

Difficult Discussions – III

September 19, 2009

Two objections to the very principle of the Society of St Pius X possibly entering soon into doctrinal discussions with the Church authorities in Rome, help to frame the nature, purpose and limitations of any such discussions. The first objection says that Catholic Doctrine is not up for discussion. The second says that no Catholic may presume to discuss with representatives of the Pope, as though on an equal footing. Both objections apply in normal circumstances, but today's circumstances are not normal.

As to the first objection, of course unchanging and unchangeable Catholic doctrine is not up for discussion. The problem is that Vatican II undertook to change that doctrine. For instance, may, or must, a Catholic State tolerate the public practice of false religions? Catholic Tradition says "may," but only to avoid a greater evil or achieve a greater good. Vatican II says "must," in all circumstances. But if Jesus Christ is recognizably the incarnate God, then no more than "may" is true. On the contrary if "must" is true, then Jesus Christ cannot be necessarily recognizable as God. The "may" and the "must" are as far apart as Jesus Christ being God by divine nature or by human choice, i.e. between Jesus being, or not being, objectively, God!

Yet today's Roman authorities claim that the doctrine of Vatican II represents no rupture with Catholic dogma, but rather its continuous development. Unless then – which God forbid! – the SSPX is also abandoning Catholic dogma, it is not discussing with these authorities whether Jesus is God, it is not putting up Catholic doctrine for discussion, rather it is hoping to persuade any Romans with open ears that the doctrine of Vatican II is gravely opposed to Catholic Doctrine. In this respect, even were the SSPX's success to prove minimal, it would still consider that it had been its

duty to testify to the Truth.

But the Romans may reply, “ We represent the Pope. How dare you presume to discuss with us?” It is the second objection, and for all those who think that Conciliar Rome is in the Truth, the objection appears valid. But it is the Truth that makes Rome and not Rome that makes the Truth. Our Lord himself repeatedly declares in the Gospel of St. John that his doctrine is not his but his Father’s (e.g. Jn.VII, 16). But if Catholic Doctrine is not in Jesus’ power to change, how much less is it in his Vicar’s power to change, i.e. the

Pope’s! If then the Pope, by his God-given free-will, chooses to depart from Catholic Doctrine, to that extent he has laid aside his Papal status, and to that extent he puts himself and/or his representatives beneath whoever remains faithful to the divine Master’s Doctrine.

Therefore the same status in discussion that the Pope lays aside insofar as he departs from the Truth, any Catholic acquires by being faithful to that Truth. As Archbishop Lefebvre once famously said in front of the Roman authorities interrogating him for his dissension from Pope Paul VI, “It is I who should be interrogating you!” To stand for the Truth of God the Father is the pride and the humility, the vocation and the glory of the Archbishop’s little SSPX. If discussions with Rome meant the least danger of the SSPX being untrue to this vocation, that is when there should be no discussions.

Kyrie eleison.