

Again, Sedevacantism – I

October 1, 2016

It may irk a number of readers of these “Comments” if they return once more to the theme of the Conciliar Popes not being Popes at all, but the recent translation into French of an article from 1991 in English shows how the arguments for sedevacantism need repeatedly to be demonstrated as being not so conclusive as they may appear. Liberals need no such demonstration, because for them sedevacantism is no temptation. However there are select Catholic souls drawn by the grace of God out of liberalism towards Catholic Tradition for whom sedevacantism becomes positively dangerous. The Devil does not care whether we lose our balance to the right or to the left, so long as we lose our balance.

For indeed the error of sedevacantism may in theory be an error neither as deep nor as grave as the universal mind-rot of liberalism, but in practice how often one observes that minds snap shut with sedevacantism, and that what started out as an acceptable opinion (what Catholic can say that the words and deeds of Pope Francis are Catholic?), tends to become an unacceptable dogmatic certainty (what Catholic can judge with certainty of such a question?), and from there to impose itself as the dogma of dogmas, as though a person’s Catholicity is to be judged by whether or not he believes in our having had no real Pope since, say, Pius XII.

One reason offered by previous “Comments” for this often observed internal dynamic of sedevacantism may be the Gordian-knot simplicity with which it slices through an agonizing and faith-threatening problem: “How can these destroyers of the Church be true Catholic Popes?” Answer, they are not Popes at all. “Oh, what a relief! I need no longer agonize.” The mind snaps shut, sedevacantism is to be shared as though it were the Gospel with whoever will listen (or not listen), and at worst it can be extended from the Popes to all cardinals,

bishops and priests, so that a once believing Catholic turns into a “home-aloner” who gives up attending Mass altogether. Will he succeed in keeping the Faith? And his children? Here is the danger.

Therefore to keep our Catholic Faith in balance and to avoid the traps laid today to its right as to its left, let us look at the arguments of BpS in the 15-page article mentioned above. (“BpS” is an abbreviation which many readers will identify at once, but it need not be spelled out here because we are more concerned with his arguments than with his person.) In his article at least he does think, and he does have a Catholic’s faith in the Papacy, otherwise the Conciliar Popes would be no problem for him. This logic and faith are what is best in sedevacantists, but neither BpS nor they are working from the whole picture: God cannot let go of his Church, but he can let go of his churchmen.

For here is his argument in a nutshell – Major: the Church is indefectible. Minor: at Vatican II the Church went liberal, which was a major defection. Conclusion: the Conciliar Church is not the real Church, which means that the Conciliar Popes who led or followed Vatican II cannot have been real Popes.

The argument looks good. However, from the very same Major and Minor can come a liberal Conclusion: the Church is indefectible, the Church went liberal, so I too, as a Catholic, must go liberal. That sedevacantism thus shares its roots with liberalism should make any sedevacantist think twice. BpS notices the common roots, and calls them “ironic,” but they are much more than that. They point to liberals and sedevacantists making the same error, which must be in the Major. Indeed both alike misunderstand the Church’s indefectibility, as they mistake the Popes’ infallibility. See these “Comments” next week for a more detailed analysis of BpS’s argument.

Kyrie eleison.