

Kerr's Musings

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Santa Claus(ewitz)

St Nicholas is credited with giving the heresiarch Arius one on the jaw at Nicaea I in 325. His partial namesake, Clausewitz, the famous Prussian military philosopher, was also keen on a concentration of force and concentration on the objective, which pertains to clerical celibacy.

It is of course the case that the primary reason for priestly celibacy is the relationship between the Incarnation and Transubstantiation. Our Lady being a virgin, it is fitting that priests should be celibate. In the Eastern Rites a married man may be ordained, but a priest can't marry and a Bishop must be celibate.

A non-Catholic once made a remark to the effect that celibacy encouraged narrow-mindedness in priests. On the contrary, a married man must have a narrow focus on his wife, whereas celibate priests have to consider women in general, and have to be trained and taught how to teach about marriage etc. A particular priest may be narrow-minded but the Church is not.

Archbishop Lefebvre's mother wanted to be a nun. Her confessor was most emphatic in telling her that her vocation was to be a wife and mother. Spiritual direction is like soul surgery. A newly ordained, properly trained priest will know more about women than a married man twice his age. Consider, the priest who advised the future Madame Lefebvre was operating on the basis of a body of knowledge going back to the Apostles. A priest may have to tell a woman how to respond if her husband wants to permit him some immorality, possibly with threats from her husband.

Now Clausewitz, in Russian service in 1812, pessimistically participated in a flanking cavalry attack at Borodino. Cavalry against cavalry and infantry would be unlikely to succeed. Note that Archbishop Lefebvre was a devotee of combined arms tactics. He got the Catholics of the Maronite Rite in Senegal a chaplain and blessed the foundation stone of their church. He got all sorts of congregations to come to Senegal, not regarding it as the exclusive property of the Holy Ghost Fathers. In 1988 he dissuaded an American Benedictine from joining the SSPX on the grounds that the Church needs monks, the Church needs prayers.

Contrast that with the pseudo-empire builder Archbishop John Ireland in America in the reign of Leo XIII. There were a lot of Catholics of the Ukrainian Rite in the Archdiocese, without priests. A priest was sent to them, but Ireland would not allow him to function on the grounds that he was a widower, hence scandal to Latins. This was an excuse, a word of explanation would have sufficed. The real reason was that a priest with long hair and a beard offering a Mass in Church Slavonic would not have helped Ireland's efforts to ingratiate himself with other politicians by projection of an image of Catholicism perfectly compatible with modern liberalism etc.

The priest should have told Ireland to go to blazes and carried on. Alas, embittered, he went over to the Orthodox. The Tsarist government rushed assistance westwards with the result that nowadays there is a six figure tally of Orthodox who would have been Catholic but for Ireland. Pope Leo was far too soft with Ireland, who should have been sacked at the very least.

Anyway, the cavalry attack at Borodino appeared to be a complete failure as Clausewitz had expected, leading to angry recriminations. Post-war the Russians learned that in fact the

French reaction to the attack had saved the Russian army from disaster. It's not too much to say that Pius VII was released from captivity and the Papal States restored in 1814 on account of the apparent failure.

The SSPX leadership are certainly correct in talking with Rome whenever Rome is willing, which is merely to continue what Archbishop Lefebvre did. When the Holy Ghost descended on Our Lady and the Apostles, the latter didn't stay in the Cenacle but came out fighting. Going by combined arms tactics, Our Lady doubtless remained at prayer in the Cenacle waiting for St Peter to return to offer the first Papal Mass. It is to be noted that Bishop Fellay got his predecessor Father Schmidberger to visit German Novus Ordo priests to try and get them to be at least a bit more traditional. Any success at all would have been for the greater glory of God, which is supposed to be the objective.

Now at the end of 1812 the Russians sent Clausewitz to see General Yorck. Yorck was in command of the Prussian force acting as Napoleon's unwilling auxiliaries. Yorck had previously not trusted Clausewitz, but the latter persuaded him to declare his force neutral. The Prussian King, terrified of Napoleon, was initially enraged at this, but so many rallied to Yorck that he realized he had to switch sides.

Clausewitz was one of the architects of the Prussian General Staff which with its stress on training and selection had a remarkable resemblance to the Church. A brilliant French officer, Pierre-Joseph de Bourcet had earlier been thinking along similar lines, founding a college for training staff officers at Grenoble in 1764. Wikipedia states that it closed in 1771, but in fact it opened up again shortly afterwards and did not finally close until 1791. Cardinal Suenen's remark that Vatican II was the 1789 of the Church was perhaps 2 years out. Bourcet's ideas would have meant that France rather than Prussia would have had the first modern staff system. The French finally got a General Staff in 1872, after the Prussians had participated in victory parades in Paris in 1814, 1815, and 1871.

The French Army had got the message. One German Bishop did not. The German Bishops met at Fulda on 30th August 1870 to compose their pastoral on Vatican I just as the Germans were closing in on Napoleon III at Sedan. After his death, among the papers of Archbishop Ketteler of Mainz there was found a plan for drastic changes in Church organisation from Rome to the parish. What are the fruits of Vatican II in institutional terms? A bloated headquarters, the formation of *de facto* parties, sluggish decision-making and lack of personal responsibility, this being mirrored down to the parish.

In the spring of 1871 Archbishop Ketteler (an inopportunist at Vatican I) elicited from Cardinal Antonelli, the Secretary of State (also an inopportunist) a letter declaring the Curia's solidarity with the Centre party. This hit a nerve with Bismarck, and, according to Gordon A. Craig in *Germany 1866-1945*, from that moment on Bismarck was willing to launch a full-blown Kulturkampf. The famous exchange between Bismarck and Windhorst about going to Canossa is of interest. Both the non-Catholic and the Catholic with liberal tendencies didn't understand Canossa. Henry IV won a political victory by getting absolution from St Gregory VII who was heading north to complete the overthrow of Henry. St Gregory VII won a spiritual victory over himself. He doubted Henry's sincerity, knew it was politically disadvantageous, but since Henry met the criteria for absolution, he acted as a priest must and absolved him.

Suppose we ignore completely the relationship between the Incarnation and Transubstantiation, Look at the flexibility involved with celibacy. Two or more celibates can live under the same roof more easily. Finally let us be ruthlessly honest: Celibates are cheaper, *Deo Gratias!* **C. Kerr**