

“Mental Sickness”

January 21, 2012

A long-standing correspondent wrote to me recently with a dozen arguments to show why the SSPX should come to some agreement with Rome, even if the doctrinal Discussions of 2009–2011 showed that the Rome-SSPX doctrinal disagreement is radical. Let me dwell here on one of his arguments, because I think it opens up the full dimensions of what the SSPX is up against.

He wrote that if the SSPX does not soon “normalize” its standing with Rome, then it runs the risk of losing the sense of what it means to belong to the Church. For there are layfolk and even SSPX priests who are comfortable with their present abnormal situation and have adapted to it, because the SSPX “has all that it needs, notably bishops.” Such adaptation, wrote my colleague, tends towards a schismatic mentality and a practical, if not theoretical, sedevacantism. I replied that in my opinion a much greater risk than that of acquiring a schismatic mentality is that of contracting “the spiritual and mental sickness of today’s Romans by getting too close to them.” A scandalous reply? Let me explain.

“Mental sickness” is the phrase applied to Roman churchmen with whom a second friend recently held long conversations. He said that they are intelligent and sincere men, fully capable of grasping the arguments of Tradition put before them, but he concluded, “They are mentally sick. Only, they have the authority.” Certainly he meant no personal insult to these Romans when he called them “mentally sick.” What he was uttering was something far more serious than a mere personal insult. He was commenting on the objective state of the Romans’ minds, as confirmed by his long conversations with them. Their minds are no longer running on truth.

A third friend also in contact with Romans said the same thing

in different words. I asked him, "Could you not have gone to the root of the matter and opened up with them the basic question of the mind and truth?" He replied, "No. All they would have said was that they were the authority, that they were the Catholic Church, and if we wanted to be Catholics, it was for them to tell us how." Such minds are running not on truth but on authority. Now milk is a beautiful thing, but imagine a car-owner quite calmly insisting on filling his car's gas-tank with milk! The gigantic problem is that almost the entire modern world has lost all sense and love of truth. For the longest time the Church resisted this loss of truth, but with Vatican II that last resistance also collapsed.

For indeed the modern world is glamorous and weighty, and so is Rome! Here is how an Italian friend senses the glamour of the Vatican offices: "To step into the Roman palaces is a daring enterprise because the very air you breathe within is irresistible. The fascination of these hallowed halls comes not so much from the charming officials (by no means all of them are charming) as from the sense the halls exude of the 2000-year duration of Church history. Is the fascination from Heaven? Is it from Hell? In any case the mere atmosphere of the Vatican seduces visitors and tames their wills."

And the fascination of the Vatican is only a small part of the total pressure of the modern world seeping into minds to disable them, and to make us follow its current. Dear friend of mine, I would rather be a schismatic sedevacantist than a Roman apostate. With the grace of God, neither!

Kyrie eleison.