

Unique Delinquency – I

November 21, 2009

In order to highlight once more the unique delinquency of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), two weeks will not be too many to reply to a reader's reasonable objection to the argument of "Eleison Comments" of three weeks ago (Oct. 31). That argument maintained that the sacramental Rites of the Newchurch, introduced in the wake of the Council, are of a nature to invalidate the Church's sacraments in the long run, because they were designed by their ambiguity to erode the Minister's sacramental Intention, without which there can be no sacrament.

The reader objected with the Church's classic teaching that personal failings of the sacramental Minister, even his lack of the Faith, can be made up for by the Faith of the Church in whose name he is administering the sacrament (cf. Summa Theologiae, 3a, LXIV, 9 ad 1). Thus – classic example – a Jew who has no Catholic faith at all can nevertheless validly baptize a dying friend so long as the Jew both knows that the Catholic Church does something when it baptizes, and he means to do that thing that the Church does. This Intention to do what the Church does he shows by saying the words and performing the actions laid down in the Church's Rite of baptism.

Therefore, argued our reader, the Newchurch may have corrupted the Minister's Catholic faith, but the Eternal Church will make up for any lack of his faith, and the sacraments he administers will still be valid. To which the first part of the reply is that if the Newchurch's sacramental Rites attacked only the Minister's faith, the objection would be valid, but if they also undermine his sacramental Intention, then there will be no sacrament at all.

Another classic example should make the point clear. For water

to flow down a metal pipe, it does not matter if the pipe is made of gold or lead, but for the water in either case to flow, the pipe must be connected to the tap. The water is sacramental grace. The tap is the main source of that grace, God alone. The pipe is the instrumental source, namely the sacramental Minister, through whose action flows from God the grace of the sacrament. The gold or lead is the personal holiness or villainy of the Minister. Thus the validity of the sacrament does not depend on the personal faith or unfaith of the Minister, but it does depend on his connecting himself to the main source of the sacramental grace, God.

This connection he makes precisely by his Intention in performing the sacrament to do what the Church does. For by that Intention he puts himself as an instrument in the hands of God for God to pour the sacramental grace through him. Without that sacramental Intention he and his faith may be of gold or lead, but he is disconnected from the tap. It remains to be shown next week how Vatican II was designed and is liable to corrupt not only the Minister's faith, but also any sacramental Intention he may have.

Kyrie eleison.