



## Commentary

# Bishop Fellay Interview Commented

September 21, 2005 AD

The following is the original text of an interview with Bishop Fellay, Superior General of the Society of St. Pius X, as it appears here:

[http://www.holycrossseminary.com/2005\\_October.htm](http://www.holycrossseminary.com/2005_October.htm)

**We are including our comments in red font in the text.**

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### INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP FELLAY CONCERNING HIS MEETING WITH POPE BENEDICT XVI

**D.I.C.I.:** Your Excellency, you requested the audience with Pope Benedict XVI that took place last August 29. What was the purpose of your request?

**Bishop Fellay:** We wanted to meet the Holy Father because we are Catholic and, as every Catholic, we are attached to Rome. We wanted to show, in requesting this audience quite simply that we are Catholic. **This is true as far as it goes, but of course Bishop Fellay must, if he believes Benedict XVI to be the true Pope, submit to him and not accord him a mere primacy of honor, under which he pays lipservice to Benedict but ignores and rejects anything from him he disagrees with, even if his disagreement is well-founded on the true teachings and laws of the Catholic Church. You cannot have it both ways. If Benedict XVI is the Pope, he has full and supreme jurisdiction over the entire Catholic Church, and his universal laws and magisterial teachings are not subject to revision by anyone.**

Our recognition of the Pope is not limited only to mentioning his name in the Canon of the Mass, as do all the priests of the Society of Saint Pius X. It is normal that we should express our respect as being Catholic and roman. Catholic means universal, and the Mystical Body of the Church does not just consist in our chapels.

There was likewise on our part the plan to remind once more the Sovereign Pontiff of the existence of Tradition. **This is hilarious. Remind the Pope (in Fellay's mind) of Catholicism? Is this an admission on the part of Bishop Fellay of what most people in the SSPX know already, namely, that Benedict XVI is not a Catholic?** Ours is the concern to remind him that Tradition is the Church, and that we incarnate the Church's Tradition in a manner that is very much alive. We want to show that the Church would be much stronger in today's world if it maintained Tradition. **Since Tradition is Catholicism, and novelty is error, Bishop Fellay is saying he wants to show that the Catholic Church would be much stronger if she were Catholic (instead of modernist). What kind of ecclesiology is this? Is the Church Catholic, Bishop Fellay? If the New Church is not Catholic, then it is not the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church cannot help but be traditional. The Catholic Church cannot become modernistic, nor can she lose Tradition, which is her identity.** Thus, we want to put forward our experience: if the Church desires to escape the tragic crisis that it is presently going through, then Tradition is a response, indeed the only response, to this crisis.

**D.I.C.I.:** How did this audience go?

**BISHOP FELLAY:** The audience took place in the Popes' summer residence at Castel Gandolfo. Foreseen for 11:30 a.m., it actually began at 12:10 p.m. in the Sovereign Pontiff's office. He generally grants an audience of 15 minutes to a bishop. For us, it last 35 minutes. This means, so say the Vatican specialists, that Benedict XVI wanted to show his interest in these questions.

There were four of us: the Holy Father and Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, Father Schmidberger and myself. The conversation took place in French – contrary to the announcement of certain persons that it would take place in German. It was directed by the Pope in a kindly spirit. He described three difficulties, in response to the letter that we had sent to him shortly before the audience. Benedict XVI was aware of this letter, and it was not necessary to go over the points brought up in it. We there outlined a description of the Church, quoting the “silent apostasy” of John-Paul II, “the boat which is taken in water from every side” and “the dictatorship of relativism” of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, with as an appendix of photos of Masses quite as scandalous as one another.

We also gave a presentation of the Society with a list of numbers and different projects. We quoted two examples of actions led by the Society in the present world, and the unbelievable attitude of the local episcopacies in their regard: the law suit in Argentina that obtained that the sale of contraceptives is not forbidden, and which merited for us to be called terrorists by the bishop of Cordoba, and the denunciation of gay pride procession in Lucerne, that finished in the Catholic church by a Protestant ceremony with total indifference on the part of the bishop.

Finally, we expressed our requests: the changing of the attitude of hostility towards Tradition, which attitude makes the traditional Catholic life (Is there any other?) practically impossible in the conciliar church. *Ah, so it is a conciliar church. Wait -- is the Church Catholic or conciliar, Bishop Fellay? Is Benedict the Pope of the Catholic Church or the conciliar church? Can a head be the head of two bodies? Can we get some clarity here, please? This is entirely novel ecclesiology. When we need a Pope, then Benedict is the Pope. When we need to explain the false teachings and evil laws and other shenanigans, it's the "conciliar church." Do Catholics now need to have split personalities to be really Catholic?* We requested that this be done by granting full liberty to the Tridentine Mass, by silencing the accusation of schism directed against us, by burying the pretended excommunications, and by founding a structure for the family of Tradition within the Church.

**D.I.C.I.:** Is it possible for us to know the difficulties raised by Benedict XVI?

**BISHOP FELLAY:** I can only evoke them. First of all, the Holy Father insisted on effective recognition by the Pope, linking it to the situation of necessity invoked by the consecration of the bishops by Archbishop Lefebvre, and our subsequent activity.

Then Benedict XVI pointed out that there can only be one way of belong to the Catholic Church: it is that of having the spirit of Vatican II interpreted in the light of Tradition, that is in the intention of the Fathers of the Council and according to the letter of the text. *Oh yes, no doubt, we have seen a very traditional approach to the novelties of Vatican II for the last 40+ years. We are not quite sure, for instance, how to put a traditional spin on the idea that "all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown" ([Gaudium et Spes](#), 12.1). Perhaps that's the reason why the Vatican hasn't exactly looked at Vatican II as traditional.* It is a perspective that frightens us greatly...

Finally, we would have to have, the Sovereign Pontiff thinks, a structure that is appropriate for us for the traditional rite and certain exterior practices – without, however, protecting us from the spirit of the Council that we would have to adopt.

**D.I.C.I.:** The Vatican Press Release at the end of the audience speaks of a “desire to proceed in stages and within a reasonable time limit”. What ought we to understand by this expression?

**BISHOP FELLAY:** The Pope did not want to go into the problems in depth, but simply to highlight them. But it will be necessary first of all to respond to the requirement of the right of existence of the old Mass so as to afterwards confront the errors of the Council, for we see there the cause of the present evils, both a direct cause and in part an indirect cause.

Of course, we will go step by step. We must show the council in a different light than that which is given to it by Rome. At the same time as we condemn the errors, it is indispensable for us to show their logical consequences and their impact on the disastrous situation of today's Church, without, however, provoking exasperation, that could cause the discussions to be broken off. This obliges us to proceed by stages.

With respect to a reasonable time limit, it is said in Rome that documents are in preparation for communities

attached to the Ecclesia Dei Commission, that are quite new, and offering things that have never previously been offered. "Let us wait and see!" It is certainly true that the Pope has the desire of rapidly arranging this situation.

In order to be quite precise, I would like to add this further detail. We must indeed consider the Pope's difficult situation. *Oh, no doubt. Benedict now has Bishop Fellay's sympathy? It was Bishop Fellay's SSPX's magazine that published serious critiques of Fr. Ratzinger, like this one here.* Of course that was before April 19, 2005. He is stuck between the progressives on one side and us on the other. *Oh, so Benedict himself is not a progressive anymore? My, how times change!* If he were to grant a general permission for the Mass on the basis on our request alone, the modernists would stand up against him, affirming that the Pope has given way to traditionalists. *Wouldn't that be horrible!* We learned from Bishop Ricard that in 2000 he, along with Cardinal Lustiger and the Archbishop of Lyon suddenly rushed to Rome to block a proposition made to the Society, under threat of rebellion if it did not work. We know that the German bishops acted in the same way at the time of the World Youth Conference in Cologne: "It is us or them". By this is meant: "If they are recognized, then we will leave the Church and go into schism." *Then, if I were the Pope, and if these men were Catholic bishops, I would tell them: "Nice to have met you. You used to be the bishop of this diocese. Now get out and make room for Bishop So-and-so." For goodness' sake, the Pope is in charge of the entire Church! He can "hire and fire" as he sees fit. Obviously, "bishops" like that would have to go!*

It is for this reason that the Pope could not, during the audience, give us the verbal assurance that this Fall, for example, freedom would be given to the Mass. *Yes, no doubt, Benedict isn't in charge here. His underlings hold him hostage. First, when he was still "Cardinal" Ratzinger, it was John Paul II who supposedly tied his hands, and now it's the German "bishops"? Will this madness ever end?* Any promise made by him to the Society in this sense would infallibly expose him to pressure by the progressives. We would then have received the opinions of a Pope against the majority of bishops disposed towards secession. *But Bishop Fellay knows, of course, that these "bishops" aren't Catholics anyway. The best thing that could happen is for these non-Catholics to formalize their schism so that they can no longer mislead innocent souls. See an essay here that appeared in the SSPX's magazine on how "Catholic" these people are.* This cannot be expected in the climate of the present debate, even with the will of a certain restoration. As for myself, I believe that it will only be a limited freedom for the Mass that will eventually be granted.

**D.I.C.I.:** The Press has published rumors concerning divisions within the Society of Saint Pius X? What is exactly the case?

**BISHOP FELLAY:** The announcement of the audience granted by the Pope provoked feverish talk in the media. They have made a lot of noise, attempting to show that divisions exist in the Society amongst its four bishops. Journalists have likewise published the threats directed against the Pope by the progressives: "To grant freedom to the Mass is to disavow Paul VI and the liturgical reform". *It's nice to know that since April 19, 2005, Benedict XVI is no longer a progressive...*

However, I can affirm to you that within the Society of Saint Pius X, the four bishops are united on the question of the relationships with Rome, and that Bishop Williamson, whose name has been quoted, is not "sedevacantist". The media has nothing to worry about. Alas, this is for them not newsworthy.

**D.I.C.I.:** Your Excellency, what do you now hope for?

**BISHOP FELLAY:** Some Cardinals in Rome hope to see Tradition recognized. *Yes, wouldn't it be nice for the Catholic Church to recognize Catholicism? What a silly game this is...* We likewise hope for it. We hope, in particular, for complete freedom to be granted to the Mass, but there is little chance that this will be for tomorrow. It will then be a duty to acknowledge the place of Tradition in the Church, avoiding the bad interpretations that are often given concerning it.

We must force the Roman authorities to admit that we cannot follow without serious reservations the interpretation that they given of the Council and of Ecumenism, as it is practiced. Deep down, what we hope for is to make them understand one day the whole reason why Tradition exists.

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