

“Greek Gifts” – III

September 3, 2011

Speculation is only speculation. Journalists are only journalists. But an Italian journalist claimed last month that he had the authority of a “Vatican insider” for writing that the Sept 14 meeting between Roman officials and the Superior General of the Society of St Pius X with his two Assistants may discuss a possible canonical regularization of the SSPX. Here is a summary of Andrea Tornielli’s main points (see <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/homepage/inquiries-and-interviews/detail/articolo/lefebvriani-vaticano-tradizione-fellay-7423/>):—

The Vatican officials will submit to the SSPX (1) a clarification of Benedict XVI’s “hermeneutic of continuity” to show how it is the more authentic interpretation of the texts of Vatican II. “Only if,” says Tornielli, this clarification overcomes the doctrinal difficulties will there then be presented (2) a solution to the canonical irregularity in which the SSPX bishops and priests still find themselves: an Ordinariat such as was given to the Anglicans in May, whereby the SSPX would depend directly on the Holy See through the Ecclesia Dei Commission. This arrangement would enable the SSPX to “retain its characteristics without having to answer to the diocesan bishops.” But (3) any such agreement is not certain because “within the SSPX co-exist different sensitivities.”

From everything we know in public about Vatican-SSPX relations, Tornielli’s forecast for the Sept 14 meeting seems highly probable. But each of his three main points deserves comment:—

Firstly, as to the doctrinal gulf between today’s Vatican and Archbishop Lefebvre’s SSPX, it cannot be said that Benedict XVI’s “hermeneutic of continuity” is a solution (see EC

208–211). If Tornielli is right, it will be interesting (not edifying) to see how Rome tries once more to prove that $2+2$ can be 4 or 5, 5 or 4. Catholic doctrine is as rigid, if not always as clear to us human beings, as $2+2=4$.

Secondly, as to the canonical arrangement evoked by Tornielli, if – unimaginably – the SSPX were to accept any kind of doctrinal compromise, then in no way could the SSPX both come under the present Holy See ($2+2=4$ or 5), and still “retain its characteristics” (based on $2+2=$ exclusively 4). The practical agreement would exercise a constant and finally irresistible pressure to make Catholic doctrine no longer exclusive but inclusive of error, which would be to adopt the Freemasons’ ideology and to abandon the very reason for existing of Archbishop Lefebvre’s SSPX.

And thirdly, Tornielli may well be right that an agreement is not certain, but he and his “Vatican insider” are absolutely wrong if either of them thinks that the problem is one of “different sensitivities.” Sensitivities are subjective. The central problem between the Vatican and Archbishop Lefebvre’s SSPX is as objective as $2+2=4$. At no point in time, reaching backwards or forwards into eternity, on no planet or star created or creatable, can $2+2$ ever be anything other than, exclusively, four.

When all Archbishop Lefebvre’s efforts had failed in the negotiations of May 1988 to obtain from then Cardinal Ratzinger a secure place for the Faith within the mainstream Church, he said some famous words: “Your Eminence, even were you to give us everything we wanted, still we would have to refuse, because we are working to christianize society, whereas you are working to de-christianize it. Collaboration between us is not possible.”

Kyrie eleison.