

Society of Saint Pius X
Priorat Mariae Verkündigung
Schloss Schwandegg
Menzingen, ZG, CH-6313
SWITZERLAND

SUPERIOR GENERAL'S LETTER TO FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS #72

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

The *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, which acknowledged that the Tridentine Mass was never abrogated, raises a certain number of questions concerning the future of the relations of the Society of St. Pius X with Rome. Several persons in conservative circles and in Rome itself have made themselves heard, arguing that, since the Sovereign Pontiff had acted so generously and thus given a clear sign of his good will towards us, there would be nothing left for the Society to do but to “sign an agreement with Rome.” Unfortunately, a few of our friends were deceived by such an illusion. We would like to take the opportunity of this Eastertide letter to review once again the principles governing our actions in these troubled times and point out a few recent events which clearly indicate that, basically, nothing has really changed except for the *motu proprio*'s liturgical overture, so as to draw from all this the necessary conclusions.

The fundamental principle that dictates our action is the safeguard of the faith, without which no one can be saved, no one can receive grace, no one can be pleasing to God, as the First Vatican Council states. The liturgical question is not paramount; it only becomes such inasmuch as it is the manifestation of an alteration of the faith and, consequently, of the worship due to God.

A notable change of orientation took place at Vatican II with regard to the Church's outlook, especially on the world, other religions, the State, and even itself. These changes have been acknowledged by all, yet not all judged them in the same way. Until now, they were presented as being very profound, even revolutionary. One cardinal at the Council could even speak of “*the 1789 Revolution in the Church*.”

While still a cardinal, Benedict XVI phrased it thus: “*The challenge of the sixties was to assimilate the best values expressed in two centuries of 'liberal' culture. These are values which, even if they originate outside the Church, can find a place, once purified and corrected, in her vision of the world. This is what was done.*”¹ In the name of this assimilation, a new vision of the world and its components was imposed: a fundamentally positive vision, which dictated not only a new liturgical rite, but also a new mode of presence of the Church in the world: much more horizontal, and more concerned about social and temporal problems than those of a supernatural and eternal character...

At the same time, the Church's relationship with the other religions underwent a transformation. Since Vatican II, Rome has avoided any negative or depreciatory observations about other religions. For example, the classic term of “false religions” has completely disappeared from ecclesiastical vocabulary. The words “heretic” and “schismatic,” which used to designate the religions closer to the Catholic Church, have also disappeared, except when they are occasionally employed, especially the term “schismatic,” to label us. The same holds true for the term “excommunication.” The new approach is called ecumenism, and contrary to what everyone used to think, it does not mean a return to Catholic unity, but rather the establishment of a new kind of unity that no longer requires conversion.

Christian denominations are considered under a new light, and this is especially clear for the Orthodox. In the Balamand Declaration, the Catholic Church officially pledged herself to not convert the Orthodox and to collaborate with them. The dogma “outside the Church there is no salvation,” recalled in the document *Dominus Jesus*, underwent a reinterpretation for the sake of the new vision of things. They could not keep this dogma without broadening the limits of the Church, and this was accomplished by the new definition of the Church given in *Lumen Gentium*. The Church of Christ *is* no longer the Catholic Church, it *subsists* in her. They may say that it subsists *only* in her, but the fact remains that they claim that the Holy Ghost and this “Church of Christ” act outside the Catholic Church. The other religions are not without elements of salvation... The “Orthodox Churches” become authentic particular churches in which “the Church of Christ” is built.

Obviously, these new views completely disrupted the Church's relations with the other religions. It is impossible to speak of a superficial change; for what they want to impose on the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is a new and very profound mutation. John Paul II consequently was able to speak of a "new ecclesiology," admitting an essential change in the part of the theology that treats of the Church. We simply cannot understand how they can claim that this new understanding of the Church is still in harmony with the traditional definition of the Church. It is new; it is radically different and obliges the Catholic to observe a fundamentally different behavior towards the heretics and schismatics, who have tragically abandoned the Church and scorned the faith of their baptism. From now on they are no longer "separated brethren," but brothers who "are not in full communion"... and we are "deeply united" by baptism in Christ in an "inamissible"² union. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's latest clarification of the word "*subsistit*" is very revealing on this point. Even as it states that the Church cannot teach novelty, it confirms the novelty introduced at the Council...

Likewise for evangelization: the sacred duty of every Christian to respond to our Lord Jesus Christ's command is at first upheld: "*He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned*" (Mk. 16: 15-16). But then it is alleged that this evangelization only concerns the pagans, so that neither Christians nor Jews need be bothered. Very recently Cardinals Kasper and Bertone, addressing the controversy over the new prayer for the Jews, stated that the Church has no intention of converting them.

Add to this the pope's positions on religious liberty, and we can easily conclude that the combat for the faith has not slackened over these last few years. The *motu proprio* that introduces the hope of a change for the better in matters liturgical is not accompanied by the logically related measures that should follow in other domains of the Church's life. All the changes introduced at the Council and in the post-conciliar reforms, which we denounce precisely because the Church had already condemned them, have been upheld. The only difference is that now they claim at the same time that the Church does not change... which amounts to saying that these changes are perfectly in line with Catholic Tradition. This confusion of terminology combined with the assertion that the Church must remain faithful to her Tradition might well be troubling to more than a few. So long as facts do not corroborate this new assertion, we must conclude that nothing has changed in Rome's intention to pursue the conciliar course despite forty years of crisis, despite vacant convents, abandoned rectories, and empty churches. Catholic universities persist in their divagations, and the teaching of the catechism is uncertain while Catholic schools are no longer specifically Catholic: they have become an extinct species...

For these reasons the Priestly Society of St. Pius X cannot sign an "agreement." It definitely rejoices at the pope's desire to reintroduce the ancient and venerable rite of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, yet it also observes the opposition—sometimes very tenacious—of entire bishops' conferences. Without giving up hope and without impatience, we can see that the time for an agreement has not yet come. This does not prevent us from continuing to hope, nor from following the line of conduct defined in the year 2000. We are still asking the Holy Father to annul the 1988 decree of excommunication because we are convinced that this would be a boon for the Church, and we encourage you to pray for this to happen. But it would be very imprudent and hasty to dash off ill-advisedly in pursuit of a practical agreement that would not be based on the Church's fundamental principles, and especially the faith.

The new Rosary Crusade we have invited you to join, to pray that the Church recover and resume her bimillennial Tradition, calls for some clarification. This is how we envision it: let everyone pledge to recite daily a rosary at a fairly fixed time of day. Given the number of our faithful and their distribution throughout the whole world, we can be assured that at every hour of the day and night prayerful voices will be ascending to heaven, voices earnestly praying for the triumph of their heavenly Mother and the coming of the reign of our Lord "*on earth as it is in heaven.*"

+ Bernard Fellay
Superior General
April 14, 2008

Footnotes

¹ Interview, *Jesus*, November 1984, p. 72.

² [Theological term meaning "*that cannot be lost*"—Translator's note.]