

Archbishop Commented – II

January 10, 2015

Before leaving Archbishop Lefebvre's realistic remarks of 1991 (cf. the last two EC's), let us comment further, in the hope of helping Catholics to keep their balance between scorning authority in the name of truth and belittling truth for the sake of authority. For ever since the churchmen of Vatican II (1962–1965) put their full authority behind the Church Revolution (religious liberty, collegial equality and ecumenical fraternity), Catholics have been thrown off balance: when Authority tramples upon Truth, how indeed is one to maintain one's respect for both?

Now in the tormented aftermath of Vatican II, who can be said to have borne fruits comparable to that preservation of Catholic doctrine, Mass and sacraments for which the Archbishop was mainly (albeit not solely) responsible? In which case, the balance that he himself struck between Truth and Authority must be especially deserving of consideration.

Firstly, let us consider a simple observation of the Archbishop on authority: **“Now we have the tyranny of authority because there are no more rules from the past.”** Amongst human beings all with original sin, truth needs authority to back it, because it is a Jeffersonian illusion that truth thrown into the market-place will prevail all on its own without a disaster being necessary to teach reality. Authority is to truth as means to end, not end to means. It is Catholic faith which saves, and that Faith lies in a series of truths, not in authority. Those truths are so much the substance and purpose of Catholic Authority that when it is cut loose from them, as by Vatican II, then it is cut adrift until the first tyrant to lay hands on it bends it to his will. The tyranny of Paul VI followed naturally on the Council, just as by pursuing approval from the champions of the same Council, the leadership of the Society of St Pius X has likewise behaved

itself tyrannically in recent years. Contrast how the Archbishop built up his authority over Tradition by serving the truth.

A second remark of his from 1991 deserving of further comment is where he said that when in 1988 he tried to reach an agreement with Rome by means of his Protocol of May 5, **“I think I can say that I went even further than I should have.”** Indeed that Protocol lays itself open to criticism on important points, so here is the Archbishop himself admitting that he momentarily lost his balance, tilting briefly in favour of Rome’s authority and against Tradition’s truth. But he tilted only briefly, because as is well-known, on the very next morning he repudiated the Protocol, and he never again wavered until his death, so that from then on nobody could say either that he had not done all he could to reach agreement with Authority, or that it is an easy thing to get the balance always right between Truth and Authority.

A third remark throws light on his motivation in seeking from 1975 to 1988 some agreement with Roman Authority. Judging his motives by their own, his successors at the head of the SSPX talk as though he was always seeking its canonical regularisation. But he explained the Protocol as follows: **“I hoped until the last minute that in Rome we would witness a little bit of loyalty.”** In other words he was always pursuing the good of the Faith, and he never honoured Authority for anything other than for the sake of the Truth. Can as much be said for his successors?

Kyrie eleison.