

Tridentine Community News

February 1, 2009

SSPX Bishops' Excommunication Revoked

In a widely anticipated, though still in many ways unimaginable move, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI on January 21 revoked the excommunications of the four bishops whom Society of St. Pius X founder Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre had consecrated in 1988 without Pope John Paul II's approval.

Let us be clear what this is and is not. It is a key step forward in working towards the eventual reconciliation of the SSPX with the Church. In conjunction with the previously issued *Motu Proprio, Summorum Pontificum*, the removal of the excommunications provides the starting point for subsequent discussions.

The action did not in any way regularize the status of the SSPX itself. SSPX Masses continue to be valid, though illicit, as they are conducted without the approval of the diocesan bishop. Confessions and weddings conducted by an SSPX priest are invalid as well as illicit, as those two sacraments require jurisdiction, that is, the diocesan bishop must specifically approve faculties for a priest to perform these sacraments. The July 13, 2008 edition of this column, available on-line, treated these subjects in greater detail.

There are theological and temporal issues to be addressed next. The SSPX has serious problems with certain teachings from Vatican II, such as the document on Religious Liberty. They have also amassed significant real estate and financial holdings which they are unlikely to turn over casually to the authority of a diocesan bishop, especially one with a track record of being unsympathetic to tradition. But our Holy Father's first two moves had to happen before more detailed issues were addressed. God willing, the talks will continue.

We must give credit to His Eminence, Dario Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos, the president of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclésia Dei*. He has embraced the challenge of working to regularize the SSPX. Because Cardinal Castrillón is at retirement age, let us pray that our Holy Father appoints a successor to His Eminence who shares his zeal for this work.

History will likely acknowledge that the SSPX played a key role in the restoration of the Tridentine Mass to the life of the Church. Circa 1982, a lengthy article in the now-defunct *Monthly Detroit* magazine described the SSPX and its Redford chapel in sympathetic terms; it was this writer's first exposure to the Tridentine Mass. Even if certain people did not want to associate themselves with the SSPX, the Society did at least make people aware of the existence and beauty of the Traditional Liturgy, so they could work for its reintroduction in other ways.

It is also important to recognize the efforts of countless souls who have worked *within* the Church's structures for the same goal, no matter how challenging that might be at times. A great number of the Extraordinary Form Mass sites we now see have been founded because of the dedication and hard work of priests and laity who simply believe the Classic Liturgy to be an appealing form of worship. They have no agenda other than prayer. Indeed, the

SSPX and its kin have sometimes tarnished the reputation of such groups before they can even be established and have actually hindered their work.

The issue of the SSPX transcends any one person or any one congregation. A given bishop may have made ludicrous and imprudent statements, and a given congregation may seem to be pugnacious or relish being independent of the Holy See, but that is not justification for keeping the whole group out. Heaven knows, strange and disloyal-to-Rome statements and actions have come out of some bishops, theologians, and congregations who *are* part of diocesan structures. The Church is comprised of sinners; imperfection is everywhere.

So what can we do now? Offer our prayers and rosaries for unity in the Church. Trust in the Holy Ghost and our Holy Father to do the right things, at the right pace, for such a large-scale issue.

Reminder - Bishop Boyea Mass on February 15

On Sunday, February 15 at 4:00 PM at All Saints Church in Flint, Michigan, Bishop Earl Boyea will celebrate his first Tridentine Holy Mass as Bishop of the Diocese of Lansing. All Saints is located one block east of I-75 at the Pierson Road exit, north of downtown Flint.

Correction

Thanks to the reader who brought to our attention conclusive proof that on the "Feria After the Epiphany" Monday, January 12, the Mass of the "First Sunday After Epiphany" should have been celebrated instead of the Mass of the Feast of the Holy Family, which is the mass of the "first Sunday After Epiphany". The argument we made two weeks ago in favor of the contrary position, no matter how logical, is not what the Church desires.

St. Agnes Church Debuts Extraordinary Form Mass



One of North America's best-known parishes for Latin Liturgy, St. Agnes in St. Paul, Minnesota, has begun offering a Tridentine Mass on the First, Third, and Fifth Sundays of the month at 10:00

AM. On the Second and Fourth Sundays, this Mass continues to be a *Novus Ordo* Latin Mass, celebrated *ad orientem*. We encourage anyone visiting the Minneapolis-St. Paul area to make a stop at St. Agnes to experience an often standing-room-only Mass accompanied by one of the most elaborate music programs in North America. Numerous orchestral Masses are offered throughout the year. For more information, go to www.stagnes.net