

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

## **SUPERIOR GENERAL'S LETTER TO FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS #73**

*Dear Friends and Benefactors,*

In this letter, I would have liked to give you first of all some news about the internal life of the Society. However, current events in the Church at large and especially concerning the developments in favor of Tradition compel us to dwell longer upon these topics of a more external nature, because of their importance. Once again, it seems to us necessary to tackle this subject, so as to express as clearly as possible something which might have caused some concern at the beginning of the summer.

As the media related in a rather surprising manner, I must say, we did receive an ultimatum from Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos. But the thing is rather complex and needs to be clarified in order to be well understood. A glance back at recent past events will help us to grasp things a little more clearly.

### **1. Our Pre-conditions**

From the beginning when Rome approached us and proposed some solutions, that is, at the beginning of 2001, we clearly stated that the manner in which Church authorities were treating the problems raised by those who desired to attempt the experience of Tradition with Rome did not inspire confidence in us. Logically we had to expect to be treated in like manner once the issue of our relationship with Rome would have been settled. Since that time, and in order to protect ourselves, we have been asking for concrete actions which would unequivocally show Rome's intentions towards us: the traditional Mass for all priests, and the withdrawal of the decree of excommunication. These two measures were not sought directly in view of gaining some advantage for ourselves, but to re-instill into the Mystical Body a breath of traditional life, and thus, indirectly, help to bring about a sound rapprochement between the Society and Rome.

The first responses were hardly engaging and were rather a confirmation of our misgivings: it was not possible to grant freedom for the Mass, because, in spite of the realization that the Mass had never been abrogated, some bishops and faithful thought it might be repudiation of Paul VI and of the liturgical reform... As for the excommunication, it would be lifted at the time of the agreement.

In spite of this demurrer, we did not cut the slender thread of fairly difficult relations, aware as we were that what is at stake far exceeds our own plight. It is not a matter of persons, but of an attitude which for centuries has been that of all the members of the Church, and which remains ours, unlike the new spirit, called "the spirit of Vatican II." And it is obvious for us that this new spirit is at the root, and is the main cause of the present misfortunes of Holy Mother Church. Hence, the basic motivation behind our actions and our relations with the Roman authorities has always been to do prudently all we can to bring about the return of the Church to what she cannot deprive herself of without rushing headlong to suicide.

Our situation is very delicate: on the one hand, we recognize both the Roman authorities and the local bishops as legitimate. But on the other hand, we contest some of their decisions, because, in various degrees, they are opposed to what the Magisterium always taught and ordered. In this, there is no pretense on our part of setting ourselves as judges or of picking and choosing. It is nothing more than the expression of an extremely painful observation of a contradiction which goes against both our Catholic consciences and faith. Such a situation is extremely grave, and cannot be treated with levity. This is also the reason why we move only very slowly and with the utmost prudence. If we are obviously greatly interested in obtaining a situation which is concretely livable in the Church, the clear awareness of the much more profound key issue which we have just described, forbids us to place the two issues on an equal footing. It is so clear for us that the issue of the Faith and of the spirit of faith has priority over all that we cannot consider a practical solution before the first issue is safely resolved. Holy Mother Church always taught us that we had to be ready to lose everything, even our own life, rather than lose the faith.

What is strange is that the blows are now coming from within the Church, and that is the stark reality of the drama through which we are living.

### **2 – In 2007, One of the Pre-conditions was Fulfilled, the *Motu Proprio***

In 2007, the new Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XVI finally granted the first point we had requested, the traditional Mass for the priests all over the world. We are deeply grateful for this personal gesture from the pope. And it causes us a great joy, because we have a great hope that we can see in this a renewal for the whole Mystical Body. Yet, the *motu proprio* has become (because of the very nature of what it states and gives back, *i.e.*, the traditional Mass), the object of the fight we mentioned

earlier in this letter because the traditional worship is opposed to the cult which meant to be “new”, the “*Novus Ordo Missae*”. It has become an occasion of fight between the progressivists, who give lip service to their full ecclesial communion while they more or less openly oppose the orders and the dispositions coming from the Sovereign Pontiff, and the conservatives, who consequently find themselves in a situation where they resist their bishops... So whom are we to obey? The progressivists know quite well that what is at stake is much more than a liturgical dispute. In spite of the efforts of the *motu proprio* to minimize opposition by affirming continuity, what is at stake is the very fate of a Council which meant to be pastoral, and which was applied in such a way that Paul VI already could speak of the “*self-destruction of the Church*.”

### 3 – Hope of a Rapid Fulfillment of Second Pre-condition

This first step of Rome in our direction gave us hope that a second would soon follow. Some signs seemed to point this way. But, whereas we had long ago proposed the itinerary we had mapped out, it would seem that Rome has decided to follow another route. In spite of our reiterated request for the withdrawal of the decree of excommunication, and as it seemed that there was no longer any major obstacle to prevent the accomplishment of this act, we witnessed a sudden turn of events: Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos wants to impose upon us conditions before going any further, even though we had clearly said that we expected a unilateral act. Our attitude seems to him ungrateful towards the Sovereign Pontiff, and even worse: haughty and proud, since we continue to openly denounce the evils from which the Church is suffering. Our latest *Letter to Friends and Benefactors* particularly aroused his displeasure. This earned for us an ultimatum, the precise conditions of which we still have not yet been able to figure out. For either we accept the canonical solution, or we will be declared schismatic!

When we take a stand this is interpreted as a delay, a voluntary procrastination. Our intentions and our good will to really discuss with Rome are doubted. They do not understand why we do not want an immediate canonical solution. For Rome, the problem of the Society would be resolved by that practical agreement; doctrinal discussions would be avoided or postponed. For us, each day brings additional proofs that we must clarify to the maximum the underlying issues before taking one more step toward a canonical situation, which is not in itself displeasing to us. But this is a matter of following the order of the nature of things, and to start from the wrong end would unavoidably place us in an unbearable situation. We have daily proofs of this. What is at stake is nothing more nor less than our future existence. We cannot, and will not leave any ambiguity subsist on the issue of the acceptance of the Council, of the reforms, of the new attitudes which are either being tolerated or fostered.

Confronted with these new difficulties, we take the liberty of appealing once more to your generosity. Given the success of our first Rosary Crusade to obtain the return of the Tridentine Mass, we would now like to offer to Our Lady a new bouquet of a million rosaries (5 decades) to obtain the withdrawal of the decree of excommunication through her intercession. From November 1st until the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, we will take it to heart to pray with renewed fervor that, in these difficult hours of history, the Holy Father may fulfill with fidelity his august functions in accordance with the wish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the good of all the Church. We are utterly convinced that such a gesture coming from the Sovereign Pontiff would have as profound an effect on the Mystical Body as the freedom of the traditional liturgy.

Indeed, the excommunication did not cut us off from the Church, but it has driven away a good number of her members from the Church's past and from her Tradition. And she cannot deprive herself of them without suffering serious harm. It is truly obvious that Holy Mother Church cannot ignore her past, since she has received everything and is still to this day receiving everything from her divine founder, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the excommunication, what has been censured and penalized is the very attitude which specified the combat of Archbishop Lefebvre, *i.e.*, this relationship to the Church's past and to her Tradition. Since then, because of this reprobation, many fear to come to the sources of living water which alone can bring back the good old days of Holy Mother Church. Yet, Archbishop Lefebvre did nothing more than adopt the attitude of St. Paul, to the extent that he requested that the following words be engraved on his tomb: “*Tradidi quod et accepi*”—*I have handed down what I have received*. Did not St. Pius X himself write that the “*true friends of the Church are not the revolutionaries, nor the innovators, but the traditionalists*”?

For this reason, dear faithful, we launch again this Rosary Crusade on the occasion of our pilgrimage to Lourdes for the 150th anniversary of the Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin. We thank the Mother of God for the maternal protection she extended over us during all these years, and especially for the twenty years since the Episcopal Consecrations. We entrust to her all your intentions for yourselves, your families and your work. To her we entrust our future and beg for this fidelity to the faith and to the Church without which no one can work out his salvation.

I thank you wholeheartedly for your untiring generosity which enables us to continue the magnificent work founded by Archbishop Lefebvre. We ask our good Mother in Heaven to protect you and to keep you all in her Immaculate Heart.

Menzingen, October 23, 2008, on the feast of St. Anthony Mary Claret

+ *Bernard Fellay*  
Superior General