

Agreement Here

July 12, 2014

On December 13 of last year, in St Martha's House in Rome where the Pope is currently living, the Pope met briefly with Bishop Fellay, Superior General of the Society of St Pius X. The Society officially denies that the meeting had any significance, but an Italian commentator having some familiarity with how Rome operates, one Giacomo Devoto (G.D.), argues that the meeting was proof that a Rome-SSPX agreement has been reached. See http://www.unavox.it/ArtDiversi/DIV812_Devoto_Notizia_intrigante.html. In brief:—

On the morning of the 13th Bishop Fellay and his two Assistants at the head of the SSPX met in the Vatican with the heads of the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission at the invitation of Monsignor Guido Pozzo, restored to the Commission by Pope Francis to deal with the problematic relations between Rome and the SSPX. An official publication of the SSPX, *DICI*, claims that this meeting was merely “informal,” but G.D. says that even being informal it cannot have taken place without there having been beforehand a series of discreet contacts to repair the public breach of relations in June of 2012. Also, says G.D., such a meeting is the necessary preliminary to any “formal” meeting.

In any case after that meeting Msgr. Pozzo, Msgr. di Noia and the three heads of the SSPX repaired to St Martha's House where the Pope also happened to be lunching. When the Pope stood up after the meal to leave, Bishop Fellay went over to him, they exchanged a few words in public view and the Bishop kissed the Pope's ring (or knelt down for his blessing, according to Rome's *Vatican Insider*). *DICI* again minimised the encounter as nothing more than a chance meeting with a spontaneous exchange of courtesies. On the contrary G.D. reasonably maintains that even such a “chance” encounter cannot have taken place without the Pope's previous knowledge

and approval.

Moreover, says G.D., in the art of diplomacy such a meeting is a finely calculated ice-breaker, of elastic interpretation, designed to mean as much or as little as one wants. On the one hand the courteous contact was there for all to see in a public place frequented by important Newchurch officials, and it could be seen as papal support of whatever had gone on at the morning's meeting with the Commission. On the other hand both Rome and the SSPX could plausibly deny that the encounter had any real significance beyond an exchange of courtesies.

Thus when rumours began to circulate in the new year, for months the SSPX denied that there was any question of a Rome-SSPX agreement. Only on May 10 did *DICI* admit that there had been any contact at all between the Pope and Bishop Fellay, and then *DICI* so minimised the event that G.D. takes it as a sure sign that an agreement has been reached in private. (In modern politics, as the cynical saying goes, nothing can be taken as true until it is officially denied.)

In fact the main problem, for Pope Francis as for Bishop Fellay, is not how to come to an agreement which they both want, but how to get their left and right wings respectively to accept an agreement. However, the problem is being solved for them day by day as the Society, once glorious for its defence of the Faith, becomes the inglorious Newsociety. For indeed how many Newchurch bishops can still be fearing the Newsociety as a threat to their Newchurch? And how many SSPX priests are still convinced that any agreement with Rome would be a disaster, especially if they are promised that "they will need to change nothing"? Such an agreement will hardly need to be announced. In many minds and hearts it is already here.

Kyrie eleison.