

Devotionary. It is not known if the Second Palmarian Council has resulted in any official documents yet.

Palmarian theology include traditional Catholic elements, but they are interpreted and developed by private apparitions, both to Clemente/Gregory XVII and his favorite mystics such as Spanish Conceptionist Maria of Agreda (1602-1665) and German Augustinian canoness regular Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824). Both nuns claimed very concrete visions of the lives of the Virgin and Christ, which widely expanded the contents biblical stories. To a much lesser extent, other modern mystics have contributed to the Palmarian doctrinal development. While parts of the Palmarian teachings are similar to Roman Catholic beliefs, their understanding of the Virgin Mary differs much, and according to the Palmarians St. Joseph has a very central role in salvation history, which he does not have in Roman Catholicism. In order to understand the distinctiveness of Palmarian theology, it is therefore useful to focus on their teachings on the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.

Mariology

If the Roman Catholic Church has made few infallible dogmatic pronouncements, the Palmarian popes have made hundreds, if not thousands. During his first days as the pontiff, Gregory XVII promulgated a series of new Marian dogmas. Many of them had been discussed in the Roman Catholic Church for centuries. In the Early Church, it was taught that the Mary was a (perpetual) virgin and the mother of God (*theotokos*). Thereafter, it would take a long time before the church made any other binding dogma on the Virgin. In 1854, the Holy See announced a new dogma, the Immaculate Conception, that the Virgin Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin. Finally, in 1950, Pius XII infallibly dogmatized the Assumption of the Virgin: that Mary at her dormition (she did not die) was brought to heaven in body and soul (For a summary on Mariology, see Pelikan 1996; for details, see *Marienlexikon* 1988-1994).

Within weeks of its foundation in 1978, the Palmarian Church would develop this body of articles of faith at a rapid pace. For them, the Virgin has come to have an almost equal status with that of Christ. In short, it is a very Mario-centric theology. Among other things, the Virgin has been declared Co-mediatrix, Co-redemptrix and Co-reparatrix. None of these titles was unknown in the Roman Catholic tradition, but they had not been made dogmas. Other Palmarian teachings, however, are less traditional. According to Pope Gregory XVII, the soul of the Virgin was shaped before the creation of heaven and earth. In fact, it had existed in the mind of God eternally. Therefore, the pontiff declared Mary to be God's "companion" in the creation of the world, that she in fact was a co-creator (PD 34; PKO, 5, 11).

As Mary, through the Immaculate Conception, was born into the world without original sin, the Palmarians teach that she did not have to suffer at all during her life.

Nevertheless, she actively chose to suffer for the benefit of humanity. The *Palmarian Catechism* also teach that, in Old Testament times, the souls of Christ and the Virgin appeared as Melchisedech and Essenia, who were king and queen of Salem, present-day Jerusalem. They also claim to know that the Virgin was born in Jerusalem on 8 December 5180 years after the creation and at her “dormition” ascended to heaven, in body and soul on August 15 57 AD (PKO, 12, 16, 21).

While Christ is seen as *the* redeemer of humanity, the Palmarians declared Mary Co-redemptrix, since she suffered with Christ during his life and in his death on the cross. She gave her son’s life for the redemption of humanity in an act of obedience to God. While Christ gave his life through a bloody sacrifice, the Palmarian pope declared that the Virgin suffered an un-bloody martyrdom; she died a spiritual death beneath the cross. (DP 2; TM, chapter 34, volumes 131-139). Still, she is dependent on and secondary to her son, because he, but not she, is God. In the Palmarian *Credo*, it is stated:

I believe that Mary is Co-redemptrix of mankind, because She united the pains and countless afflictions of Her life to the Sacred Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, not as mere co-operation, but as authentic suffering of the Passion (CP).

The title of Co-redemptrix has not been dogmatized by the Roman Catholic Church, even if many faithful have urged the Holy See to do just that. Several twentieth century pontiffs, however, have used the term or terms with a similar meaning. Thus, it is certainly not an original Palmarian doctrine of faith, though it has reached a more prominent position, making it an infallible doctrine.

According to the teachings of Pope Gregory XVII, the Virgin is universal Co-mediatrix, which means that she is the dispenser of all the graces won through the death and resurrection of the Lord. Christ is seen as the supreme mediator between God and humanity, but as he came to the world through the body of the Virgin Mary, and mixed his blood with hers, the faithful’s road to Christ goes through Mary (*ad Jesum per Mariam*), a phrase used by the French mystic Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort. In Gregory XVII’s second pontifical document (1978), it is stated that this dogma is a direct consequence of the Virgin giving birth to Jesus Christ. Her mediation can be understood in two ways. First, she gave birth to Jesus Christ (the savior) and then she gathers humankind’s supplications and prayers and presents them before her son (DP 2; cf. PD 35). The Palmarian *Credo* reads:

I believe that Mary Most Holy is Universal Mediatrix in the Dispensation of all graces, Suppliant Omnipotence — a privilege that She uses continuously, as is well proved at the marriage of Cana, when She hastened the hour of the first public miracle, or manifestation of the glory of Christ (CP).

Elaborating on these ideas, Gregory XVII dogmatized that the Virgin is Co-reparatrix. This term has a similar meaning to that of Co-mediatrix, but it focuses on the repairing of the broken relationship between God and creation that followed the introduction of sin into the world. By the cross the Virgin suffered spiritually what Christ suffered in his body as to present an offering to God for the benefit of mankind (PD 35 and 45). The Palmarian Creed relates to the dogma in the following way:

I believe that Mary is Co-reparatrix, because she suffered in Her spirit all the pains that Christ suffered in His flesh, offering to the Father the death of Her son and Her own spiritual death, thus accomplishing a Co-priestly mission with Christ (CP).

After this, the Palmarians took one further step in declaring that both Christ and the Virgin Mary are present in the Eucharist, as she never left the side of Christ. It is also stated that her presence in the eucharist is in no way symbolical, but real. Not only the body and blood of Christ is present in the Eucharist, but also the Virgin, kneeling beside him. In one of the papal documents this is explained in the following way:

We teach as infallible doctrine that - - - [s]he who is able by grace really and truly to suffer the Sacred Passion of Christ, also by grace is able to be present in the Sacred Eucharist, since, at no moment has Mary ever been, or will be, removed from her Son. Now that, with sure and irrevocable faith, you know this presence of Mary in the Eucharist as Co-adjutrix of the Eucharistic Christ, you have, as a result, more strength to implore Mary, in order that, Mediatrix that she is, she obtain from God all your spiritual necessities, as well as the material if they do not oppose the spiritual. Her presence kneeling in the Eucharist shows her adoration of God and her Omnipotence, which is omnipotence of supplication (PD 45).

Being born without sin, and not having committed a single sin during her lifetime, the Palmarians claimed that the Virgin did not need to be redeemed through the death of Christ; she was “irredeemed”. Apart from that, they teach that if the Virgin had sinned even once, it would have been a contradiction of her being immaculately conceived (PD 31).

The Virgin and the End-times

Although the Palmarian Mariological definitions are many, Gregory XVII also defined the special role of the Virgin in the end-times. Through her many apparitions and particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the Virgin had on many occasions, shown the faithful the road to Christ in order to escape perdition. Apparitions such as those in Paris (1830), La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), Fatima (1917), Ezkioga (1931-1933), Heroldsbach (1949-1952) and Garabandal (1961-1965) were essential, but Palmar de Troya was seen as the last and foremost Marian apparition, in which the

Virgin made a final call to humanity “during these times of confusion, darkness, self-destruction and general apostasy.” In a 1980 decree, Gregory XVII made Our Lady of Palmar the advocate of the church. She would have her feast day on March 30, the date of her first apparition in 1968 (DP 27).

According to the Palmarians, the Virgin also appeared in other, more violent ways, in order to save Christendom. She had led Christian armies on many occasions and she was on Francisco Franco’s side in the Spanish civil war, which was looked upon as a crusade against communism. They claimed that the Virgin gave Spain “a saintly leader, Francisco Franco, Supreme Chief of the Holy Crusade against Communism” (DP 15, 44). In fact, to Pope Gregory, throughout history the Virgin has been the captain general of the Spanish army. Therefore, she will lead and assist the pope and the Palmarians in the final battles against Antichrist:

You will find the Palm tree on many occasions throughout history leaning like the Tower of Pisa, but never vanquished,- because the Most Holy Virgin Mary, as exalted Commander in Chief of the armies, comes to the help of the Pope and obtains the great miracle of re-straightening the Palm Tree, and making her more beautiful than ever. After the wintry storm, spring returns, and adorns the Palm Tree with renewed beauty (PD 40).

Gregory XVII looked upon himself as both the spiritual and secular leader of humanity and with the powerful help of the Virgin. He would lead a crusade for the Holy Land and throughout the world as the Caudillo of Tajo, a kind of apocalyptic Franco. In short, the Palmarian teachings on the Virgin can be divided into two main groups: Marian dogmatic definitions and teachings about the role of the Virgin in the mission of Palmar de Troya. The Virgin, as co-worker with Christ, became the main protagonist in the Palmarian fight against the modern (DP 29)

Josephology

Just as there is a parallelism between Christ and the Virgin in Palmarian theology, there is also a clear parallelism between the Virgin and St. Joseph. Nevertheless, Joseph is subordinated to the Virgin, as she is subordinated to Christ. The Palmarian Josephology is in no way as detailed as its Mariology, but still substantial and detailed, and has a prominent place in its *Credo*. In one of the first papal documents, promulgated in 1978, it was taught that Joseph was pre-sanctified in the womb of his mother in the third month of his conception. From that time, he was freed from the stain of original sin. Thus, he was born without the ability to commit any sin during his entire existence. Just as the Virgin, he did not have to suffer, as suffering was the effect of the fall, but to help humanity, he chose to do it anyway (CP; DP 3).

In the Palmarian *Credo* it is stated that Joseph was twenty-six years-old when he betrothed the Virgin Mary, thus distancing themselves from certain traditions that claimed that he was an old man at the time (CP). The *Catechism* teaches that Joseph was born in Bethlehem on July 20 5172 years after the creation and died on March 19, 34 AD, just before the death and resurrection of Christ. He was resurrected a year later. Shortly thereafter, he was brought to heaven, in body and soul. The Palmarians also impart that Joseph remained a virgin throughout his life, and that he never questioned the perpetual virginity of Mary (PKO 17). He was named father and doctor of the church and co-priest with the Virgin Mary. In the Palmarian *Credo* it is stated:

I believe that Saint Joseph, because of his most high dignity as Virginal Spouse of Mary and Virginal Father of Jesus, exercises, as Coadjutor of the Exalted Mother of God, the Prerogatives of Co-reparator, Co-redeemer, Co-mediator, Co-treasurer and Co-dispenser, as well as many other exalted privileges (CP).

In Palmarian theology, Joseph becomes a Co-redeemer, who takes part in the redemption of humanity, as he was the foster father of the Redeemer and spouse of the Co-redemptrix. Thus, just as the Christian's road to Christ goes through Mary, their path to Mary goes through Joseph (PKO 17).

Apocalyptic Teachings

According to Palmarian belief, the universe is entirely circular and there are several inhabited planets, while heaven, hell, purgatory, limbo are understood as different states, not as physical locations (PKO 63-66). As Marian apocalypticists, the church has prophesied the end of the world on a number of occasions, but the date has constantly been moved forward. Several years between 1980 and 2015 were indicated. In the revised *Catechism* of 2005, no official end date is given. Still, during his pontificate Peter II "infallibly defined" that Antichrist was born in Bethlehem in the year 2000. He is the son of a "Jewish nun," Anti-Mary and an apostate Palmarian bishop, and made a brief entry into the world in 2012. Antichrist may look like a man, but, in fact, he is Satan in human guise. At the age of thirty, in 2030, he will begin his public apostolate, proclaiming himself the Messiah and initiate persecutions against the true Christians, i.e. the Palmarians (PKO; SHP; Peter II, Apostolic Letters; Personal communication with former members).

The Palmarians teach that there is a Planet of Mary, where sin is absent. It is the dwelling-place for those who have died in a state of grace. The inhabitants will help the church militant on earth in the final battles against Antichrist. Many of them will die martyrs together with the last Palmarian pope, including John the Evangelist, who was brought to the planet in the year 100 (PKO 67). According to official teaching, there is also a Planet of Lucifer, inhabited by godless people, under the leadership of Satan. The

inhabitants there will assist Antichrist in the last fights between Good and Evil, and when losing the apocalyptic war, they will all be cast into hell (PKO 68).

All humans will rise from the dead at the Second coming of Christ in 2034. He will arrive in Jerusalem, but be visible in all part of the world. The moment of the Second Coming implies the beginning of the Messianic age, when the inhabitants of the planet of Mary and the martyrs, including the last pope, will be resurrected. All humans will thereafter be individually judged. At that occasion, there will be a direct enthronement of the elect into the heart of Christ, who will live forever in a glorious state; they are saved. On the other hand, there will be an enthronement of the wicked into the heart of Satan, who are condemned and have to suffer hell in all eternity (PKO 62, 71-78; personal communication with former members). Thus, the Palmarians still await the end of the world and now they, once again, have an exact date, when it will happen. For them it remains to fill the Apocalyptical Ark of the church with as many faithful people as possible, as it is the only way to salvation.

Rituals

Sacraments

Just as the Roman Catholic church, the Palmarians hold that Christ instituted seven sacraments. Nevertheless, they also teach that in this end-time the election to the papacy is an eighth, invisible sacrament, directly conferred by Christ (TM, chapter 34, volume 78-80). The Palmarians have an exclusive soteriology; it is only possible to reach salvation within the visible Palmarian Church in union with the pope, where all divine graces are distributed since the end of the Roman era of the church. At present, the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Palmarian church is the mystical body of Christ and the Virgin. Therefore, the sacraments of other churches, including the Roman Catholic have no value whatsoever, as the Holy Spirit does not work through them. Thus, they are empty rituals and, in fact, sacrileges that bring damnation on those who administer and receive them. Already from its foundation, the Palmarian Church has held this view, but it is stated particularly clearly in a series of papal decrees from 1982, which has been re-published on a number of occasions (DP 9, 25; TM, chapter 34, volumes 169-206; PKO 22-28; Gregory XVII, Apostolic decrees, 30, 31 July 1982).

The documents from 1982 had a context. They were issued shortly after Pope Gregory's visit to Alba de Tormes outside Salamanca, where the relics of St. Teresa of Avila rest in the Carmelite church. During the visit, there were rumors that the Palmarians planned to steal the remains of the saint and bring them to their cathedral. Moreover, when walking through the convent church, Palmarian bishops shouted that John Paul II was an anti-pope, that Gregory XVII was the true pontiff and that women wearing pants, who were present were whores. The events led to a popular uprising, where at least several thousand people attacked the bishops; several were beaten, and at least one of

their cars was thrown in the river. They had to hide in the Carmelite convent and later the National Guard had to intervene and protect the prelates, who were brought away from the site (*El País* May 18, 1982).

Two months after the events in Alba de Tormes, Pope Gregory thus made a number of declarations about sacraments, relics and images. He stated that the sacraments administered in Roman Catholic churches were valueless and that the relics and miraculous images kept at such places had no power for Roman Catholics; they were veiled for them. The Palmarians, however, could receive graces and indulgences from relics and images at a distance, but they were under no conditions allowed to visit any Roman Catholic church buildings (Gregory XVII, Apostolic decrees July 30, 31 1982. For an analysis of the Palmarian self-understanding, see Steinhauer 2014:108-09).

There are great differences between Roman Catholic and Palmarian sacramental theology. One original aspect of that Palmarian theology, as explained in the *Catechism*, is that the Virgin “enthrones” a drop of her blood into the faithful at baptism or conversion. This drop can be strengthened, diminished or disappear altogether according to the moral status of the individual, and its presence contribute to her sanctification. The sacraments also “enthroned” and strengthen a piece of Christ’s heart in the faithful (PKO 22, 27, 37).

Baptism is the door to the church and the other sacraments. Children should preferably be baptized within eight days of their birth and not later than fifteen days. Through baptism, the child (or adult) receives Mary’s blood drop, which takes away original sin. The Palmarian baptism has an undeletable character, but the strength of the drop can be weakened. The sacrament of confirmation should ideally be administered very shortly after baptism. It strengthens the blood drop and makes the individual stronger in his or her fight against Satan. Only a bishop can confirm (PKO 38-39). If a person commits a cardinal sin, the blood drop of Mary disappears. Confession of mortal sins to a Palmarian priest is the way to re-enter into the state of grace, so that the drop is strengthened (PKO 40)

The Eucharist is arguably the most important sacrament for the Palmarians, and Mass should be read as many times as possible. In his first papal decrees in 1978, Pope Gregory XVII declared that the only rite that should be used was the Tridentine Mass of Pius V, promulgated in 1570 (DP 1). Shortly thereafter, however, he introduced several new elements, and, in 1980, he referred to the rite as Latin-Tridentine-Palmarian. On October 9, 1983, the pope instituted a new, much briefer Mass order, which is concentrated to offertory, consecration and sacrificial communion taken by the priest. Making it very brief, every cleric could and should read several masses a day; in fact, they read turns of masses, not individual masses. Likewise, concelebration was banned, as it would lessen the number of masses that could be read per day (DP 4-5, 8; TM,

chapter 34, volumes 105-168. For the changes in the rite, see Steinhauer 2014:110-11, referring to several of Gregory XVII's sermons in the early 1980s).

According to Palmarian doctrine the body, soul and blood of Christ and Mary are present in the consecrated bread and wine. To communicate a person must be in a state of grace; otherwise, it constitutes a sacrilege. Communion should only be taken on the tongue and the recipient must be kneeling when receiving the sacrament. The communion of the faithful is only received in one species; they only receive the Eucharistic bread. If, due to long distances to the nearest Palmarian priest, it is not possible to attend mass, the faithful should pray a penitential rosary instead. According to the precepts of the church, Palmarians should take communion at least every third month, but almost all masses are celebrated without lay people taking communion. Still, if in a state of grace, a layperson is allowed to communicate several times a day (Gregory XVII, Apostolic decree 27 Feb 1981; TM, ch. 34, 155; PKO 32-36, 41 and 53).

The fifth sacrament of the church, the last unction strengthens the faithful's relationship with Christ and Mary, and increases the Virgin's blood drop. When receiving the sacrament, a person must be in a state of grace, and it should therefore ideally be preceded by confession. It should be received in cases of serious illness or before undergoing surgery (PKO 42).

In the Palmarian church, there are three degrees of clerical ordination: deacon, priest and bishop. All clerics are members of the Carmelites of the Holy Face, and to be ordained, a man should be in state of grace. At ordination, the priest becomes inhabited by the soul of Christ, seen in the form of a radiant cross, and he becomes a representative of the savior on earth (PKO 43). The seventh sacrament is marriage. Its main reason is to give children, new members, to the church. Still, virginity is the preferred state. At the wedding, the spouses must be state of grace, and according to church law, marriage is only permitted when both parts are Palmarians (PKO 44).

Devotions

There are many prayers, hymns and other devotions in the *Palmarian Devotionary*, but four of them have an especially central place in the life of the church. The first of them is the Holy Penitential Rosary, also known as the Holy Palmarian Rosary. It should be read each day and consists of altogether fifty Our Fathers, fifty Hail Mary, fifty Glory and fifty Hail Mary Most Pure (PD 8). Each rosary is divided into five mysteries with ten of each prayer, to the Palmarians every series of the ten prayers is known as "a complete Our Father." The reflection on each mystery is preceded by an act of contrition and followed by a hymn and the entire penitential rosary concludes with the Litany of Loreto and act of consecration to Our Crowned Mother of El Palmar. Every week, beginning on Sunday, the faithful should reflect over altogether thirty-five

mysteries, which follow the life of Christ and the Virgin according to Palmarian teaching, that is, from the creation of the soul of Christ to the coronation of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven (DPA).

The second of the main devotions is the Holy Way of the Cross to the Holy Face of Christ. Just as in the Roman Catholic church, the Palmarian Viacrucis includes fifteen stations, starting with Christ being sentenced to death and ending with his burial. It starts with an act of contrition and preparatory prayers. In the Palmarian version, the initial prayers at each station are followed by one complete Our Father and an invocation of the Holy Face and Our Crowned Mother of Palmar. The Viacrucis ends with a complete Our Father and Act of Consecration to the Holy Face of Our Lord Jesus Christ followed by a hymn (DPA).

The third of the most important devotions is the Holy Trisagion to the Most Holy Trinity. It begins with an Act of Contrition and hymn. Thereafter, it includes prayers to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, followed by Praises to the Most Holy Trinity, a prayer and praises to the Divine Mary, Temple and Tabernacle of the Most Holy Trinity. The Trisagion is concluded by a Litany to St. Joseph and a Consecration to the Most Holy Crowned Joseph of El Palmar (DPA).

The fourth and last of the most central devotions is the Holy Josephine Rosary, divided into five mysteries. For each mystery the faithful read one Our Father, ten Josephine Aves, one Glory be to the Father, one Hail Mary Most pure and invocations to the Holy Face and Our Lady of Palmar.

Important feast days for the Palmarians of course include Christmas and Easter. Shortly after becoming the third pope, Gregory XVIII decreed that from 2012 onwards, the Holy week should always take place between March 20 and 27. The death of Christ should thus always be remembered on March 25, even if not a Friday, as he according to Palmarian doctrine died on March 25 in the year 34. Holy week is a very solemn occasion at the Cathedral-Basilica in Palmar de Troya. Altogether, fourteen big, richly decorated floats featuring different holy images are that are carried around outside the church.

Other important Palmarian feast days are: The Circumcision of Christ (January 1), the Crowned St. Joseph of Palmar (March 19), the Our Crowned Mother of Palmar (July 16), Holy Anne, Mother of Our Lady (July 26), the Assumption of Our Lady (August 15), the Birth of Our Lady (September 8), the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady (December 8) (Gregory XVII, Apostolic Decree, July 25, 1989).

Canonizations

Through the years, the Palmarian church has canonized a very large number of people. Just in the period between 1978 and 1980, some 1,400 named individuals were declared saints by Gregory XVII. In fact, the lion's share of the papal documents during these years is made up by brief hagiographies and decrees of canonization. These early canonizations have been followed by many others. The saints are of many kinds. They came from many different parts of the world and died between the eleventh century and the mid-1970s. Still, the large majority were Spanish. One important category of Palmarian saints is bishops, priests and nuns killed during the Spanish Civil War. Apart from the saints explicitly named, Gregory XVII canonized an "innumerable" group of people, who fought on the nationalist side in the war. Still, he explained that though the war was a crusade, not everybody killed in the war was a saintly crusader, as they had not joined the army for the right reasons (DP).

English martyrs, killed during the sixteenth and seventeenth-century persecutions of Catholics constitutes another numerous group as do missionaries who died as martyrs in China and Indochina. Gregory XVII also canonized an "innumerable" group of Irish martyrs, killed because of their Catholic faith. Founders of religious orders and congregations, kings and queens, mystics, many earlier popes and virtuous male and female religious also appear among the canonized. The first person canonized in August 1978 was the Italian Capuchin Padre Pio, who died in 1968 (DP).

Among the saints canonized in 1978 was the recently deceased Spanish leader Francisco Franco, but other twentieth-century right-winged politicians such as the Fascist leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera and Francoist minister Luis Carrero Blanco were elevated to the altars, too. General Franco is looked upon as a very prominent saint as he is considered the savior of Spain through his victory in the Civil War. In 1980, Gregory XVII even made him a co-patron saint of Spain, together with St. James and Teresa of Avila (DP).

In 1987, Gregory XVII issued a document where he stated that he had by then made 2,164 canonizations. As the years have passed, recently dead Palmarians have been canonized and just after their deaths, the first two Palmarian popes were made saints: Pope Gregory the Very Great and Pope Peter the Great (SHP).

LEADERSHIP/ORGANIZATION

At its foundation in 1978, the Palmarian church, officially known as Santa Iglesia Católica Apostólica y Palmariana and Orden Religiosa de los Carmelitas de la Santa Faz en Compañía de Jesús y María, already had a developed, top-heavy organizational structure, headed by Pope Gregory XVII. He had absolute power in the church. He is the high priest, the Vicar of Christ and the Successor of St. Peter. He is infallible when proclaiming doctrine and has the supreme spiritual and temporal authority in the universe, including both the earth and other inhabited planets. Papal election is

understood as an invisible eighth sacrament conferred by Christ himself. Still, it is evident that the first Palmarian pope and Manuel Alonso (Father Isidoro María) were close collaborators. Clemente/Gregory was the “voice-box” and charismatic leader, while Manuel/Isidoro María was the eminence grise through whom all messages passed. He never claimed charismatic authority.

From 1976 onwards, the Palmarians consecrated a large number of bishops. Palmarian priests existed, but they were clearly outnumbered by bishops. The normal situation was that a clerical member of the Carmelites of the Holy Face soon was elevated to the episcopacy. At the foundation of the church in 1978, most of the bishops were made cardinals, who were members of a curia, led by Secretary of State, Father Isidoro María. Number three in the hierarchy was the Vice-secretary of State Father Elias María, who would remain so until his death in 1997. A fourth influential cardinal was Father Leandro, Camilo Estévez Puga (1924-1999), who had been a Roman Catholic priest in Galicia before he became one of the five bishops consecrated by Archbishop Thuc. Father Leandro took part in most Palmarian episcopal consecrations. In 1987, Pope Gregory announced that since 1978 he had elevated ninety-eight bishops to the cardinalate. Of the bishop-cardinals, some were vicars general in charge of liturgy, cult, vocations, missions, propagation of faith and the Inquisition, and some were elected archbishops, patriarchs or archpatriarchs (see documentation from the Spanish Ministry of Justice 1981-1982, in Catalá Rubio 2004:307-11).

Gregory XVII suppressed the cardinalate in 1995 and in the year 2000, he appointed Father Isidoro María as his successor. After Gregory’s death in 2005, he became pope, taking the name Peter II. Even as pope, Peter II did not claim to receive any heavenly messages, and most of his apostolic letters dealt with the threat from the outside world and that being a Palmarian meant that one should not have any contact with non-Palmarians as possible. During Peter II’s pontificate, Father Sergio María was the Secretary of State and was chosen as his successor. At Peter’s death in 2011, he succeeded him as pope.

In the early years, there were about a hundred nuns in the Carmelite Order of the Holy Face, who lived a life in strict enclosure. They were led by a mother superior, seen as the co-General of the Order. The available sources say little about their role. Some of them had joined the order after leaving Roman Catholic convents, but most had no previous experience of religious life. Just as in the case of the bishops, quite a number of the nuns left the order soon, while others remained for a long time.

ISSUES/CHALLENGES

As can be seen above, the history of the Palmarian movement, and the subsequent church is conflict-filled and there have been many issues. The church has been

described as a manipulative sect, based on the unquestionable authority of the leaders and an increasing separation from the world outside the church.

Control and Abuses

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Spanish newspapers published a series of testimonies by former bishops of the Palmarian church. Being able to provide an inside perspective, ex-members told about a very strict life based on blind obedience to superiors. Of course, the pope and his closest men were on the top, followed by other cardinals. The highest leaders led quite a luxurious life, eating and living well. The ordinary bishops, priests and in particular, the non-ordained brothers lived in frugal circumstances. The days followed a strict and repetitive plan, and the members of the order were constantly controlled, deprived of sleep and were given too little to eat. Psychological and physical abuse was common.

Though clerics did not wake until 8.30 AM, their activities often continued until very late at night. After attending mass and having a light breakfast, the friars went in line from their convent to the headquarters at Calle Abad Gordillo 5, where there was a roll call, where public criticism against individual friar also had a part. Thereafter, classes of liturgy and Spanish began; most of the members were foreigners. Numerous masses were celebrated on the many altars. At 2:00 PM, the friars had a simple lunch, generally eaten in silence, if the pope did not give a special permission for them to talk. Having finished their meal, the friars went back to their convent for a new roll call to check that nobody had escaped.

In the late afternoon, all nuns and clerics, but generally not the pope, left for Palmar de Troya. There, there were new masses and pious practices, such as praying the penitential rosary and meditating over the Stations of the Cross. They generally returned to Seville at about one or two in the night, but often continued their prayers in the city until 4:00 AM or 4:30 AM. Thereafter, the friars got a few hours of sleep until the next day begun (For testimonies of the daily life in the Palmarian order, see *ABC* December 4, 1977; December 1978; Molina 2006:119-24, 147-58).

Although the Palmarian edifices in Seville looked quite elegant from the outside and were centrally located, the ordinary clerics and nuns lived in run-down rooms. Different kinds of illness, both of a physical and psychological nature were common, and since the members were not allowed to wash often, the smell inside was overpowering. On a frequent basis, the friars had to move from one building to another in the middle of the night, according to the contents of the pope's visions. In 1981, however, these kinds of apparitions disappeared, and their living quarters became more stable (*ABC*, December 20, 1978; January 30, 31, 1979; February 1, 1979; September 13, 1981; Molina 2006: 210-17).

The Legal Status of the Church

Despite its general condemnation of the outside world, the Palmarian church wanted to become an officially recognized religious group. Following the promulgation of the 1980 Spanish law on religious freedom in 1981 and several times later, the Palmarians applied for inscription into the official Spanish register of religious associations. However, they were repeatedly denied inscription by the Ministry of Justice, among other reasons because the term “Catholic” was controlled by the Roman Catholic Church, and words such as “pope” and “cardinals” belonged to that church. In later applications, they therefore introduced a new official name, Iglesia Cristiana Palmariana de los Carmelitas de la Santa Faz.. Thus, in the official context, the church did not use the label “Catholic” but rather “Christian,” but in internal documents, Pope Gregory made it clear that this church was identical with the Holy Apostolic Catholic Palmarian Church. Still, they were not successful with the applications.

In 1985, the Palmarians appealed against the Ministry’s decisions to the Spanish Supreme Court. At first, the Court ruled against them, but on November 2, 1987, it eventually decided that the Palmarian church could indeed be included in the register, as they met all the formal requirements for a religious association. The Court referred to the Spanish law on religious freedom (1980) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This decision meant that the church now had a separate legal personality (For the final decision, see Tribunal Supremo 1987, cf. *El País*, Decemer 7, 1985 and August 28, 2000. For a detailed legal analysis, see Seco Caro 1988; cf. Catalá Rubio 2004:224-25; 307-11; Pelayo Olmedo 2009. For the Palmarian teaching on the church’s name, see TM, chapter 35, volume 47).

This decision was followed by much criticism in the Spanish media and from some researchers who looked upon the Palmarians as a dangerous sect and a suspect business organization, most of all interested in the collecting riches. After the decision, money was transferred from the private accounts of the Palmarian leaders to the church’s newly opened accounts (*ABC* January 3, 13, 1988; Molina 2006:240-45). A similar image of the church was contained in the comedy movie *Manuel y Clemente* (1985), which presented the whole church as a great hoax, authored by the two brothers-in-arms, who did not believe in the apparitions themselves but were only after all money they could get. It was Manuel, who was the brains behind it all, and Clemente was a gifted, though simple-minded actor. Another comedy movie, *La de Troya en El Palmar*, was made in 1984. In both these movies, the leading Palmarians were presented as greedy picaresque characters and Palmar de Troya as an intricate fraud.

La Cruz Blanca

Though Clemente Domínguez and the group around him physically took over the apparition site and dominated the rapid development from a movement into a church of

its own, most other seers clearly distanced themselves from them, not wanting another pope and a new church. Today, one can see a white cross with a picture of Pope Francis just outside the high walls of the Palmarian church compound. It is the Cruz Blanca, which is the gathering site for the seers who do not belong to the Palmarian church and their supporters.

According to the group's own data, about a dozen people meet there every weekday to pray the rosary. On weekends, there can be forty persons present. At Easter, however, as many as a couple hundred gather at the site, including pilgrims from abroad. According to the group's website, the number of apparitions at the Cruz Blanca and in their chapel, Santuario del Corazón de María, through the decades are estimated to be about 10,000 to date. Of these, around a thousand have been transcribed, and a selection of messages from 1980 to 2013 is available on the website (www.cruzblancapalmar.es).

At the beginning, several of the old seers claimed to receive heavenly communications by the Cruz Blanca, including Pepe Cayetano and Manuel Fernández, but in later years only Rosario Arenillas claims to receive messages. Until his death in 2005, the group was led by Félix Arana, a former Roman Catholic priest. He was consecrated a Palmarian bishop in 1976, but he only stayed for a few months and then opposed the movement as it had developed by writing books and articles (*ABC*, November 23, 1976; cf. Arana 1977). Arana served as the Cruz Blanca's spiritual leader. He recorded the messages of the seers, and he transcribed, published and interpreted them. He also celebrated the Tridentine mass in the chapel on a daily basis.

Christ and the Virgin are those who most frequently have appeared to the seers by the Cruz Blanca, followed by St. Joseph and Padre Pio. After his death, Father Arana also appeared on a few occasions. The messages often have a clear apocalyptic component. They are very critical of the modern Catholic Church, claiming that it has been almost destroyed after Vatican II and that most priests and bishops are heretics. However, the pope is not to be blamed, as his messages are falsified by the curia. The Cruz Blanca thus claims that Pope John Paul II and his successors are true popes, but that they suffer immensely because of their fidelity. They assert that the Holy See will be overtaken by Antichrist and that great wars and catastrophes will precede the Second Coming of Christ. In this situation, the faithful's role is to pray for the pontiff and the church so that the end of the world is averted (www.cruzblancapalmar.es).

The Cruz Blanca group's only relation to the Palmarian church, referred to by them as "the sect of Clemente," is that they pray for their return to the Roman Catholic church. Still, as can be seen, the contents of the messages at the Cruz Blanca are similar to the ones that Clemente received during the first half of the 1970s.

Palmarian Splinter Groups

An important step in the history of the Palmarian church was taken on November 7, 2000 when Gregory XVII expelled no fewer than eighteen bishops and seven nuns, accusing them of heresy and of planning to overthrow the pope. He claimed that Bishop Isaac María, who had been his confessor for many years, was leader of the rebellion together with Mother María Goretti (Gregory XVII, Apostolic Letter November 7, 2000).

Some of the excommunicated started an independent Palmarian community in Archidona, Andalusia, and others would follow them later. Although, they still regarded early apparitions to Clementes as veracious and believed that Gregory XVII indeed had been the true pope, with the publication of the Palmarian Bible (or even from the mid-1990s), they had come to regard him as an insane heretic who thus had lost his papal authority (See their confessional statements on laiglesiapalmariana.blogspot.com). The dissenter group was very critical of the fact that Pope Gregory had suppressed the cardinalate in 1995, and that he had chosen Father Isidoro María in 2000 as his successor, taking away the possibility of a conclave (See laiglesiapalmariana.blogspot.com; Gregory XVII, Apostolic letters March 30, 1995 and October 24, 2000).

Still, it is very important to note that many of those who left the Palmarian Church in the 1990s and 2000s did not do so for explicit theological reasons. Many were teenagers or young adults who had grown up in the church, but who found the increasingly strict rules and the superiors' total control and many abuses unbearable. There are numerous testimonies recounting similar stories about young people escaping the order, having to leave their family members behind, and slowly accommodating themselves to a life outside (Personal communications with ex-members).

Riches

Throughout its history, many people have wondered how the Palmarian Church has become so wealthy. It is thus worth considering the economic development of the church in the last decades. It has always been difficult to know exactly how the Palmarians have been able to assemble such substantial funds, despite being a rather small organization. During the 1970s, 1980s and, to some extent, into the 1990s, the Palmarian Church was very wealthy due to substantial more or less voluntary donations from members and benefactors. People paid part of their salary to the church, and it became the beneficiary in last wills and testaments.

With the money, the leaders acquired around ten buildings in the city-center of Seville, which served as headquarters and convents for nuns and priests. They also bought a large number of houses in Palmar de Troya. Not least, they were able to build the enormous church at the apparition site, the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Crowned Virgin

of El Palmar, which is one of the largest temples constructed in twentieth-century Spain. It has nine towers, though twelve were originally planned. Inside, it has a main altar and fourteen lateral altars overflowing with elaborate golden ornaments and religious paraphernalia, as well as many golden and silvery statues of Christ, the Virgin and different saints. It is no exaggeration to estimate that the construction, begun in the late 1970s, has cost at least 100,000,000 Euros.

Due to decreasing incomes in the 1990s, the Palmarians sold their remaining buildings in Seville in 2003 for at least 3,500,000 Euros; other real estate had been vended before, together with some of the jewelry used for images in the cathedral. At that time, the clergy left for Palmar de Troya, where the order had bought some twenty houses in the 1970s, and new buildings were constructed on the cathedral compound. The nuns had left a couple of years before. Palmar de Troya thus became the residential center of the church, not only the spiritual center. By moving, the members did not have to make the almost ninety kilometer-long tour from Seville to Palmar and back every day. They also saved money in that way. As we have seen, however, the finances have improved considerably under the third Palmarian pontificate (For Palmarian economy, see *Diario de Sevilhai*, October 5, 2003; *El Mundo*, March 27, 2005; Molina 2006).

The Palmarian Church's main challenge today is to increase the number of members. The number of friars and nuns is much lower than it used to be and the number of lay members has dwindled during the 1990s and 2000s. However, under the pontificate of Gregory XVIII, the church seems to have reassumed a more active missionary activity, opening branches in several countries.

**An earlier version of parts of this profile was published as "Fighting the Modern with the Virgin Mary: The Palmarian Church," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 17 (2013):40-60. This profile includes thoroughly revised portions of that article as well as new material.

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As has been indicated, few Palmarian documents are available in research libraries (see www.worldcat.org). One exception is the library of the Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni (CESNUR) in Turin, Italy (www.cesnur.org), which has an impressive collection of Palmarian imprints: altogether 72 titles. Most of them are sermons from the 1990s and early 2000s, but they also hold copies of major works such as the Catechisms, the Palmarian Bible and the Treatise on the Mass. The great majority of the texts are in Spanish, but some are Italian versions.

The Palmarian church has no official website, but some ex-bishops, who do not recognize the pope at Palmar de Troya as true pontiff, have one: laiglesiapalmariana.blogspot.com. There, it is possible to download several important documents.

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CP = *Credo palmariano*. Printed in *Documentos pontificios de su santidad el papa Gregorio XVII*, vol. 1. Seville: Patriarcado del Palmar de Troya Orden de los Carmelitas de la Santa Faz, 1980.

DH = “Datos históricos sobre hechos que precidieron a las primeras visionens y misiones apostólicos y misiones apostólicas del vidente de El Palmar de Troya, Clemente Domínguez Gómez”, [1974]. Printed in Gerardo R. Alfaro, *El Palmar de Troya: Mensajes sobrenaturales*. Buenos Aires: Difusora Mariana Argentina, 1975.

DP = *Documentos pontificios de su santidad el papa Gregorio XVII*, vol. 1. Seville: Patriarcado del Palmar de Troya Orden de los Carmelitas de la Santa Faz, 1980.

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PD = *Pontifical Documents of His Holiness Pope Gregory XVII*. Seville: Patriarcado del Palmar de Troya Orden de los Carmelitas de la Santa Faz, no year.

PKO = *Palmarianischer Katechismus: Oberstufe, geleitet und approbiert vom heiligen Papst Gregor XVII, dem Grössten; auf den neuen Stand gebracht von Seiner Heiligkeit, Papst Petrus II; gegeben am Apostolischen Stuhl von El Palamar de Troya am 15. August, Fest der Himmelfahrt der Heiligen Jungfrau Maria, im Jahre MMV unseres Herrn Jesus Christus und im ersten Pontifikatsjahr des glücklichen*

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La de Troya en el Palmar, directed by José María Zabalza, 1984, 77 min
A comedy about a bullfighter who goes to Palmar de Troya in search of a cure for his brother.

Manuel y Clemente, directed by Javier Palmero, 1985, 91 min.
A comedy about the apparitions and the role of Manuel and Clemente with Juan Jesús Valverde and Ángel de Andrés López in the title roles. Accessed from <http://pccinebox.blogspot.com.es/2013/05/manuel-y-clemente.html> on 12 August 2015.