

How Discern? – I

November 18, 2017

A young man with a good mind is asking a good question about the crisis in the Church, and another good question about the crisis in the Society of St Pius X. Here is how Joseph frames his first question:–

*On the one hand the Conciliar crisis was one is a series of crises afflicting the Church, such as Protestantism, Liberalism, and Revolutions, with two World Wars, and therefore errors made their way at the Council which were clearly condemned by the Church before Vatican II. And after the Council its novelties were applauded by classical enemies of the Church, such as Freemasons and Socialists, while the Church's missionary spirit has clearly been extinguished. On the other hand the ideas of the Council are the work of highly intelligent and supposedly Catholic churchmen, and one cannot all the time say that the Pope is not Pope, or that the majority of modernist Bishops are invalidly consecrated. **Therefore can one say that the Conciliar crisis involves shadowed areas which still make it difficult to see clear? And if we cannot arrive at definite conclusions, can we be sure we are holding onto the true Faith?***

The best reply comes from Our Lord Himself, speaking in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. VII, 15–20) – “By their fruits ye shall know them.” Obviously Our Lord knew that there would be constant attacks on His Church with repeated attempts of the Devil to sow confusion in His followers' minds. The confusion that has followed on Vatican II is not different in kind from previous crises in Church history, even if by the defection of the churchmen at Vatican II the confusion today is unprecedented in degree – never before have the mass of Catholic shepherds been so lost, nor therefore the Catholic sheep.

Nevertheless, to find one's way out of the confusion, the same infallible principle still applies: actions speak louder than words, and the fruits of a man's actions are the surest guide to who he is and what he really intends. Especially in the case of modernism a man can be deceiving himself as to what he wants or intends, because nobody is so deeply detached from reality as a modernist. "The end of the world will be characterised by men doing evil while thinking they are doing good," said Fr Faber in mid-19th century. In the 21st century we are at the wrong end of this centuries-long process of mankind deceiving itself as it has turned away from God. Then would God be leaving His sheep defenceless against such unprecedented wolves in sheep's clothing as modernists are? No, because to judge by the fruits is something that anybody can do, with a minimum of common sense and upright will.

Therefore, Joseph, you observe that today's Church authorities are highly intelligent men and supposedly Catholic, and you quite reasonably assume that they are the valid authorities of the Church, because even if you know that their fruits are so little Catholic as to make many a Catholic dispute that validity, notwithstanding who else is there who is authorised to speak and act for the Universal Church? But at the same time you observe that their ideas are in line with grave anti-Catholic errors from the past, and that they are now applauded by classic enemies of the Church, such as Freemasons. Arguments on one side and on the other. Doubts and shadows. How do you resolve the confusion?

Answer, by your own further observation that the missionary spirit has disappeared from the Church since Vatican II. Here are the fruits. The Council preached ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), religious liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*) and the relative acceptability of false religions such as Hinduism, Islam and Judaism (*Nostra Aetate*) – how could the Catholic missionary spirit not collapse after the Council? And have not countless monasteries, seminaries, convents, dioceses

and parishes also emptied out and closed down since Vatican II? Did new ones open anywhere? Yes, under the leadership of the one Catholic bishop worldwide who from the beginning repudiated openly the Council and all its works, Archbishop Lefebvre. Here were the selfsame fruits of the selfsame Catholic principles, faithfully applied in defiance of Vatican II. Joseph, you need look no further.

Kyrie eleison.