

Archbishop's Authority – II

February 22, 2020

DCLV – in theory, the Pope's authority is indispensable to the Church. DCLVI – in theory, priests need absolutely the Pope to unite them. DCLVII – in practice, Archbishop Lefebvre's authority was seriously handicapped by his not having the living Pope behind him. DCLVIII – in practice, the Archbishop exercised the authority he still had in at least three different ways, depending on the subjects over whom he exercised it: those who asked him to exercise authority over them on his terms, or those who asked only for a partial authority on their own terms, or those who asked for none at all.

Notice first of all how the classification is not by the authority, but by those under it. In other words, the subjects are, to a certain extent, "calling the shots." This abnormal situation in the Church is the direct result of Vatican II, where Catholic Authority radically undermined itself by its wholesale betrayal of Catholic Truth, when it attempted to replace God's objective religion with a man-made substitute, and to change the God-centred Catholic Church into the man-centred Newchurch. By this Council all Catholic priests were essentially discredited, as they remain to this day, and so will remain, until the churchmen return to telling God's Truth. Then they will recover their full Authority.

Those who asked the Archbishop to exercise his authority on his terms were of course the members of the Catholic Congregations which he himself founded, notably of secular priests but also of religious Brothers and Sisters and Tertiaries. These Congregations he made as normal as possible, with grades of obedience to himself as the Superior General, with vows at ordinations for the priests and solemn promises on formal entry of priests, Brothers or Sisters into their corresponding Congregations. The vows were to God, and in case

of need have often been dissolved (discreetly) by Roman authority, as is normal. The promises have depended rather more on the choice of those who made them, and here the authority of the Archbishop was seriously undermined, as told in last week's "Comments," by his being condemned officially by the Pope and his fellow-bishops. If a priest decided to leave the Society for liberalism on the left or for sedevacantism on the right, the Archbishop could, as he said, do nothing more than cut off all future contact, in order that such priests could not pretend that they were still on good terms with the Society. They had chosen to do without him.

Those who, secondly, asked the Archbishop to exercise his authority on their own terms, for instance to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, he would readily satisfy, as far as he could within the norms of the Church, because of the Church crisis which makes questionable the validity of Confirmations conferred with the Newrite of Confirmation. On the one hand, he said, Catholics have a right to certainly valid sacraments, and if on the other hand they wanted nothing further to do with him personally, that was their choice and their responsibility before God.

And thirdly, for those who asked him in no way to exercise authority over him, like a large number of Traditional priests who were sympathetic to his Society but who never wanted to join it, he was always generous with whatever contact, friendship, encouragement or advice they may have asked of him, but never did he remotely pretend or behave as though he had any authority over them. And the same with the laity. Many Catholics never agreed with the stand he took, apparently opposed to the Pope, but he was unfailingly courteous and ready to answer questions, if only the questioner was remotely deserving of an answer. And it was the objectivity and reasonableness of his answers which turned many Newchurchers into Traditionalists who would put themselves under his ministry or the guidance of his priests.

In brief, the Council crippled Church Authority, but where there was a will there was a way, or at least a substitute way, for souls to seek eternal salvation, which is extremely difficult without priests. Through the Archbishop especially but not only, God guaranteed this substitute way for souls, which is still there.

Kyrie eleison.