

A Chapter

August 4, 2012

As many of you know, a certain bishop was excluded from the General Chapter, or meeting of heads of the Society of St Pius X, held last month in Écône, Switzerland. To confirm the exclusion, use was apparently made of the adaptation by “Eleison Comments” (#257, June 16) of St Paul’s seemingly murderous wish that the corruptors of the Catholic Faith be “cut off” (Galatians V, 12). Actually Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Chrysostom all think that the wish, in context (Gal.V, 1–12), is aimed at the Judaisers’ manhood rather than at their very lives, and Chrysostom thinks it is a jest.

However, when I heard what serious use was being made of the jest at the Chapter, I must admit that I had a naughty vision: I imagined my noble colleagues in SSPX headquarters looking out of the windows at night to see if there might not be a lanky episcopal Englishman, heavily disguised as Jack the Ripper, prowling around in the bushes with a long carving-knife gleaming in the moonlight, seeking someone to carve to pieces. Dear colleagues, sleep easy – I have no murderous ambitions. Honestly!

But the Chapter was serious business. What did it produce? Above all, a Declaration, made public a few days later, and six conditions for any future Rome-SSPX agreement, leaked on the Internet soon after that (given how many souls are presently entrusting their faith and their salvation to the guidance of the SSPX, I find such a leak not unreasonable). Now all honour to the good men at the Chapter who by all accounts did their best to limit the damage, but if the Declaration and conditions give us the present mind of the Society’s leaders as a whole, then there has to be cause for concern.

As for the Declaration of 2012, it is enough to compare it for

a few moments with Archbishop Lefebvre's Declaration of 1974, to wonder what has happened to his Society. Whereas the Archbishop explicitly and repeatedly denounces the reformation wrought by Vatican II ("born of Liberalism and Modernism, poisoned through and through, deriving from heresy and ending in heresy"), in words that brought down upon him the wrath of the Conciliar Popes, on the contrary the Declaration of 2012 refers only once to the Council with its "novelties" merely "stained with errors," in terms that one can easily imagine Benedict XVI underwriting from beginning to end. Does the SSPX now think that the Conciliar Popes represent no serious problem?

As for the six conditions for any future Rome-SSPX agreement, they deserve a detailed examination, but suffice it to say here and now that the demand made by the SSPX's 2006 General Chapter for a doctrinal agreement prior to any practical agreement seems to have gone completely by the board. Is it now the mind of the SSPX that the doctrine of the Romans to whom they would submit is no longer so important? Or is the SSPX itself succumbing to the charms of Liberalism?

For a contrarian point of view, may I venture to recommend a collection of "Sermons and Doctrinal Conferences" of His Excellency Jack the Ripper from between 1994 and 2009, now available on seven CD's from <http://truerestorationpress.com/node/52>, with special incentives to purchase expiring at the end of this month? Not every word in these 30 hours of recordings may be golden, some words are no doubt too temperamental, but at least the effort is made to disembowel the enemies and not the friends of our Catholic Faith.

Kyrie eleison.