

Latest Encyclical

December 15, 2007

To illustrate what is appealing and what is most dangerous in Pope Benedict's latest Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi* ("By hope we are saved" – Rom. VIII,24), here is a comparison.

In a river flowing fast towards a deadly waterfall, men are happily swimming and drifting downstream, apparently unaware of the danger. On the bank one man has tied a rope to a firmly rooted tree, and he cries out to the men in the water to grab hold of the rope which he is throwing out to them as their last chance of rescue. But the men in mid-stream seem deaf, and few grab hold of the rope.

Seeing this lack of response, a second man on the bank unties the rope from the tree, fastens it around his waist and begins to wade out towards the men in danger, hoping that by getting that much closer to them he can make himself heard. Alas, the current sweeps him too off his feet, and too late he realizes that he will share the fate of the doomed drifters.

The river is our swiftly passing life in this world. The men in mid-stream are the mass of its inhabitants, drifting blithely towards eternal damnation. The tree is the saving doctrine of Catholic Tradition, thrown out afresh to each age by the rope of the Magisterium. The first man represents Catholic Traditionalists. The second man represents Conciliar churchmen like Benedict XVI, who in their concern to reach modern man have untied their teaching from Tradition and tied it to themselves. But in this condition they can no longer rescue modern man, they can only perish with him.

The appealing side of Benedict XVI and his latest Encyclical is his evident and sincere desire to reach out to modern man by, for instance, his abandoning of the classic precision of concepts such as faith, hope and redemption (no less!), in

order to “refresh” their content in a way meaningful to humanists today. However, such humanizing gravely foreshortens and distorts the Church’s divine doctrine. Immensely dangerous, to take just one example, is the strong suggestion (Section #46) that “the great majority of people” go to Purgatory, and so are saved. Our Lord said on the contrary, “Many are called but few are chosen” (Mt.XX,16), and “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat” (Mt.VII,13).

Holy Father, you are drifting to destruction, and you risk taking many souls with you. We pray for you!

Kyrie eleison.