

Letter of Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos to Mgr. Fellay

(English translation by Mr. Ken Jones, Una Voce St. Louis)

The Vatican, April 5, 2002

Dear Brother in the Lord:

Since the beginning of our fraternal contacts to find a way toward full communion, I believe that we have experienced the solicitude of our merciful Lord: truly he has not spared us His aide and His support, to gather together all the good things that unite us and overcome what still divides us.

I read at the time attentively, in prayer and not without suffering, your letter of last June 22. I have also studied certain documents concerning our conversations, written by members of the Fraternity of St. Pius X, published on the Internet and disseminated by other means of communication. I have also reread the letters of the bishops of the Society of St. Pius X, the interviews granted by Your Excellency and the letters that you have sent me.

Until today, for my part, I have never agreed to grant interviews on the subject, in order to maintain the privacy of the details of our dialogue: for me they have always had a provisional and discreet character, because of the great responsibility that I feel in conscience for this matter. It now seems to me opportune, for the love of truth, to clarify here several aspects of the development of this reconciliation, with the intention of imparting a new impetus, to be frank, to move beyond possible suspicions and misunderstandings that compromise the outcome that,

I have no doubt, Your Excellency also desires.

The subject that we are considering will have, in fact, particularly important historical consequences, because it touches the unity, the truth and the holiness of the Church, and it is necessary therefore to treat it with charity but also with objectivity and truth. Our sole judge is Christ the Lord.

Permit me now to give a brief historical overview of our journey:

First of all, I must reiterate a historical truth, at the root of everything. My first initiative was not the result of a Pontifical mandate and was not the fruit of an agreement or project of some other person from the Apostolic See, contrary to what has been written and rumored, as if it was a matter of a definite strategy. As I have already had the occasion to say several times, the dialogue was completely my own personal initiative.

In the second week of August 2000, on returning from Colombia, I learned through the media that was available on the airplane, and only through it, that the Society of St. Pius X was participating in the Jubilee. On my own initiative, and without speaking to anyone about it, I decided to invite the four bishops of the Fraternity to a private dinner with me. The meeting with brother bishops would be a gesture of fraternal love, the occasion of a reciprocal exchange. I therefore had the joy of meeting Your Excellency, as well as Their Excellencies Tissier and Williamson. As you will recall, we did not discuss any subject thoroughly, even if, naturally, we did speak about the liturgical rites, and I was able to become familiar with several aspects of the current life of your Fraternity. I manifested publicly the good impression that the aforementioned Prelates made on me.

I subsequently gave an account of this meeting to the Holy Father, and I received from him words of encouragement. I expressed a desire to maintain

contacts to explore the possibilities of this much hoped for unity. The Sovereign Pontiff asked me to continue, and he manifested his clear will to accommodate the Society of St. Pius X, by promoting the conditions necessary for this accommodation.

Some time later I read, with a private satisfaction, the interview granted by Your Excellency to the magazine 30 Days. The journalist put these words on your lips: "If the Holy Father calls me I come, or rather I run." I had occasion to speak with the Holy Father about this interview, in which Your Excellency expressed freely and spontaneously his thought: the Holy Father indicated to me, one more time, his generous will to accommodate your Fraternity.

As a result, I contacted Cardinals Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State for His Holiness, Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Jorge Medina Estevez, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, as well as with His Excellency Mgr. Julian Herranz, President of the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts. All manifested their satisfaction with a view to an eventual solution of the difficulties. I also consulted Cardinals Paul Augustin Mayer and Alfons Marie Stickler, who were of the same opinion. It is thus that we studied the fundamental theological problems, already present in 1988 when an accord with His Excellency Mgr. Lefebvre was prepared. It did not seem to us that there have been any new problems. Then we began studying several juridical forms that would make a reintegration possible; this appeared very much desirable. Throughout history, the desire for unity has always been a constant for the See of Peter.

To all it seemed appropriate, if Your Excellency agreed, that the undersigned could proceed to a new dialogue of a provisional character. It was not a matter of discussing theological problems in depth, but preparing the way for reconciliation.

I therefore invited Your Excellency by letter; you amiably accepted the invitation and the meeting took place on Dec. 29, 2000.

As Your Excellency knows well, we then studied the possibility of reconciliation and of the return to full communion, as a very concrete and special fruit of the Jubilee. We concluded with a dinner at my residence, attended also by the Rev. Michel Simoulin, in a very cordial and fraternal climate.

Informed of this new reunion, and despite the amount of work he had in the last days of the great Jubilee, the Holy Father received you with the Abbe Simoulin on Dec. 30, 2000 in his private chapel. After a few minutes of silent prayer, the Holy Father said the Our Father, followed by those present, then he wished them a Holy Christmas. He blessed them by offering several rosaries and encouraged them to continue the dialogue undertaken.

In the same Apostolic Palace and in the presence of the personal secretaries of the Holy Father, I read to Your Excellency a Protocol regarding the dialogue of the preceding day, which would be sent to the Sovereign Pontiff. You have expressed your agreement by specifying two points: 1) the prayer for the Pope in the Canon of the Mass was not your decision but was a prior provision of Mgr. Lefebvre; 2) reservation about Vatican II especially regarding religious liberty, since the rights of God over the public order could not be limited. The secretary took notes in order to make a report to the Holy Father.

For further clarity, permit me to transcribe here the aforesaid protocol:

On Dec. 29, as planned, I had a meeting of a provisional character with His Excellency Mgr. Bernard Felly, Superior General of the Society of St. Pius X. The

meeting was characterized by a lively friendliness and his spirit of faith.

The Position of His Excellency Mgr. Fellay

1.1 He expresses his will be fully Catholic.

1.2 He recognizes His Holiness John Paul II as successor of Peter and he wants to submit to his authority. He has his seminarians promise to pray for the Holy Father and cites the name of his Holiness John Paul II in the Canon of the Mass.

1.3 He accepts the Second Vatican Council while expressing difficulties on several points.

1.4 Principal difficulties:

- In returning to full communion he does not mean to give up the struggle against modernism in the Church, liberalization, democratization and the influence of Freemasonry;

- Past experience prevents him from being trusting, and makes him fear that the Fraternity will be ill-treated and abandoned, consequently losing its charism of the defense of Tradition;

- He considers that the Mass of Paul VI presents silences that open the way to protestantization (lay ministers) and that do not emphasize the sacrificial dimension of the Mass;

- Concerning the sacrament of confirmation he considers

- but this needs to be studied
- that olive oil is necessary for validity; in case of doubt, regarding some candidates, they proceed with a new conditional administration; they consider moreover that certain translations of the formula are not theologically exact;

- He believes that canon law opens the way to a democratic conception of collegiality (episcopal conferences), which promote collegiality to the detriment of Petrine primacy;

- He considers that the conciliar text on religious liberty lends itself to relativist interpretations tending toward protestantism;

- He considers that there is a form of ecumenism that causes the idea of the unique Church to become lost, with the danger of a Protestant mentality (His Excellency Mgr. Kasper speaks of

abandonment of the ecumenism "of return" for an ecumenism of "a common way" that guides Christians toward universal reconciliation).

My Position:

2.1 The Holy Father has open arms.

2.2 The position of the bishops would be made regular for the present, and in the future with the presentation of ["terna"], when the case presents itself.

2.3 The Fraternity would be a Society of Apostolic Life with a special rite.

2.4 The protocol signed by Cardinal Ratzinger and His Excellency Mgr. Marcel Lefebvre would be followed.

2.5 There would be a special commission with the participation of the bishops of the Fraternity, as foreseen in the protocol.

2.6 Naturally, the excommunication would be lifted and one would proceed to the necessary sanation according to the norm of law.

A few days later an audience was requested of me, with Your Excellency, who was accompanied by the former Benedictine abbot, Dom Thomas Niggel

(Weltenberg) and Don Simoulin. The dialogue was very intense and lasted several hours. With much honesty, Your Excellency presented several points of view concerning the Holy Mass and the difficulties to be expected in this process. At that time, it seemed clear that no dogma was denied, nor was pontifical authority. One felt on the other hand faced with difficulties of theological interpretation, of estimation of the life and the crisis of the Church, of the explanation or of the interpretation of certain texts of Vatican II. I believed that these dialogues concerning theological detail, certainly important and not without difficulties, could be examined in the very heart of the Church, after the attainment of full substantial communion which, however, did not exclude a healthy criticism. My assessors and the Cardinals specially involved in the affair shared my opinion on this point.

After these events, in noting your good will and based on the fact that your Fraternity certainly was not spreading any heretical doctrine and did not maintain schismatic attitudes, I had dared you to propose, without consulting anyone first, to set a possible date for reintegration. I suggested as a possible date the Solemnity of Easter 2001, and Your Excellency, although surprised, did not exclude this possibility, while expressing in any case that, probably, at the center of the Society of St. Pius X a few problems would arise. I therefore took pains to find a formula that would give to your Fraternity the full guaranty of maintaining its charism of service to Tradition, of assuring the rite of the Mass of St. Pius V, and of continuing fully its effort to safeguard sound doctrine and preserve discipline and Catholic morality.

I do not believe that my clear attitude and declaration of intention can be correctly interpreted - as some of you have - as a conversion on the part of the Church of Rome, which should now search for the Deposit of Faith in the heart of the Society of St. Pius X. Nor should my search for dialogue be considered to signify an inability of the universal Church to emerge

of an interior crisis. In fact, what we have done in our dialogues, and written in the protocols, is very different: we have spoken of the common work of brothers to promote holiness in the Church, which must always be reformed in the life of its members. The Holy Father received with satisfaction the full account given about this meeting and expressed anew his disposition to maintain open arms for reconciliation.

At this stage, I convened a plenary initial meeting of the Ecclesia Dei Commission, with all its members as well as with their Eminences Cardinals Felici, Mayer and Stickler. I explained to them the beginnings of this journey and the actual state of the question.

A little afterwards the Holy Father named, for the first time, Cardinals Ratzinger, Medina, Billee and Mgr. Herranz as members of the Commission. Some of you interpreted this gesture as a move designed to control, dominate and absorb the Society of St. Pius X.

You yourself, dear Mgr. Fellay, after having heard from several members of the Fraternity and having met your Council, sent to me the secretary of the Society of St. Pius X, Don Selegny, accompanied by Don Simoulin, with the mission of presenting several questions concerning the formulas of an eventual reintegration. The secretary, after having heard my responses articulated to his numerous questions, expressed himself in an extremely harsh manner about the present rite of the Holy Mass, as the faithful united to the Vicar of Christ and their Bishops adhere to, in claiming that this rite was evil; he informed me moreover of having received from you a mandate to suspend the dialogues, if two prior conditions were not granted: to lift the excommunication and to permit all Catholic priests to celebrate according to the rite of St. Pius V.

I should say that I was left saddened and perplexed, because this development was not in line with the climate of trust, of cordial fraternity and reciprocal

respect which, until then, had sustained and animated our relations.

Since the beginning, starting out from a sound, fundamental position, a hope was kept alive of being able to put an end to the irregular situation in which your Fraternity finds itself; even more so because I noted neither the scent of heresy nor the will to incur a formal schism on your part, but only the desire to contribute to the good of the universal Church, considering that the specific charism of the Society of St. Pius X toward Tradition, in the current context, could only benefit the path of the Church.

It was absolutely not a matter of a trap, set up to silence you or destroy your movement, and a base strategy with hidden intentions or with unconfessed aims was never followed, as certain among you have written to the contrary.

I can say that on the part of the Holy See and of all people involved in this difficult but promising episode for the unity of the Church, we never lacked the honest desire to see the Society of St. Pius X reconciled with the See of Peter so that, with its particular charism of service to Tradition, it could contribute to the missionary work of the new evangelization.

Also, although I did not doubt the disposition of Your Excellency to continue our dialogue toward the desired end, I am surprised at the declarations you and other members of the Society of St. Pius X have made on this subject.

It seems to me in fact that your declarations, which appear to cast doubt on the sincerity of the Holy See, are not useful in making our common efforts thrive, and have created a less favorable climate and cast doubt on the Society of St. Pius X's understanding of this important matter.

Permit me, therefore, to quote some of your

statements, enumerating several of these contradictory attitudes and assertions in which your Fraternity seems to be risking itself, which create perplexity and are in contradiction to the Tradition of the Church. Besides, how could I not confront these painful points, if they contained questions that invite at least some explanation?

I must therefore enumerate several of the points of which we have knowledge:

- "It cannot be denied that the dysfunction of the Catholic hierarchy, ... omissions, silences, deceptions, tolerance of errors, and even of positively destructive acts, reaches even into the Curia, and unfortunately even in the Vicar of Christ. These are public facts that can be seen by ordinary men." (Letter from Mgr. Bernard Fellay to Card. Castrillon, Menzingen, June 21, 2001).

This frontal attack on the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, including the Pope, and the reproach of having abandoned Tradition, constitutes in practice a dangerous pretension of judging the supreme authority. In line with the teaching of the First Vatican Council, Pastor Aeternus, we believe no one can arrogate to himself the right to judge the Holy See: "... than which there is no higher authority [and which] is not subject to revision by anyone, nor may anyone lawfully pass judgment thereupon." Nicholas I said it already in the 9th Century, in the letter to Proposueramus: "The judge will be judged neither by the emperor, nor by the assembly of the clergy, nor by the princes, nor by the people. ... The principal See will not be judged by anyone."

Nor can one forget, in line with true Catholic Tradition, these other declarations of the First Vatican Council on the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church, in fact, "...received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the savior and redeemer of the human race, and that to this day and for ever he lives and presides and exercises judgment in his successors

the bishops of the Holy Roman See, which he founded and consecrated with his blood." It is thus that "...by unity with the Roman Pontiff in communion and in profession of the same faith, the Church of Christ becomes one flock under one Supreme Shepherd. This is the teaching of the Catholic truth, and no one can depart from it without endangering his faith and salvation." Also in Pastor Aeternus, one reads concerning the Apostolic See: "For in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been preserved unblemished, and sacred doctrine been held in honor. Since it is our earnest desire to be in no way separated from this faith and doctrine, we hope that we may deserve to remain in that one communion which the Apostolic See preaches, for in it is the whole and true strength of the Christian religion."

- The Society of St. Pius X makes an accusation, saying that Truth has been abandoned by the Church that it calls, in a pejorative fashion, "conciliar": "The Conciliar Church is like a termite that bores away from the inside. For 30 years and more, the same principles have been applied with an imperturbable coherence, despite their catastrophic fruits. ... So, we prefer to keep our freedom to act for the whole Church rather than let ourselves be isolated in a zoo of Tradition. It is necessary to shake up the Catholic world, which slumbers in a post-Conciliar lethargy." (Interview with Mgr. Fellay in the journal "Pacte" Summer 2001).
- In addition, in a letter you sent me, Your Excellency wrote: "It seems to me possible to affirm, from our point of view, that, following Popes Pius XII and Paul VI, the Church is presently in a literally apocalyptic situation." (Letter from Mgr. Bernard Fellay to Card. Castrillon, Menzingen, June 21, 2001). I did not manage to find the exact words of Pius XII Your Excellency is referring to. I have no difficulty in recognizing, with Pope Paul VI, that the "smoke of Satan" has entered the Church, even if the context of the assertion was limited. In reality it seems that in all

eras of the history of the Church, sometimes more sometimes less, one can speak of a situation of Apocalypse. But one should not be surprised by sin, since it is rather grace that is astonishing. Despite the decadence of the practice of the Faith that extends up and down the old European continent, despite the presence here and there of certain abuses in discipline and liturgy, it is disproportionate, false and unacceptable to claim that the Church and the Pope have left the Faith.

St. Catherine of Siena wrote to Barnabas, Viscount Lord of Milan: "He is insane who rises or acts contrary to this Vicar who holds the keys of the blood of Christ crucified. Even if he was a demon incarnate, I should not raise my head against him, but always grovel and ask for the blood out of mercy. And don't pay attention to what the demon proposes to you and you propose under the color of virtue, that is to say to want to do justice against evil pastors regarding their fault. Don't trust the demon: don't try to do justice about what does not concern you. God wants neither you nor anyone else to set themselves up as a righter of the wrongs of His ministers. He reserves judgment to Himself, and He reserves it to His Vicar; and if the Vicar does not do justice, we should wait for the punishment and correction on the part of the sovereign judge, God Eternal." (Letters, Vol. I. Letter No. 28).

To return to this situation, I should tell you my sorrow in noting that your publications, despite the praiseworthy desire to guard against certain faults and sins, lack this sensibility that is required in order to appreciate the positive elements that are also amid the faults.

- "For it is in this regard that can be found the novelties of the new theology, that were condemned by the Church under Pius XII, and that were introduced into Vatican II. ... They would have us believe today that these novelties are but a development in conformity with the past. They were

already condemned, at least in their principles." (Letter from Mgr. Bernard Fellay to Card. Castrillon, Menzingen, June 21, 2001).

According to the opinion of the Society of St. Pius X, the Catholic Church has strayed from the deposit of Faith. "We are only a sign of the terrible tragedy that runs through the Church, maybe the most terrible of all until now, where not only dogma but everything is attacked." (Letter from Mgr. Bernard Fellay to Card. Castrillon, Menzingen, June 21, 2001).

- "A Magisterium that contradicts the teaching of the past (for example, today's ecumenism versus Mortalium Animos), a Magisterium that contradicts itself (see the Joint Declaration on Justification and the preceding note from Cardinal Cassidy, where one finds a condemnation of and also praise for the term "sister churches") - here lies a haunting problem. Thousands and millions of faithful Catholics who [leave] the Faith are damned because of the failures of Rome, here is our concern." (Letter from Mgr. Bernard Fellay to Card. Castrillon, Menzingen, June 21, 2001).
- "This crisis in the Magisterium constitutes a problem that it is almost impossible to resolve practically. Moreover, the nightmare concerns also the Curia and the residential bishops." (Letter from Mgr. Bernard Fellay to Card. Castrillon, Menzingen, June 21, 2001).

Your Excellency professes to believe in the indefectibility of the Church, and one recognizes gladly your merits in the vigorous struggle against several sedevacantist heresies. However, as far as your citation of Vatican I - on the character, the object and the purpose of the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff - is concerned [Bishop Fellay had quoted the following passage from Pastor Aeternus in his letter to Card. Hoyos: "The Holy Ghost was not promised to the successors of Peter that by His revelation they might disclose new doctrine, but that by His help they might guard sacredly the revelation transmitted through the

apostles and the deposit of Faith, and might faithfully set it forth"], it seems necessary to me to cite in full what is contained in this paragraph and the next: "Indeed, their apostolic teaching was embraced by all the venerable fathers and reverenced and followed by all the holy orthodox doctors, for they knew very well that this See of St. Peter always remains unblemished by any error, in accordance with the divine promise of our Lord and Savior to the prince of his disciples: 'I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.'"

The divine assurance that this text expresses, according to which the seat of the Apostle Peter will always be exempt from all kind of error, does not permit one to accuse the current Pontiff in the name of an earlier Council, as if there were no continuity between Councils and as if the promise of the Lord has been worthless since the Second Vatican Council. The indefectible charism of Truth and Faith ("This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter and his successors in this See" - Pastor Aeternus) has not been granted in any less degree to the person of John Paul II, whose faith is that of the Church of all time.

If Your Excellency seriously considers this declaration about the "never-ending faith" in the Roman Pontiff, it seems to me that it would be necessary to show a greater theological consistency in reflecting on the organic development of the magisterium of the Church in recent years. It is true that one notes differences of opinion and theological formation among the prelates of the Church; however, a simple sentence, even said by the Sovereign Pontiff, is not an act of the magisterium; we know that all statements assume different degrees of authority.

It is always possible to criticize this type of statement, as well as a style of governing. The criticism, however, demands an authentic understanding of the

thinking of the other person, and should presuppose that he also possess the Catholic faith. If one raises inconsistencies, the criticism, made with humility and charity, becomes a service rendered with great respect and in a spirit of sincere collaboration.

Origen, in *Contra Celsus*, said: "[T]aking in different acceptations those discourses which were believed by all to be divine, there arose heresies, which received their names from those individuals who admired, indeed, the origin of Christianity, but who were led, in some way or other, by certain plausible reasons, to discordant views. And yet no one would act rationally in avoiding medicine because of its heresies; nor would he who aimed at that which is seemly entertain a hatred of philosophy, and adduce its many heresies as a pretext for his antipathy. And so neither are the sacred books of Moses and the prophets to be condemned on account of the heresies in Judaism. Now, if these arguments hold good, why should we not defend, in the same way, the existence of heresies in Christianity? And respecting these, Paul appears to me to speak in a very striking manner when he says, "For there must be heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you." For as that man is "approved" in medicine who, on account of his experience in various (medical) heresies, and his honest examination of the majority of them, has selected the preferable system,- and as the great proficient in philosophy is he who, after acquainting himself experimentally with the various views, has given in his adhesion to the best,--so I would say that the wisest Christian was he who had carefully studied the heresies both of Judaism and Christianity. Whereas he who finds fault with Christianity because of its heresies would find fault also with the teaching of Socrates, from whose school have issued many others of discordant views. Nay, the opinions of Plato might be chargeable with error, on account of Aristotle's having separated from his school, and founded a new one."

• "Rome is in a hurry to conclude. We are much less in a hurry, as Bishop Fellay said recently. After Vatican II, the train of reforms moved off, and little by little increased speed. ... It is speeding up more and more foolishly towards total anti-christianity, as Archbishop Lefebvre so rightly said in 1987." (Abbe Benoit de Jorna, Superior of the St. Pius X Seminary in Eccone, Interview with Giovanni Pelli, May 15, 2001).

• "Rome approached us, saying: Listen, you have a problem; it needs to be solved. You are outside; you must come back in, under certain conditions. Now it is our turn to respond: No, it is not like that. If we are in the situation in which we currently find ourselves (a situation of being marginalized and persecuted), we are not the cause. The cause is to be found in Rome; it was because there are grave deficiencies at Rome that Archbishop Lefebvre had to adopt certain positions in order to conserve certain goods of the Church that were being vandalized." (Interview with Mgr. Fellay in the journal "Pacte" Summer 2001).

• "We reject the dilemma they are trying to snare us in again. It is very clear: we are not outside, nor will we allow ourselves to be caged." (Interview with Mgr. Fellay in the journal "Pacte" Summer 2001).

No heretic or schismatic, throughout history, has said he is wrong. They always thought that is was the Church that was wrong.

In particularly difficult circumstances, not only of persecution, the Church foresees the possibility of "states of necessity." But these states of necessity are always subject to the criteria of the judgment of the supreme ecclesiastical authority, and the measures it adopts in consequence; they cannot be claimed against or outside of this supreme authority, on the part of forces, orthodox though they may be, driven by a desire to reform and by good intentions. Your conception and your interpretation of these states of necessity are not consistent with faith in the indefectibility of the Church, and de facto were never

shared by the universal episcopate with the Pope as its head. It is a sorrow for us to see you shut up in such a position, which very much thwarts the return to full communion that is desired.

- "Personnally, I don't believe in discussions which would not deal with the heart of the matter: with Vatican II, with the new Mass, intrinsically evil as we always said in Tradition, with the new code of Canon Law, which introduces the new Vatican II ecclesiology in the legislation of the Church." (Abbe Benoit de Jorna, Superior of the St. Pius X Seminary in Econe, Interview with Giovanni Pelli, May 15, 2001).
- "After 20 years of pontificate, John Paul II has not changed. He still is the pope of Assisi. The new ecumenism born of Vatican II is his guiding idea. ... Personnally, I think that he wants to integrate us, in this pluralistic church. This integration would be our desintegration." (Abbe Benoit de Jorna, Superior of the St. Pius X Seminary in Econe, Interview with Giovanni Pelli, May 15, 2001).
- "We are presently at a standstill, an impasse. I think that this stoppage results from the groundwork on which the dialogue was started." (Interview with Mgr. Fellay in the journal "Pacte" Summer 2001).

To qualify as Catholic one must always, before everything, seek full communion with Peter. Faced with possible doubts and problems, it is always possible to make criticisms that, in conscience and with humility, one considers to be truly constructive. Despite all difficulties, this thought of Leo XIII should enlighten us: "But the true church is one, as by unity of doctrine, so by unity of government, and she is catholic also. Since God has placed the center and foundation of unity in the chair of Blessed Peter, she is rightly called the Roman Church, for 'where Peter is, there is the church.' Wherefore, if anybody wishes to be considered a real Catholic, he ought to be able to say from his heart the selfsame words which Jerome addressed to Pope Damasus: 'I, acknowledging no

other leader than Christ, am bound in fellowship with Your Holiness; that is, with the chair of Peter. I know that the church was built upon him as its rock, and that whosoever gathereth not with you, scattereth.'"

Even if the members of your Fraternity recognize the legitimacy of the current Pope, John Paul II, and recognize him as the true successor of Peter and the legitimate Vicar of Christ, the language often used by certain of you is not very respectful. In fact, it seems that these do not accept the prerogatives of the Pope concerning possible modifications in the ritual form of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

- "We refuse the new liturgy, because it is endangering our catholic faith." (Abbe Benoit de Jorna, Superior of the St. Pius X Seminary in Econe, Interview with Giovanni Pelli, May 15, 2001).

This attitude is to be compared with the teaching of the earlier magisterium (Council of Trent, Dz 1728): "The Holy Council declares moreover: The Church has always had, in the dispensation of the sacraments, their substance being saved, the power to decide or to modify what she judges better to suit the spiritual utility of those who receive them or with respect to the sacraments themselves, according to the variety of circumstances, times and places." In the encyclical *Mediator Dei*, Pope Pius XII writes: "In every measure taken, then, let proper contact with the ecclesiastical hierarchy be maintained. Let no one arrogate to himself the right to make regulations and impose them on others at will. Only the Sovereign Pontiff, as the successor of Saint Peter, charged by the divine Redeemer with the feeding of His entire flock, and with him, in obedience to the Apostolic See, the bishops 'whom the Holy Ghost has placed ... to rule the Church of God,' have the right and the duty to govern the Christian people."

- "True, the Romans may always convert, but, again, given the track record such as the Vatican's over the last 40 years, then the burden of proof lies with those

who claim they have converted, and not with those who assume, by the Romans' fruits, that they are still wolves and foxes and sharks!" (Mgr. Williamson, Letter to Benefactors, Feb. 1, 2001).

- "And the recent message of Cardinal Sodano to the pilgrims from Paris to Chartres insists twice in six lines on the obedience to the bishops, on the necessary docility of Catholic traditionalists toward their persecutors for 30 years. For those who imagine that Rome opens wide her arms, it's a snub. One more." (Abbe G. de Tanouarn, *Pacte*, Summer 2001, p. 11).

I cannot fail to note with sadness that this tone, concerning the intentions of the Holy See, does not help toward reconciliation, since it is not in line with the superior gift of charity, as St. Irenaeus taught: "He shall also judge those who give rise to schisms, who are destitute of the love of God, and who look to their own special advantage rather than to the unity of the Church; and who for trifling reasons, or any kind of reason which occurs to them, cut in pieces and divide the great and glorious body of Christ, and so far as in them lies, [positively] destroy it,--men who prate of peace while they give rise to war, and do in truth strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel. For no reformation of so great importance can be effected by them, as will compensate for the mischief arising from their schism. ... True knowledge is [that which consists in] the doctrine of the apostles, and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops, by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place, and has come even unto us, being guarded and preserved without any forging of Scriptures, by a very complete system of doctrine, and neither receiving addition nor [suffering] curtailment [in the truths which she believes]; and [it consists in] reading [the word of God] without falsification, and a lawful and diligent exposition in harmony with the Scriptures, both without danger and without

blasphemy; and [above all, it consists in] the pre-eminent gift of love, which is more precious than knowledge, more glorious than prophecy, and which excels all the other gifts [of God]."

St. Thomas writes on what follows the suffering that schism causes, in commenting on a passage of St. Paul: "Et, similiter in ecclesia, imperfectionibus sunt magis consolationes adhibendae, quibus perfectiones non egent. Unde dicitur Is. 11, 11: in brachio suo congregabit agnos, et in sinu suo levabit, foetas ipse portabit, et, 1 Petr. III, 7 dicitur: viri quasi infirmiori vasculo muliebri impartientes honorem. est notandum quod triplicem defectum circa membra notavit, scilicet in honestatis, ignobilis et infirmitatis. Quorum primum in membris ecclesiae pertinet ad culpam; secundum ad conditionem servilem; tertium ad statum imperfectionis. secundo ponit causam finalem, dicens ut non sit schisma in corpore. Quod quidem sequeretur, si defectui membrorum non subveniretur. Hoc autem schisma quantum ad membra corporis mystici manifeste vitatur, dum pax ecclesiae custoditur per hoc, quod singulis ea quae sunt necessaria attribuuntur. Unde et supra dictum est cap. I, v. 10: id ipsum dicatis omnes, et non sint in vobis schismata."

Excellency, my sincere frankness regarding the beginning and course of our history is not intended in the least to vex or embarrass you. I consider total sincerity in relations a necessary condition of a true agreement and success of our project.

Excellency, I beg you to consider me truly as a brother who loves you and who desires the good of the Church, its clear unity, witnessed by the unity of Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the face of the world. You know that I have never wanted to promote the division of the Society of St. Pius X and its bishops, even if today I am convinced that there are those in your ranks who no longer have the true faith in the authentic Tradition of the Church; those who,

without a conversion caused by the Holy Spirit, will return with difficulty to unity, it seems to me.

Your Excellency knows the details of the event that I consider, and many others with me, as providential: the incorporation into full unity the group from Campos. I would not hesitate to say that, on our journey, there is a before and after: before Christmas 2001 and after Christmas 2001. On this date, as you know, the Holy Father John Paul II signed the letter according to which he welcomed into the fullness of Catholic communion His Excellency Mgr. Licinio Rangel, as well as the priest members of the Society of St. John Marie Vianney union, with all their faithful of Campos.

I had the joy of personally receiving the profession of faith and the vow of fidelity to the Roman Pontiff of this bishop, with all the priests of the union, in a moving public celebration which was held in the diocesan cathedral of Campos, last Jan. 18, in the presence of different bishops and of the Pontifical representative.

I firmly believe that this event of Campos - which healed an open wound on the Latin American continent, which was celebrated with emotion by all people present and was perceived as an event of grace - is rightly seen as an encouragement to continue our efforts, with the goal of arriving at the warm embrace that Peter desires to exchange with you, as he exchanged with the Society of St. John Marie Vianney union.

This embrace was put into concrete form with the most adaptable juridical model. Offered in a permanent manner, for the development of the charism of this union, at the heart of the only Church of Christ with Peter at Her head: I refer to the personal apostolic administration of Campos, which is not a transitional solution but is given in a stable manner (one can by no means doubt this stability and this will). I know that many people, lay, priests and

religious of the Society of St. Pius X, want to find peace of mind, in full reconciliation with the Church.

Already before the events of Campos I wished to meet with you; and now in light of the fact of this reconciliation and of the new personal apostolic administration, this meeting with Your Excellency would seem to me even more fitting and desirable: it could be held after Easter, to continue our dialogue, and to clarify also, in charity and truth, in fraternal support, all that is ripe in our heart following Campos. It would not serve a useful purpose, it seems to me, to continue our dialogue by direct or indirect writing, in order to shed light on the things that ought on the contrary to be treated on a personal and cordial level, as we have already experienced.

One cannot, in fact, fail to see how providential was the return to the fullness of communion of the Society of St. John Marie Vianney with the See of Peter, precisely in the week consecrated to the Unity of Christians, of these brothers who shared with your Fraternity the same ideals and who henceforth rejoice in having attained what, in conscience, they knew they could no longer delay: communion with the Vicar of Christ.

The suffering and prayers of many faithful have made possible this joy of recovering full communion with the Church guided by Peter by the Society of St. John Marie Vianney union; and I am convinced that our Lord Jesus, who began this work, will bring it to fulfillment.

What has urged me on from the beginning, and causes me to write to you today, is the charity of Christ which compels me not to neglect a single attempt to make unity, a true mark of charity, triumph. Today, more than yesterday, I suffer and carry the weight of knowing you are in a situation of excommunication, whereas all the faithful of Campos have henceforth happily passed from this situation, under the leadership of their pastor.

I therefore have a great desire to be able to meet with you as soon as possible; I assure you that I have written this letter with a spirit and heart filled with the sentiments of the approaching Second Sunday of Easter, the Sunday of Divine Mercy.

Wishing you every grace and blessing of Heaven, I remain united to and devoted to the course of Jesus and Mary.
