

Disintegration

October 29, 2016

*Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold,
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of a passionate intensity.*

These famous lines from *The Second Coming*, a poem written in 1919 in the wake of the First World War by the Anglo-Irish poet, W.B. Yeats (1865–1939), come to mind as a possible explanation of how the movement of resistance to the 2012 betrayal of Archbishop Lefebvre's Society of St Pius X can be so strong in truth and yet weak in unity and numbers. 1919 is nearly a hundred years ago, and Yeats was neither Catholic nor particularly concerned with the condition of the Catholic Church, which did then seem to be flourishing. But poets can be visionaries, and Yeats caught in these lines an essential truth about Western civilisation as it emerged from that war that was "putting out the lights all over Europe" (Earl Grey): the Western nations were spiritually disintegrating in a process uninterrupted ever since.

Nevertheless many Catholics today who wish the Faith to survive are upset by the apparent weakness of the "Resistance" of Archbishop Lefebvre's own priests in particular to the obvious betrayal of his principles by their present leaders, and they look for an explanation. Some think that the SSPX priests do not take a public stand against the false conciliation of Tradition with Vatican II because they are scared of being thrown out of the Society with nowhere to sleep and nothing to eat. But the priests have to know that there are layfolk who would be glad to support them. A deeper explanation might be that the priests are scared of cutting themselves out of that Society which is both their human

family and the framework by which they belong to the structural Church. But again with a strong enough faith they would know that Providence can supply for both needs.

On the other hand if we set the 2012 sell-out of the Society in the context of the double disintegration of the two World Wars, followed by the far more terrible disintegration of the Catholic Church at Vatican II (1962–1965), then we must admire the heroic feat of Archbishop Lefebvre in gathering together flying fragments from that unprecedented explosion, but we can hardly be surprised if the Society of St Pius X should in turn explode from within, or if refugees from its disintegration should have difficulty in re-integrating without. Things have fallen apart, and minds and hearts with them. I think that there is not enough integrity or integration left in hearts and minds for us to be able to think of repeating the Archbishop's feat. We are nearly 50 years downhill from 1970 when the Archbishop founded the SSPX.

What that means is not that there is nothing to be done, but that what is to be done must be worked out more from God's point of view and less from man's. At the very end of the world, God will allow the Faith almost to disappear (Lk XVIII, 8), but there will still be a few souls believing, hoping and loving. In 2016 he is giving us a foretaste of that disappearance, but souls should be able to recognize that they still have considerable freedom to believe, hope and love. And they should be able to foresee that even the most powerful of police states will not have the power to stop them from doing so. Moreover, the more heavily circumstances are made to weigh upon that freedom, the more glorious in Heaven will be the persevering devotion of any soul to God, to his divine Son and to the Blessed Virgin, and the greater will be the merits of that soul. Above all, the greater will be its unstoppable contribution to the welfare of the Church. All is by no means lost, and it can never be lost. God's Church is not a merely human affair.

Kyrie eleison.