

Cassocks Weighed

March 12, 2011

To affirm, as did last week's "Eleison Comments" (190, March 5), that whoever possesses the fullness of Catholic Truth is in the driving-seat of the Catholic Church, may seem a statement at best risky, at worst untrue. After all, 1/ who is in the driving-seat of the Church if not the drivers – the Church authorities – put there by Our Lord? 2/ Since when did Our Lord design his Church to be led by any claimant to the Truth? 3/ Is not the direction of the Church being entrusted to any claimant of Truth a recipe for chaos in the Church?

The best answer is in Scripture. When St Paul preached the true Gospel of Jesus Christ to the peoples of Galatia (think of today's Turkey), they accepted the Gospel with rejoicing and great fruit (Gal. II, 14–15; III, 5). But soon after he left them to preach elsewhere, enemies of God came amongst them to preach salvation not by faith in Jesus Christ but by the works of the Old Law, notably circumcision (V, 2, 11). By falling for this perversion of the true Gospel (I, 6; III, 1), the Galatians provoked from St Paul the glorious *Epistle to the Galatians*. Here are some key verses from Chapter I:–

“(verse 6) I wonder that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel. (v.7) Which is not another, only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. (v.8) But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema. (v.9) As we said before, so now I say again: if anyone preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema.” (“Anathema” means, utterly condemned and excommunicated.)

Now it is obvious that any angel appearing to the Galatians would appear with all the authority of a true messenger from

Heaven. And if St. Paul himself were to return amongst them, he would appear with all the authority of his prior evangelizing amongst them as Doctor of the Gentiles. In either case the appearances of authority could hardly be stronger. Yet St. Paul says, and repeats, that the Galatians would have to put, as one might say, content before cassock, so that if he were ever to change the content of his preaching, they were not to believe a word of it, whatever the colour of his cassock upon his return!

In answer therefore to the three objections laid out at the start, let us say: 1/ Our Lord puts, ultimately, Truth-tellers and not cassocks in the driving-seat of the Church. 2/ These drivers will be Truth-tellers and not just Truth-claimants. Claims do not make the Truth, but Truth makes its telling (this is what few modern people can grasp). 3/ The Truth being one, then all Truth-tellers will be united in the Truth, and the only chaos will come from souls that reject or pervert that Truth.

The greatness of Archbishop Lefebvre lay in his discerning that Vatican II was sliding into “another” gospel than that of Jesus Christ or St. Paul, a gospel of justification by the works of modern man, and that even white cassocks were not to be followed if they preached it. Is today’s white cassock any different?

Kyrie eleison.