

GREC – IV

April 27, 2013

A lady having read the first “Eleison Comments” on GREC (EC 294, March 2) wrote to complain that I misrepresented GREC, the Parisian group of Catholics founded in the late 1990’s to bring together Traditionalists and mainstream Catholics so that they could think and talk peacefully with one another for the good of Mother Church. I am happy to correct errors of fact which she pointed out. I have no problem admitting personal faults of mine which she highlighted. However on one major point I must disagree with her.

As for the errors of fact, Mr Gilbert Pérol was French Ambassador to the Italian government, and not to the Vatican. Also he was not a “lay collaborator,” but a personal friend of Fr Michel Lelong, a White Father. Also GREC was launched not “in the salons of Paris,” but in the flat of the Ambassador’s widow, Mrs. Huguette Pérol, who, I was told, takes full responsibility for having founded GREC, purely to help the Church, and with the help of people “competent and concerned to be faithful to the Gospel and to Tradition.”

As for my faults, she wrote that I was “full of myself” and “ignorant,” that I lacked modesty and diplomacy, that I showed insufficient respect for the dead, and that I wrote with a sarcastic tone befitting neither an educated person nor a priest. Madam, how happy I would be if these were the worst faults for which I shall have to answer before God. Do pray for my particular judgment.

However, as to the sarcasm, let me plead that if I mocked the nostalgia of Catholics today for the Catholicism of the 1950’s, I was thinking not of Ambassador Pérol in person, but of the multitudes of present-day Catholics, who, not realizing why God allowed Vatican II to split the mainstream Church from Catholic Tradition in the first place, wish to return to that

sentimentalized faith of the previous decade which led directly to Vatican II! Madam, the crucial point has nothing to do with subjective persons, it has everything to do with objective doctrine.

That is why I must disagree with you as to the competence of the people helping Mrs Pérol to found GREC. That a professional diplomat like Ambassador Pérol should have resorted to diplomacy to solve major problems of doctrine is misguided, but understandable. That a Conciliar priest like Fr Lelong should have encouraged such a diplomatic undertaking is graver, but still understandable, given how Vatican II undermined all doctrine by officialising subjectivism within the Church. What is much less easy to accept is the “competence and concern for the Gospel and Tradition” on the part of priests who were trained under Archbishop Lefebvre to understand the doctrinal disaster of Vatican II. Such priests should never have encouraged, let alone taken any active part in, an essentially diplomatic effort to solve an essentially doctrinal disaster, however well-intentioned that effort may have been.

And yet, even in their case the French proverb to some extent applies: “To understand everything means to forgive everything.” The Archbishop was of an earlier and saner generation. They are all children of the world shattered by two World Wars. All credit to them for resorting to his person for their priestly formation, and while he lived he raised us all up. But they never truly absorbed his doctrine, and so once he was dead they began within a few years to fall back. But he was right, and they, and GREC – forgive me, gracious lady – are wrong. Please God they may come right.

Kyrie eleison.