

Priestly Society of Saint Pius X

MEDIA INFORMATION BROCHURE

Courtesy of the United States of America District

Regarding the Withdrawal of the Excommunications for the 1988 Episcopal Consecrations



THIS MEDIA BROCHURE INCLUDES:

SSPX's Official Statement Regarding the Withdrawal of the Excommunications

Short history about the life of Archbishop Lefebvre and the SSPX

Some facts about the 1988 excommunications

The 1974 Declaration of Archbishop Lefebvre



PRESS RELEASE
FROM THE
SUPERIOR GENERAL
OF THE
PRIESTLY SOCIETY OF SAINT PIUS X



The excommunication of the bishops consecrated by His Grace Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, on June 30, 1988, which had been declared by the Congregation for Bishops in a decree dated July 1, 1988, and which we had always contested, has been withdrawn by another decree mandated by Benedict XVI and issued by the same Congregation on January 21, 2009.

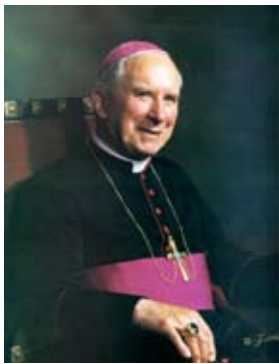
We express our filial gratitude to the Holy Father for this gesture which, beyond the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, will benefit the whole Church. Our Society wishes to be always more able to help the pope to remedy the unprecedented crisis which presently shakes the Catholic world, and which Pope John Paul II had designated as a state of “silent apostasy.”

Besides our gratitude towards the Holy Father and towards all those who helped him to make this courageous act, we are pleased that the decree of January 21 considers as necessary “talks” with the Holy See, talks which will enable the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X to explain the fundamental doctrinal reasons which it believes to be at the origin of the present difficulties of the Church.

In this new atmosphere, we have the firm hope to obtain soon the recognition of the rights of Catholic Tradition

Menzingen, January 24, 2009

+*Bernard Fellay*



A SHORT HISTORY ABOUT THE LIFE OF ARCHBISHOP MARCEL LEFEBVRE

November 29, 1905

Marcel Lefebvre is born in Lille, France to a devout Catholic family.

1929

Ordained to the priesthood after studying at the French Seminary in Rome.

1932 - 1946

Joins the Holy Ghost Fathers and becomes a missionary in Gabon, Africa.



A SHORT HISTORY ON THE SSPX

November 1, 1970

It is officially recognized by Bishop Charriere of Lausanne, Geneva, and Fribourg in Switzerland. Its mission is to form holy priests as the Catholic Church has done for centuries. The International Seminary of St. Pius X is founded in Ecône, Switzerland.

February 18, 1971

The Holy See gives approval to the SSPX and grants it an international character. Later it is allowed to incardinate clergy and to establish houses in other dioceses.

June 10, 1971

Archbishop Lefebvre announces that the SSPX's priests will not say the *Novus Ordo Missae* due to its doctrinal deficiencies which pose a danger to the faith and the priesthood.

1973 - 1974

The SSPX makes its first establishment in the United States in Spring 1973, followed by a seminary in late 1974.

May 6, 1975

Liberal elements in the Church attempt against the precepts of canon law to suppress the SSPX, considered a threat to the newly implemented Modernism. Despite the false charges, the SSPX continues on forming priests and religious.

December 11, 1987

Cardinal Gagnon makes an apostolic visit to the Ecône seminary. He is thoroughly impressed and even participates in the Mass celebrated by "suspended" Archbishop Lefebvre.

June 30, 1988

Discussions with a Modernist Rome having failed, "Operation Survival for Tradition" takes place. Archbishop Lefebvre and Bishop de Castro Mayer consecrate to the episcopacy four priests to ensure the continuance of Catholic Tradition and the SSPX's priestly work.

November 1, 1995

By its 25th anniversary, the SSPX numbers four bishops, over 360 priests, 50 brothers, 120 sisters and 53 oblate sisters, all living in 140 houses in 27 countries.

August 2000

The SSPX leads a pilgrimage of over 6000 Catholics to Rome for the jubilee. It is the second largest pilgrimage group for the entire year. Many Vatican authorities are impressed by this Pilgrimage of Tradition, so Cardinal Hoyos invites the SSPX's bishops to lunch afterwards.

2000 - to the present

The Superior General, Bishop Bernard Fellay, prudently maintains contacts with Rome while insisting on the doctrinal balance which Archbishop Lefebvre himself demonstrated.

1947 - 1962

Is subsequently consecrated a bishop, appointed Apostolic Vicar in Dakar (Senegal), then Apostolic Delegate for 18 African countries, and finally Dakar's first archbishop. He establishes many Catholic institutions and prepares the native clergy to administrate their own dioceses.

In 1962, he becomes the bishop of Tulle, France, but only six months later, is elected Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers.

Second Vatican Council: 1962-1965

In 1960, is appointed to the Preparatory Commission for the upcoming Council.

During the Council's first session, the liberals take over the proceedings and jettisoned the prepared schemas. To fight against Modernism during the Council, he organizes the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*, a collection of Council Fathers who strove to uphold Catholic Tradition.

1968 - 1969

Resigns as Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers who want to liberalize the congregation. Planning a quiet retirement, he is besieged by seminarians seeking a seminary not affected by Modernism; to assist he opens a house of studies.

1969

He founds the SSPX to form holy priests as the Catholic Church has traditionally done, acting as its first Superior General until 1982.

1970 - 1988

He travels the world to encourage Catholics to hold fast to the Faith, administering confirmation and ordaining new priests from the SSPX's seminaries.

In July 1976, through liberal machinations, he is declared suspend *a divinis*, but this is uncanonical. Illegally he is also denied an ecclesiastical trial to clear his name.

On June 30, 1988, he consecrates four SSPX priests as bishops to ensure the survival of Catholic Tradition. Contrary to canon law, he is subsequently declared to have excommunicated himself by this action.

March 25, 1991

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre passes away in peace, assured of having fulfilled his duty as a Catholic bishop: "*I have transmitted to you what I have received.*"

We wholeheartedly adhere with all our soul to Catholic Rome, guardian of the Catholic faith and of the traditions necessary to keep this faith; to eternal Rome, mistress of wisdom and truth. ARCHBISHOP LEFEBVRE IN HIS NOVEMBER 1974 DECLARATION (SEE THE LAST PAGE FOR THE FULL TEXT)

THE EXCOMMUNICATIONS: WHY THEY NEVER EXISTED



On June 30, 1988, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and Bishop Antonio de Castro Mayer consecrated four SSPX priests to the episcopacy. Archbishop Lefebvre publicly stated clearly on several occasions that he undertook this act out of necessity due to the crisis in the Church.

On July 1st, the Vatican's Congregation of Bishops announced that the act of consecrating a bishop without a papal mandate was a schismatic act and the six bishops had automatically incurred the penalty of excommunication. The canonical notice added that those supporting the consecrations were also threatened with excommunication because of the "schism." On July 2, in *Ecclesia Dei Afflicta*, Pope John Paul II simply repeated the accusations of schism and excommunication citing Canon Law. But did a state of schism or the penalty of excommunication actually ever exist?

Canon Law Cited as the Instrument of Power

In both cases, canon law was cited as having *ipso facto* (on its own power) excommunicated the bishops, not the authority of the pope. So it is not accurate to say that "the pope excommunicated them" as he never used his solemn papal authority for this act (even this could be illegitimate, as was the famous case Pope Liberius' illicit solemn excommunication of St. Athanasius). Canon Law then must be examined to determine if any penalties were ever incurred by the bishops, or the SSPX.

According to the 1983 edition of the Code of Canon Law:

1. A person who violates a law *out of necessity* is not subject to a penalty (Canon 1323 §4).

But even if no state of necessity existed:

- if one inculpably thought there was, he would not incur the penalty (Canon 1323 §7),
- and if one culpably thought there was, he would still incur no automatic penalties (Canon 1324 §3; §1, 80).

2. No penalty is ever incurred without committing a subjective mortal sin (canons 1321 §1, 1323 §7).

Archbishop Lefebvre made it clear that it was his duty before God as a bishop to perform the episcopal consecrations to ensure the continuance of the Catholic priesthood. Even if he had been wrong, there would still have been no subjective sin.

Consequently, the accusations of excommunication were illegitimate and thereby always null and void.

WAS THE SSPX EVER IN A STATE OF SCHISM?

"The act of consecrating a bishop (without the pope's permission) is not itself a schismatic act."

Cardinal Lara, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of Canon Law, October 7, 1988

1. The mere deed of consecrating bishops without pontifical mandate does not constitute a schismatic act.

The Code of Canon Law itself lists this type of offense under Title 3 (abuse of ecclesiastical powers) and not under Title I (offenses against religion and the unity of the Church) of its penal section (Book 6). So at worst, the episcopal consecrations *was one of disobedience*.

2. Disobedience does not amount to schism. A state of schism requires that the recognition of the pope's authority *is denied*. Archbishop Lefebvre always recognized the pope's authority, as has the SSPX until the present.

3. Consecrating a bishop without a papal mandate would be a schismatic act if jurisdiction (e.g., a territory to govern) was given to the newly consecrated bishops. But Archbishop Lefebvre never did this, and made it clear that he was only consecrating "sacramental bishops" to perform such episcopal duties as administering confirmations and ordaining priests.

4. The concluding evidence is from Rome itself. As noted above, supposedly anyone who supported the SSPX would be automatically excommunicated. However on June 28, 1993, Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, overturned a decree of excommunication that Bishop Ferrario of Hawaii had sent on May 1, 1991 to six Catholics of his diocese. Their "crime" was attending Masses celebrated by priests of the SSPX, and receiving a bishop of the Society to confer the sacrament of confirmation.

This case alone should be ample proof that what was asserted about the six bishops and the SSPX in 1988 was without validity.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE IMPORTANT TOPICS, CF. ON OUR WEBSITE THE TWO-PART ARTICLE:
THE 1988 CONSECRATIONS: PART I: A THEOLOGICAL STUDY AND PART II: A CANONICAL STUDY

THE 1974 DECLARATION OF ARCHBISHOP LEFEBVRE

Made on November 21, 1974

On November 11, 1974, two apostolic visitors from Rome arrived at the International Seminary of St. Pius X in Econe. During their brief stay, they spoke to the seminarians and professors, maintaining scandalous opinions such as, the ordination of married men will soon be a normal thing, truth changes with the times, and the traditional conception of the Resurrection of our Lord is open to discussion. These remarks prompted Archbishop Lefebvre to write this famous Declaration as a rebuttal to Modernism.



We hold fast, with all our heart and with all our soul, to Catholic Rome, Guardian of the Catholic faith and of the traditions necessary to preserve this faith, to Eternal Rome, Mistress of wisdom and truth.

We refuse, on the other hand, and have always refused to follow the Rome of neo-Modernist and neo-Protestant tendencies which were clearly evident in the Second Vatican Council and, after the Council, in all the reforms which issued from it.

All these reforms, indeed, have contributed and are still contributing to the destruction of the Church, to the ruin of the priesthood, to the abolition of the Sacrifice of the Mass and of the sacraments, to the disappearance of religious life, to a naturalist and Teilhardian teaching in universities, seminaries and catechetics; a teaching derived from Liberalism and Protestantism, many times condemned by the solemn Magisterium of the Church.

No authority, not even the highest in the hierarchy, can force us to abandon or diminish our Catholic faith, so clearly expressed and professed by the Church's Magisterium for nineteen centuries.

"But though we," says St. Paul, *"or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema"* (Gal. 1:8).

Is it not this that the Holy Father is repeating to us today? And if we can discern a certain contradiction in his words and deeds, as well as in those of the dicasteries, well we choose what was always taught and we turn a deaf ear to the novelties destroying the Church.

It is impossible to modify profoundly the *lex orandi* [law of prayer] without modifying the *lex credendi* [law of belief]. To the *Novus Ordo Missae* correspond a new catechism, a new priesthood, new seminaries, a charismatic Pentecostal Church—all things opposed to orthodoxy and the perennial teaching of the Church.

This Reformation, born of Liberalism and Modernism, is poisoned through and through; it derives from heresy and ends in heresy, even if all its acts are not formally heretical. It is therefore impossible for any conscientious and faithful Catholic to espouse this Reformation or to submit to it in any way whatsoever.

The only attitude of faithfulness to the Church and Catholic doctrine, in view of our salvation, is a categorical refusal to accept this Reformation.

That is why, without any spirit of rebellion, bitterness or resentment, we pursue our work of forming priests, with the timeless Magisterium as our guide. We are persuaded that we can render no greater service to the Holy Catholic Church, to the Sovereign Pontiff and to posterity.

That is why we hold fast to all that has been believed and practiced in the faith, morals, liturgy, teaching of the catechism, formation of the priest and institution of the Church, by the Church of all time; to all these things as codified in those books which saw day before the Modernist influence of the Council. This we shall do until such time that the true light of Tradition dissipates the darkness obscuring the sky of Eternal Rome.

By doing this, with the grace of God and the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that of St. Joseph and St. Pius X, we are assured of remaining faithful to the Roman Catholic Church and to all the successors of Peter, and of being the *fideles dispensatores mysteriorum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi in Spiritu Sancto. Amen.*



SOCIETY OF SAINT PIUS X

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