

“Excommunications”

November 24, 2007

As rumors circulate that Rome may soon lift the “excommunication” of the four bishops of the Society of St. Pius X, declared by Cardinal Gantin on the occasion of their episcopal consecration by Archbishop Lefebvre back in 1988, it may be opportune to set the record straight on one or two points.

First and foremost, those “excommunications” were, from the moment they were declared, neither valid, nor to be taken seriously. A valid Church excommunication can only take place either positively (“ferendae sententiae”) or automatically (“latae sententiae”). It is positive, when Church authorities declare by a judicial sentence (in the good old times with a solemn ceremony of “bell, book and candle”) that the offender no longer belongs to the Church. It is automatic, when the offender so clearly breaks certain Church laws incurring excommunication that by his action alone (“ipso facto”) he has put himself out of the Church.

Now in 1988 there was no positive excommunication by judicial sentence or ceremonial expulsion. Nor was there, by Canon Law, any automatic excommunication, because the Archbishop acted for the good of the Church (New Code, canon 1323, number 4), and even if he was objectively mistaken in thinking so, he will still not have incurred the full rigour of the law, in this case excommunication, because he was certainly subjectively convinced in thinking that he acted for the good of the whole Church (New Code, canon 1324, §1, number 8). Therefore there was no excommunication at all.

What Rome did was to declare, without judicial sentence or ceremony, that the excommunications had been automatic, when by Church Law they were not. It follows that the Society for its part cannot ask for the “excommunications” to be lifted by

any form of words which might imply that they have ever been valid.

On the other hand any unilateral lifting of the “excommunications” on the part of Pope Benedict XVI, whatever form it may take, would, in his circumstances, be a courageous act of justice. All the neo-modernists would hate him for it, unless they hoped it would help to dissolve Tradition’s resistance, but Almighty God would certainly reward him for his restoring of truth, especially if his intention was upright.

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on your Church!

Kyrie eleison.