

Rome Insists

December 17, 2011

At about the same time that Bishop Fellay was letting it be known that the SSPX will ask for clarification of the Doctrinal Preamble (Rome's reaction to the doctrinal discussions running from 2009 to spring of this year), one of Rome's four theologians taking part in those discussions, Monsignore Fernando Ocariz, published an essay "On Adhesion to the Second Vatican Council." His timing shows that we are not out of the woods, on the contrary! But let us look at his arguments, which are at least clear.

In his introduction he argues that the "pastoral" Council was nonetheless doctrinal. What is pastoral is based on doctrine. What is pastoral seeks to save souls, which involves doctrine. The Council documents contain much doctrine. Good! The Monsignore is at least not going to dodge doctrinal accusations levelled at the Council by pretending the Council was not doctrinal, as have done many of its defenders.

Then on the Church's Magisterium in general, he says that Vatican II consisted of the Catholic bishops who have "the charism of truth, the authority of Christ and the light of the Holy Spirit." To deny that, he says, is to deny something of the very essence of the Church. But, Monsignore, what about the mass of Catholic bishops going along with the Arian heresy under Pope Liberius? Exceptionally, even the near unanimity of Catholic bishops can go doctrinally astray. If it happened once, it can happen again. It happened at Vatican II, as its documents show.

He proceeds to argue that the Council's non-dogmatic and non-defined teachings nevertheless require of Catholics their assent, called "religious submission of will and intellect," which is "an act of obedience well-rooted in confidence in the divine assistance given to the Magisterium." Monsignore, to

the Conciliar as to the Arian bishops no doubt God offered all the assistance they needed, but they refused it, as is shown by the departure of their documents from his Tradition.

Finally Monsignore Ocariz begs the question by arguing that since the Catholic Magisterium is continuous and Vatican II was the Magisterium, therefore its teachings can only be continuous with the past. And if they look like a break with the past, then the Catholic thing to do is to interpret them as though there is no such break, as does for instance Benedict XVI's "hermeneutic of continuity." But Monsignore, these arguments can be turned around. In fact there is a doctrinal break, as is clear from examining the Conciliar documents themselves. (For instance, is there (Vatican II), or is there not (Tradition), a human right not to be prevented from spreading error?) Therefore Vatican II was not the Church's true Magisterium, and the Catholic thing is to show that there is indeed this break with Tradition, as did Archbishop Lefebvre, and not to pretend that there is no such break.

The Monsignore's last word is to claim that only the Magisterium can interpret the Magisterium. Which takes us right back to Square One.

Dear readers, Rome is not by any means out of the woods. Heaven help us.

Kyrie eleison.