

Interview of Archbishop Lefebvre Given to *Fideliter* Magazine

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Bishop Bernard Tissier de Mallerais ordained seven priests at Ecône, Switzerland, on September 25, 1988, and Bishop Bernard Fellay, another of the four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre, ordained three at Zaitzkofen, Germany, on October 1, 1988. These constitute the most important actions after the consecrations. After the ordinations, His Excellency Archbishop Lefebvre granted an interview to *Fideliter*.

Interviewer: After these ordinations, what are your feelings?

Archbishop Lefebvre: I can feel nothing but **joy**. It was, indeed, this **desire to insure the continuity of the transmission of the Catholic priesthood** that led me to consecrate four bishops.

This was my wish—to see the work continue. It was a feeling that I had already experienced when I passed on the charge of Superior General of the Society to Fr. Schmidberger. I acknowledge that I will be happy if the Good Lord grants me a few more years to live and see the continuation of the Society. Now there are signs that it will last, that it will endure, and that it will be strengthened. I am happy to see that my episcopacy shall not be the last one faithful to Tradition, and that Tradition will continue even should I die now. The fact of having bishops is of paramount importance.

It was certainly a decision not easily made. On Jan. 2, 1988, I wrote to Fr. Aulagnier, “Behold, a new year is beginning; **it will be a year for great decisions, whether the proposals from Rome are good or not**. I am almost certain that they will be inadmissible, and that **we shall have to continue the work of the Church without the support of the Vatican**. It shall be the year of the bishops of the Society, God willing—Let us hope that it shall be a source of blessings. He who says blessings, says **trials** too...”

It is with that spirit that I went to the negotiations which **I feared would not succeed**.

Interviewer: At the end of July, in the conference to the Chilean bishops, Cardinal Ratzinger had severe words regarding the disastrous effects of Vatican II, without identifying their causes.

Archbishop Lefebvre: Yes, indeed. He called for an examination of conscience for “the post-schism.” He proposed three areas of reflection.

- 1) The question of the liturgy too much desacralized;
- 2) Whether it was an error to present Vatican II as a super-dogma, blotting out the whole of the Tradition of the Church;
- 3) That the documents of the Council do not all have the same importance.

The Cardinal said that many see, in Archbishop Lefebvre, a guide and a useful master....One must take into account the positive elements which do not find a vital place in the Church today. He expressed the opinion that if the areas are corrected "the schism" of Archbishop Lefebvre will not last long. What can be the deep feelings of the Cardinal? One is forced to acknowledge that, for the Cardinal, **one must return to the Council.**

We indeed had a little hope that something had changed in the Vatican; especially after the Visit of Cardinal Gagnon and Msgr. Perl and their declarations, I had hoped that things would develop in Rome.

But, then, when we found out **their deeper intentions** in the meetings, the discussions on the Protocol, and the Protocol itself, **I realized that nothing had changed.** We were faced with a brick wall. **They had hoped to put an end to Tradition.** This is, indeed, the position of Rome, of the Pope, of Cardinal Ratzinger, of Cardinal Mayer, of Cardinal Casaroli....**All these people hold desperately to the Council,** to this "new Pentecost," to the reform of the Church. They do not want to depart from it.

Cardinal Ratzinger said it openly in an interview to the great Frankfurt newspaper, *Die Welt*, about the consecrations: "It is **inadmissible**, one cannot accept that there be in the Church groups of Catholics who do not follow the general way of thinking of the bishops in the world."

Here you have it; it is clear!

For a while I thought something had changed in him, but I have to acknowledge that **all he did was with the intention to suppress the group that we were forming and to bring us back to the Council.** It would be a mistake to impute only to Cardinal Decourtray and to the French Bishops this will; **it is the position of Rome.** The only difference is **that the Vatican has more facilities to grant things to attract the traditionalists** and, then later, **destroy them and bring them back to the Council. It is just a question of Roman diplomacy.**

The French, German and Swiss bishops are not happy with the groups to which Rome has now granted some privileges. So they have said to the Vatican, "Don't give us such groups. We don't know what to do with them! They are going to cause trouble. We had condemned them; we had rejected them, and now you say they have the right to do what they want. It cannot go like that."

I would not be surprised that there be confrontations between the bishops and Rome. Some have already started. Recently, in the name of the Swiss bishops, Msgr. Henri Schwery made a violent declaration against Rome, saying that it was inadmissible to have given such admissions to the traditionalists without consulting them. They have not been consulted and Rome has caused disorder in their dioceses.¹

I will, therefore, not be surprised if during the next bishops' meeting of France, Germany and Switzerland there be violent reactions against Rome. The Vatican shall be brought to say to those who have left us, **"You must accept the Council; you must accept the New Mass. You must not be so intransigent."**

The Vatican “will get them!” It’s impossible that it should be otherwise.

Interviewer: Cardinal Oddi recently declared, “I’m convinced that the division shall not last long, and that Archbishop Lefebvre shall soon be back in the Church of Rome.” Others say that the Pope and Cardinal Ratzinger feel that **the “Lefebvre affair” is not closed**. In your last letter to the Holy Father² you declared that you were waiting for a more propitious time for the return of Rome to Tradition. **What do you think of a possible re-opening of the dialogue with Rome?**

Archbishop Lefebvre: We do not have the same outlook on a reconciliation. Cardinal Ratzinger sees it as reducing us, bringing us back to Vatican II. **We see it as a return of Rome to Tradition. We don’t agree; it is a dialogue of death.** I can’t speak much of the future, mine is behind me, but if I live a little while, supposing that Rome calls for a renewed dialogue, then, **I will put conditions. I shall not accept being in the position where I was put during the dialogue. No more.**

I will place the discussion at the doctrinal level: “Do you agree with the great encyclicals of all the popes who preceded you? Do you agree with *Quanta Cura* of Pius IX, *Immortale Dei* and *Libertas* of Leo XIII, *Pascendi Gregis* of Pius X, *Quas Primas* of Pius XI, *Humani Generis* of Pius XII? Are you in full communion with these Popes and their teachings? Do you still accept the entire Anti-Modernist Oath? Are you in favor of the social reign of Our Lord Jesus Christ? If you do not accept the doctrine of your predecessors, **it is useless to talk!** As long as you do not accept the correction of the Council, in consideration of the doctrine of these Popes, your predecessors, **no dialogue is possible. It is useless.**”

Thus, the positions will be clear.

The stakes are not small. We are not content when they say to us, “You may say the traditional Mass, but you must accept the Council.” **What opposes us is doctrine; it is clear.**

This is what Dom Gérard did not see, and what confused him. Dom Gérard has always seen the liturgy and the monastic life, but **he does not clearly see the theological problems of the Council**, especially Religious Liberty. **He does not see the malice of these errors.** He was never too much worried about this. What touched him was the liturgical reform and the reform of the Benedictine monasteries. He left Tournay, saying, “I cannot accept this.”

Then, he founded a community of monks with the liturgy and with a Benedictine spirit. Very well, wonderful. But he did not appreciate enough that these reforms which led him to leave his monastery were **the consequences of errors in the Council itself**.

As long as they grant him what he wanted—this monastic spirit and the traditional liturgy—he has what he wants and is indifferent to the rest. **But he has fallen into a snare: the others have given up nothing of their false principles.**

It is sad because there are around sixty monks, twenty priests, and thirty nuns. There are nearly one hundred youth there, bewildered, whose families are worried or even divided. It is a disaster.

Interviewer: The nuns of the monastery Notre Dame de l'Annonciation remain very much attached to you.

Archbishop Lefebvre: Yes, indeed. They came to manifest their affections....However, I do not seek this affection, but rather that they remain **attached to Tradition. Are they willing to submit to a modernist authority? Here, indeed, is the question.** If needed they must separate themselves from Dom Gérard to keep the Faith and Tradition.

At least the monastery in Brazil [Dom Tomás Aquino's Monastery of Santa Cruz] refused to follow Dom Gérard and that is an important point.

I believe that what has contributed to the loss of Dom Gérard was his desire to open to those who are not with us and who would profit from following Tradition. This was the theme of what he wrote in his letter to the Friends of the Monastery two years after his arrival at Le Barroux. He was saying, "We will strive not to have this critical, sterile, negative attitude. We will strive to open our doors to all those who, **though they might not have our ideas**, would love the liturgy, so that they too may benefit from the monastic life."

From that period, I was worried, considering this as a dangerous operation. It was the opening of the Church to the world, and one must acknowledge that it was the world that converted the Church. **Dom Gérard let himself be contaminated by the milieu which he welcomed in his monastery.** Rome may be proud to have won a big battle and to have hit in the right place. It is sad....

Interviewer: Do you believe in the future of the Society of St. Peter?

Archbishop Lefebvre: **It is a phantom society.** They have **copied** our statutes and all that we have done.

Interviewer: Even Cardinal Oddi was **skeptical** of its future, referring himself to the previous attempts of Rome to rehabilitate seminarians from the Society of Saint Pius X.

Archbishop Lefebvre:....In one year, one and a half, they may be asked to return to their dioceses....They will have to choose priests from the dioceses to take care of their seminarians. They will have to wait for a year and to undergo an examination before being accredited. How can they see that they are being played with? **They came to Rome to deliver themselves into their hands with the hope of keeping Tradition and they are already rejected.** "You are not allowed to teach in your seminary. You must pass an exam first, because we do not trust you." It is unbelievable. It manifests that there is, in Rome, the will to put an end to Tradition.

This is also the reason that they did not want to give us bishops. **Rome did not want traditional bishops.** This is why the consecrations annoyed them and caused such a terrible shock. It is like the stone which hit Goliath.

To excommunicate us after having lifted all other excommunications, is the end of their ecumenism. How can they imagine that those with whom they wish to shake hands trust them **when they excommunicate those who uphold Tradition?**

The most recent issue of *Fideliter* was entitled, “Rome Is Perplexed.” This is true; they don’t know what to do: **attacking us they attack the Church of all times** and the Good Lord cannot allow that.

[1.](#) “Msgr. Henri Schwery, President of the Swiss Episcopal Conference, has publicly lamented ‘the lack of openness of the Vatican regarding the re integration of some traditionalist communities.’ According to Schwery, open relations and negotiations do not exist between ‘the Holy See and the local bishops,’ and in his view the Commission should continue to operate only ‘on the condition that the bishop of the place concerned be informed and consulted’” (30 Days, No.6, Oct. 1988).

[2.](#) June 2, 1988.