

Ten Years Ago...

PART I

2nd Feb. 2012 - Bishop Fellay sermon: "We Are Ready"

"We are not an independent group. Even if we are fighting with Rome, we are still, so to say, with Rome. ...It's also important that we don't finally imagine a Catholic church which is just the fruit of our imagination but which is no longer the real one. And with the real one we have problems.

[...]

So what is going to happen now? Well, we have sent our answer to Rome. ... Do they really want us in the Church or not? We told them very clearly, if you accept us as is, without change, without obliging us to accept these things, then we are ready."

(See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120206175204/https://www.dici.org/en/news/extract-from-the-sermon-of-bishop-bernard-fellay-superior-general-of-the-sspx-for-the-feast-of-candlemas-february-2nd/>)

18th March 2012 - Bishop Fellay, writing to all SSPX priests in *Cor Unum*: "We need to take up a new position with respect to the Official Church"

"We now have friendly contacts in the most important dicasteries, and also in the Pope's entourage! As we see this situation, we think that the efforts of the aging hierarchy will not succeed in stopping this movement that has begun – a movement that desires and hopes for the restoration of the Church, although still in a rather muddled way. Even though the return of a "Julian the Apostate" cannot be ruled out, I do not think that the movement can be stopped.

If this is true, and I am convinced of it, this requires that we take up a new position with respect to the official Church. Quite obviously we must support this movement with all our strength, and possibly to guide and enlighten it. This is precisely what many people expect of the Society. This is the context in which it is advisable to ask the question about some form of recognition of the Society by the official Church.

Our new friends in Rome declare that the impact of such recognition would be extremely powerful on the whole Church, as a confirmation of the importance of Tradition for the Church.

[...]

Concrete circumstances are what will show when the time has arrived to take the step towards the official Church. "

(See: <http://www.therecusan.com/fellay-cor-unum-march2012>)

7th April 2012 - Letter of three SSPX Bishops to the Superior General and his two Assistants - "Do not engage the Society in a purely practical agreement!"

"Reverend Superior General, Reverend First Assistant, Reverend Second Assistant, For several months, as many people know, the General Council of the FSSPX is seriously considering Roman proposals for a practical agreement, after the doctrinal discussions of 2009 to 2011 proved that a doctrinal agreement is impossible with current Rome. By this letter the three bishops of the FSSPX who do not form part of

the General Council wish to let him know, with all due respect, of the unanimity of their formal opposition to any such agreement.

[...]

Don't we see already in the Fraternity symptoms of a lessening in its confession of the Faith? Today, alas, the contrary has become "abnormal". Just before the consecration of the bishops in 1988 when many good people insisted that Archbishop Lefebvre had to reach a practical agreement with Rome that would open a large field of apostolate, he expressed his thoughts to the four new bishops:

'A large field of apostolate perhaps, but in ambiguity, and while following two directions opposed at the same time, and this would finish by us rotting.'

[...]

Your Excellency, Fathers, take care! ... At least listen to your Founder. He was right 25 years ago. He is right still today. On his behalf, we entreat you: do not engage the Society in a purely practical agreement.

With our most cordial and fraternal greetings,
In Christo and Maria,

Mgr. Alfonso de Galarreta
Mgr. Bernard Tissier de Mallerais
Mgr. Richard Williamson "

(See: <https://www.therecusant.com/menz-letter-to-3-bishops>)

14th April, 2012 - Letter of Reply from the Superior General and his two Assistants to the Three SSPX Bishops: "It is not realistic to require that everything be settled to arrive at what you call a practical agreement."

"Menzingen,
14 April, 2012

Your Excellencies,

To your collective letter addressed to the members of the General Council we have given our full attention. We thank you for your concern and for your charity. Allow us in turn with the same concern for charity and justice to make the following observations.

[...] Reading your letter one seriously wonders if you still believe that the visible Church with its seat in Rome is truly the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a Church horribly disfigured for sure from head to foot, but a Church which nevertheless still has for its head Our Lord Jesus Christ. One has the impression that you are so scandalised that you no longer accept that that could still be true. It Benedict XVI still the legitimate pope for you? If he is, can Jesus Christ still speak through his mouth? If the pope expresses a legitimate desire concerning ourselves which is a good desire and gives no command contrary to the commandments of God, has one the right to pay no attention and to simply dismiss his desire? ... You blame us for being naïve or fearful, but it is your vision of the Church that is too human and even fatalistic; you see dangers, plots, difficulties, you now longer see the help of grace and the Holy Ghost.

[...]

Within the Society, we are in the process of making the Council's errors into super-heresies, as though it is becoming absolute evil, worse than anything, in the same way

that Liberals have dogmatised this pastoral council. This failure to distinguish leads one or the other of you three to an “absolute hardening”. This is serious because such a caricature no longer corresponds to reality and logically it will in the future finish up in a true schism. And it may well be that this fact is one of the arguments pushing me to delay no longer in responding to the pressure from Rome.

[...]

So that as for the most crucial question of all, that of whether we can survive in the case of the Society being recognised by Rome, we do not arrive at the same conclusion as you do. Let it be noted in passing that we did not look for a practical agreement. That is false. All we have done is not refuse a priori, as you ask us to do, to consider the Popes offer. For the common good of the Society, we would far prefer the present solution of the intermediary status quo but it is clear that Rome will put up with it no longer.

In itself, the proposed solution of a personal Prelature is not a trap. That is clear firstly from the fact that the present situation in April of 2012 is very different from that of 1988. To claim that nothing has changed is a historic error. [...] Fewer and fewer Romans believe in Vatican II.

This concrete situation, together with the canonical solution being proposed, is very different from that of 1988 and when we compare the arguments given by Archbishop Lefebvre at that time we draw the conclusion that he would not have hesitated to accept what is being proposed to us. [...] It is not realistic to require that everything be settled to arrive at what you call a practical agreement.

You cannot know how much your attitude over the last few months - quite different for each of you - has been hard for us. It has prevented the Superior General from sharing with you these great concerns, which he would gladly have brought you in to, had he not found himself faced with such a strong and passionate lack of understanding. How much he would have loved to be able to count on you, on your advice to undergo this so delicate moment in our history. It is a great trial, perhaps the greatest of all 18 years of his being superior. Our venerable founder gave to the Society bishops a task and precise duties. He made clear that the principle of unity in our Society is the Superior General. But for a certain time now, you have been trying - each one of you in his own way - to impose on him your point of view, even in the form of threats, and even in public. This dialectic between the truth and the faith on the one side and authority on the other is contrary to the spirit of the priesthood. He might at least have hoped that you were trying to understand the arguments driving him to act as he has acted these last few years in accordance with the will of divine Providence.

We are praying hard for each of you that we may find ourselves all together once again in this fight which is far from over, for the greater glory of God and for love of dear Society.

May Our risen Lord and Our Lady deign to protect and bless you,

+Bernard Fellay (Superior General)

Niklaus Pfluger+ (First Assistant)

Alain-Marc Nély+ (Second Assistant) ”

(See: <https://www.therecusan.com/menz-letter-to-3-bishops>)

15th April 2012 - Doctrinal Declaration composed and signed by the Superior General on behalf of the SSPX and delivered to Rome (but kept secret from even the SSPX's own priests for almost a full year).

I

We promise to be always faithful to the Catholic Church and to the Roman Pontiff, the Supreme Pastor, Vicar of Christ, Successor of Peter, and head of the body of bishops.

II

We declare that we accept the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church in the substance of Faith and Morals, adhering to each doctrinal affirmation in the required degree, according to the doctrine contained in No.25 of the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council.(1)

III

1. We declare that we accept the doctrine regarding the Roman Pontiff and regarding the college of bishops, with the Pope as its head, which is taught by the dogmatic constitution Pastor Aeternus of Vatican I and by the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II, chapter 3 (*de constitutione hierarchica Ecclesiae et in specie de episcopatu*), explained and interpreted by the *nota explicativa praevia* in this same chapter.

2. We recognise the authority of the Magisterium to which alone is given the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, in written form or handed down (2) in fidelity to Tradition, recalling that, "the Holy Ghost was not promised to the successors of Peter in order for them to make known, through revelation, a new doctrine, but so that with His assistance they may keep in a holy and expressly faithful manner the revelation transmitted by the Apostles, that is to say, the Faith."(3)

3. Tradition is the living transmission of revelation '*usque ad nos*'(4) and the Church in its doctrine, in its life and in its liturgy perpetuates and transmits to all generations what this is and what She believes. Tradition progresses in the Church with the assistance of the Holy Ghost(5), not as a contrary novelty(6), but through a better understanding of the Deposit of the Faith(7).

4. The entire tradition of Catholic Faith must be the criterion and guide in understanding the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which, in turn, enlightens - in other words deepens and subsequently makes explicit - certain aspects of the life and doctrine of the Church implicitly present within itself or not yet conceptually formulated(8).

5. The affirmations of the Second Vatican Council and of the later Pontifical Magisterium relating to the relationship between the Church and the non-Catholic Christian confessions, as well as the social duty of religion and the right to religious liberty, whose formulation is with difficulty reconcilable with prior doctrinal affirmations from the Magisterium, must be understood in the light of the whole, uninterrupted Tradition, in a manner coherent with the truths previously taught by the Magisterium of the Church, without accepting any interpretation of these affirmations whatsoever that would expose Catholic doctrine to opposition or rupture with Tradition and with this Magisterium.

6. That is why it is legitimate to promote through legitimate discussion the study and theological explanations of the expressions and formulations of Vatican II and of the Magisterium which followed it, in the case where they don't appear reconcilable with the previous Magisterium of the Church(9).

7. We declare that we recognise the validity of the sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacraments celebrated with the intention to do what the Church does according to the rites indicated in

the typical editions of the Roman Missal and the Sacramentary Rituals legitimately promulgated by Popes Paul VI and John-Paul II.

8. In following the guidelines laid out above (III,5), as well as Canon 21 of the Code of Canon Law, we promise to respect the common discipline of the Church and the ecclesiastical laws, especially those which are contained in the Code of Canon Law promulgated by John-Paul II (1983) and in the Code of Canon Law of the Oriental Churches promulgated by the same pontiff (1990), without prejudice to the discipline of the Society of Saint Pius X, by a special law.

Notes --

(1) Cf. the new formula for the *Profession of Faith* and the *Oath of Fidelity* for assuming a charge exercised in the name of the Church, 1989; cf. Code of Canon Law, canon 749,750, §2; 752; CCEO canon 597; 598, 1 & 2; 599.

(2) Cf. Pius XII, *Humani Generis* encyclical.

(3) Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution, *Pastor Aeternus*, Dz. 3070.

(4) Council of Trent, Dz. 1501: "All saving truth and rules of conduct (Matt. 16:15) are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves,[3] the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand."

(5) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 8 & 9, Denz. 4209-4210.

(6) Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, Dz. 3020: "Hence, also, that understanding of its sacred dogmas must be perpetually retained, which Holy Mother Church has once declared; and there must never be recession from that meaning under the specious name of a deeper understanding "Therefore [...] let the understanding, the knowledge, and wisdom of individuals as of all, of one man as of the whole Church, grow and progress strongly with the passage of the ages and the centuries; but let it be solely in its own genus, namely in the same dogma, with the same sense and the same understanding." [Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*, 23, 3]."

(7) Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, Dz. 3011; Anti-modernist Oath, no. 4; Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*, Dz 3886; Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 10, Dz. 4213.

(8) For example, like the teaching on the sacraments and the episcopacy in *Lumen Gentium*, no. 21.

(9) There is a parallel in history in the Decree for the Armenians of the Council of Florence, where the porrection of the instruments was indicated as the matter of the sacrament of Order. Nevertheless theologians legitimately discussed, even after this decree, the accuracy of such an assertion. Pope Pius XII finally resolved the issue in another way."

(See: <https://www.therecusan.com/doctrinalpreamble-15apr2012>)

For an overview, in chronological order, see: www.therecusan.com/reference-materials

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