

# Archbishop Lefebvre on the Liturgical Reforms of Pope Pius XII

Romanitas Press is an independent company and not connected with any religious congregation. The citation of Archbishop Lefebvre is like those which support such contemporary figures as Cardinal Burke, Archbishop Vigano, or Bishop Schneider. We must also invoke the memory of the late Michael Davies, that great English-speaking apologist for Tradition who as an independent traditionalist did not hesitate to defend Archbishop Lefebvre.<sup>1</sup>

## Summary

The conclusion of this presentation is that the liturgical reforms of Popes Pius XII and John XXIII are not modernist and thus, following the precept of obedience vis-à-vis the Doctrine of the Faith, the books contingent with the 1962 edition of the *Missale Romanum* must be followed.

## Foreword—The Significance of Archbishop Lefebvre’s Statements

Regarding Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, the late Pope Benedict XVI stated “I consider him to be the most important bishop of the 20th century with regard to the universal Church” and called him a “great bishop of the Church,”<sup>2</sup> while Pope Francis has affirmed that he enjoyed reading the monumental biography of this prelate.<sup>3</sup> Thus, despite the confusing post-conciliar political environment in which the Roman Catholic Church finds herself, the genuine esteem deserved for Archbishop Lefebvre continues to be manifested.



As a defender of the Catholic Faith, the priesthood, and the “Mass of All Time”, Archbishop Lefebvre (1905-1991) has been hailed as the “Standard Bearer of Tradition”—a title he personally eschewed. For his courageous stance on the rights of the traditional liturgy, a debt of gratitude and recognition is owed by all attached to the Roman Mass; thus, his statements continue to merit consideration.

In addition to upholding the “Mass of All Time” against the problems of the *Novus Ordo Missae*, he likewise combatted the error of antiquarianism manifested by some concerning which editions of the pre-conciliar liturgical books should be utilized—that is, those concurrent with the 1962 *Missale Romanum*—thus providing the crucial principle upon which legitimate resistance is based; that is, ecclesiastical authority vis-à-vis the doctrine of the Faith.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, consider his three-volume set of *Apologia Pro Lefebvre* (Angelus Press).

<sup>2</sup> As reported at LifeSiteNews on 12-3-2021.

<sup>3</sup> As reported by the Rorate Coeli blog on 5-28-2014. The referenced book is *Marcel Lefebvre: The Biography* by Bishop Bernard Tissier de Mallerais (Angelus Press, 2004).

It is significant—if not providential—that Archbishop Lefebvre was called upon to battle within the ranks of his own priestly society a “neo-antiquarianist” mindset that manifested itself among the pernicious errors and radical positions of sedevacantism, which he staunchly opposed. A benefit of this struggle is his testimony to the genuine origins and nature of the liturgical reforms undertaken by Pope Pius XII—some posthumously promulgated by Pope John XXIII—and an explanation of the principle that requires their acceptance.

## Debunking the Myths—Conclusions from the Extracts

From what Archbishop Lefebvre has said below—as well as from other sources—we can affirm the following points, thereby debunking certain myths commonly circulated among those opposed to the revisions undertaken by Pope Pius XII’s Commission for liturgical reform (known as the Pian Commission):

1. The Pian Reforms were not the harbinger of the *Novus Ordo* liturgical revolution, even if some individuals:
  - a) were later involved with the Consilium, or
  - b) harbored modernist concepts or plans at the time.

Thus, the erroneous concept of “gradualism” must be rejected.

2. Fr. (later Archbishop) Annibale Bugnini was not the architect of the Pian Reforms as has been falsely claimed in his autobiography and by others. This specifically applies to the Holy Week Reform, which was Pius XII’s project from start to finish as attested by eyewitnesses.<sup>4</sup>
3. The spirit and intent of the Pian Reforms were diametrically opposed to the modernist objectives of the Consilium and therefore are in no way related to nor in continuity with the revolutionary changes that brought about the *Novus Ordo Missae*.
4. The Holy Week Reform was not the “battering ram” that allowed the subsequent liturgical revolution, as Bugnini falsely claimed, nor was it the initiation of the Consilium’s work, as claimed by others (including Pope Paul VI who tried to link the post-conciliar reforms to those of St. Pius X).
5. The Pian Reforms are neither modernist nor heterodox but represent an authentic, organic development of the Roman Liturgy and therefore must be accepted by those attached to Tradition in obedience to legitimate authority.
6. Consequently, the refusal to accept the 1962 liturgical books in favor of older editions is a form of antiquarianism, an error condemned by Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it should be noted that this neo-antiquarianist position has been primarily espoused by sedevacantists as a consequence of their rejection of the post-conciliar popes.



Archbishop  
Annibale Bugnini

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<sup>4</sup> For example, that of Mother Pascalina—Pope Pius XII’s long-time confidante—as quoted by Fr. Charles T. Murr in his book, *The Godmother: Madre Pascalina, A Feminine Tour de Force* (2017) and the “Cardinal Antonelli Diaries”, *The Development of the Liturgical Reform: As Seen by Cardinal Ferdinando Antonelli from 1948 to 1970*; Nicola Giampietro (Roman Catholic Books, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Encyclical, [On the Sacred Liturgy](#) (1947).

7. The pre-conciliar liturgical reforms are not the products of a “hyper-papalist” autocracy, as has been claimed by some in recent years who rightly reject Ultramontanism (an excessive concept of papal authority); for the Supreme Pontiff is the universal legislator of the Church’s sacred liturgy (both in the West and the East) and thus has the right to enact revisions so long as they are orthodox. This point has been clearly explained for centuries by liturgists<sup>6</sup> as well as in Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Mediator Dei*.

## **Historical Background to the Extracts**

This is a collection of statements made by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre concerning the reforms that comprised the 1962 liturgical books (i.e., the *Missale Romanum*, *Breviarium Romanum*, *Rituale Romanum* and *Pontificale Romanum*), and why they must be accepted based upon obedience to legitimate authority as there is nothing unorthodox in them.

The historical background to these statements is firstly the imposition—or rather *confirmation* of what had always been practiced and taught at the Ecône seminary—of the 1962 liturgical books upon the Society of St. Pius X as a whole in order to:

- a) ensure obedience to legitimate authority (i.e., the use of liturgical books which incorporate the reforms of Pius XII and John XXIII) and
- b) communal unity in practicing the official form of the Roman Rite.

This rule was resisted by certain American priests in the Northeast District who were espousing radical sedevacantist positions.

In April 1982, Archbishop Lefebvre gave a conference to the SSPX seminarians of St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary at Ridgefield, Connecticut, concerning the liturgical reforms that comprise the 1962 books, thereby clarifying their actual origin—of Pope Pius XII and not of Annibale Bugnini, as the seditious priests were claiming—and that they were not heterodox in any way. Unfortunately—as will be seen further below—neither the principle nor the facts given by Archbishop Lefebvre on this matter were accepted by the said priests who persisted in their disobedience.

In early 1983 this liturgical dispute among these disaffected American priests came to a head when a newly ordained SSPX priest—one of their followers—refused to accept his assignment at St. Mary’s, Kansas (which as part of the Southwest District had remained obedient to the Superior General), because they used the “John XXIII” missal and breviary.

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<sup>6</sup> See for example, Msgr. C. Callewaert in [\*De Sacra Liturgia Universim\*](#) (1953—reprinted by Romanitas Press): *De Fontibus Liturgiae Romanae* (Caput IV); *De Fontibus Iuridicis* (Art. 1), n. 120—I. *Legislatores*, pp 125-148.

On March 25, 1983, nine rebellious priests (known colloquially as "The Nine") submitted an open letter to Archbishop Lefebvre accusing him of compromising with Modernist errors. Integral to the sedevacantist attitudes manifested in this letter was the statement that the "liturgical reforms imposed by John XXIII" were modernist because they were "authored by Annibale Bugnini" and thus must be rejected in favor of the "St. Pius X" books. This brought the liturgical issue finally to a head.

In a final attempt to persuade "the Nine" to retract their sedevacantism, Archbishop Lefebvre held a two-hour conference with them at the SSPX priory in Oyster Bay Cove, New York, but to no avail. As the Nine remained steadfast in their positions, they were formally expelled from the Society on April 27, 1983.

The following extracts are of conferences given to the seminarians of St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary at Ridgefield, Connecticut, which were reproduced as transcriptions from tape recordings.<sup>7</sup> These were held on the following dates:

- April 23, 1982 (i.e., a year prior to the expulsion of "the Nine")
- April 24, 25, 26 and 28, 1983

Two other extracts have been provided from:

- April 1983 Superior General's Letter to Friends and Benefactors
- Conference given on November 5, 1983, at Long Island, New York

In all cases, these texts have been slightly reformatted from their originals for easier reading or to correct misspellings. The footnotes are the compiler's. Most of the comments given in square brackets are those of the transcriber to provide context or clarity.

It will also be noted that Archbishop Lefebvre uses the French word for "Fraternity" (based on the official Latin title, *Fraternitas Sacerdotalis Sancti Pii X*) instead of the American usage of "Society" in reference to his pious union of priests under the patronage of St. Pius X.

Also, "Ecône" refers to the International Seminary of St. Pius X located in Ecône, Switzerland, while "Zaitzkofen" refers to the International Seminary of the Sacred Heart in the German city of the same name, and "Albano" to the SSPX's former seminary in Italy.

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<sup>7</sup> These recordings were also made available to the public by the Ridgefield seminary on tape cassette.

## **Refuting Some False Claims and Rumors about Archbishop Lefebvre and the 1962 Liturgical Books**

Stemming mainly from the testimonies of the Nine—and currently disseminated by others as if factual—are several false claims about Archbishop Lefebvre’s motivations for insisting upon the 1962 liturgical books. Simultaneously, several unsubstantiated contentions have been made about his later views on this matter. These erroneous claims and their refutation have been compiled in what follows.

### **1. The choice of the 1962 liturgical books was arbitrary and not within Archbishop Lefebvre’s authority as Superior General.**

By reason of the ongoing authority of St. Pius V’s papal bull *Quo Primum* (which was never abrogated<sup>8</sup>), the liturgical books of the traditional Roman Rite that were concurrent with the 1962 *Missale Romanum* must be adhered to.

The 1965 interim missal—initially used at Ecône until 1974—is substantially the 1962 *Missale Romanum* (i.e., textually) with some rubrical differences. So, in fact, this was not an “arbitrary choice” as some contend, but rather was in conformity with legitimate authority. Note also, the 1962 missal had already for several years been adhered to by *Una Voce* International and other organizations (e.g., the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales), in opposition to the wholesale vernacularization of the Mass that many episcopal conferences were authorizing in conjunction with the 1965 edition.

Thus, as Superior General, Archbishop Lefebvre was merely applying and enforcing within his religious congregation the principles of liturgical law as had always been upheld by the clergy.

### **2. Archbishop Lefebvre only enforced the use of the 1962 liturgical books to appease Rome during discussions.**

This false claim is taken directly from the open letter of “the Nine”.

Firstly, the 1962 books—even via the 1965 interim missal—were always in use at the Ecône seminary (e.g., Solemn Mass, Pontifical ceremonies, Holy Week, etc.).<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, the archbishop makes clear repeatedly within the extracts the two-fold reason for this imposition:

- 1) As a principle of authority and orthodoxy in proper reaction to the post-conciliar crisis—thus as a matter of the Faith;

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<sup>8</sup> For the juridical argument on this point, see *In Defence of the Roman Mass*, Fr. Raymond Dulac (Te Deum Press, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> See *Marcel Lefebvre: The Biography*, pp 415-416.

- 2) As a matter of unity of praxis within the Society—and we may also say that this sense of unity is equally important today for the Traditional Movement as a whole.

So, an “appeasement with Rome” was not the archbishop’s motivation in this matter, nor is such a cause ever mentioned.

### **3. At one time Archbishop Lefebvre allowed pre-1962 editions to be used in the Society.**

Firstly, as the archbishop outlines in the seminary conferences, it was always expected that Society priests would do as they had done at Ecône—that is, use the 1962 books.

Secondly, it is true that the archbishop tolerated—or rather, overlooked—the use of pre-1962 books for a short time in some SSPX houses. However, this was due to:

- a) the difficulty of obtaining 1962 editions, and/or
- b) the hope that the Society’s houses at odds with the congregation’s official praxis (i.e., as at Ecône) would eventually correct themselves—as in fact many did.

Thirdly, the archbishop was initially more preoccupied with the formation of priests and dealing with the rapidly escalating post-conciliar crisis, which required his continual travels around the world to administer confirmations, ordain seminarians, etc. As he himself admits below, perhaps he should have addressed this liturgical matter sooner. But once he realized that the refusal to use the 1962 books was linked to a sedevacantist mindset and became a matter of disobedience, he swiftly dealt with it.

### **4. “I’ve heard it said that Archbishop Lefebvre later considered returning to the pre-1955 liturgical books.”**

Firstly, these are unsubstantiated claims based upon hallway hearsay.

Secondly and more importantly, if we consider the principle that Archbishop Lefebvre gave—as well as his own first-hand knowledge of the events that led to the reforms in question—such a claim is without foundation as it would have contradicted his position in this important matter.

### **5. Archbishop Lefebvre would have accepted the three-year indult for the pre-1955 Holy Week Rites.**

This is mere conjecture, especially considering the principle repeatedly cited by him, namely that of obedience to legitimate authority as well as agreement with the rational for the Pian Holy Week Reform.

Furthermore, it is significant that during the indult’s timeframe (2019-2021), the SSPX’s Superior General, Fr. Davide Pagliarani (appointed in 2018), did

not allow his priests to utilize this indult. Also, the former Superior General, Bishop Bernard Fellay (1994-2018), forbade his priests to use the pre-55 rites during his tenure.

### **A Concluding Note**

It must be well-noted that the insistence on using the pre-1962 liturgical books originated primarily in sedevacantism and as an integral part of their radical positions.

Furthermore, there is no legitimacy in rejecting the Pisan reforms—especially of Holy Week—on the grounds that Bugnini was their architect, as this myth has been conclusively debunked.

Most “pre-55ers” today however espouse another form of neo-antiquarianism by rejecting the organic liturgical developments promoted by Pope Pius XII. This error was condemned by the same pope in *Mediator Dei*.



## **April 23, 1982 Seminary Conference Extracts Concerning the Unity in the Society**

### **The True Way**

Now you can see how it is very difficult for you and me and for all the priests of the Fraternity to choose the true way, the way of God, the way of the Catholic Church. (...)

It is very difficult to know the thing we must refuse and the thing we must accept. It is very difficult. In the story of the Reform, from Church history, we must say that they [the saints] remained conformed to the tradition of the Church and the theology of the Church... and that is very difficult. Now, it is impossible to accept 'this' or 'that' because it is against the tradition and theology of the Church.

So we must be careful. Do not judge with sentimental judgment, but judge with reason and good sense, with the sense of the Faith, because it is evident that Modernism is not only the error of this day alone... because St. Pius X condemned it after it had existed perhaps about two centuries. And so, the influence of Modernism in the Church, and the effects we see in the Church, make it dangerous for us... we must be very careful not to refuse obedience when we have no right to refuse obedience, and know when we have a right and a duty to refuse obedience.

Thus, in the Fraternity, Ecône is the example of our attitude, or our actions and judgments in this time of the confusion in the Church.

### **Deviations from Ecône**

I am afraid, that is, I can say that I am afraid that I know that in some seminaries [of the Society] they change the [liturgical] custom of Ecône. If we choose a certain act in Ecône it is not without reason, without a motive. And so I think in this time when there is so much confusion, if we begin to change here, for example, in Albano [Italy], they do some new rule [rubrics], or in Zaitzkofen, or here [in Ridgefield], ...where is the unity? Slowly, slowly, although you do something that is not so very important, slowly, slowly, perhaps we may realize a division in the Fraternity. That would be very sad. Our fortitude, our strength... we are strong because of our unity.

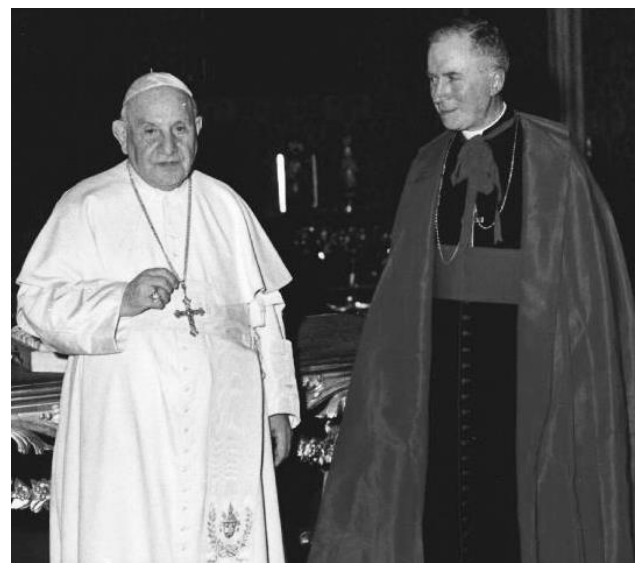
### **The Breviary of Pope John XXIII**

I know that for some of you and some of the professors here, it is very difficult to change the breviary, the office, and take the breviary edited by Pope John

XXIII. But you know that this reform is not truly of Pope John XXIII. It was done during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII. Myself, I know that because when I was Apostolic Delegate in Dakar, and when I was going to the episcopal conference in Madagascar... in West Africa, etc., for the episcopal conferences, I received a letter from Rome to speak with the bishops in Africa to ask questions about the reform of the breviary, during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII.



I know that there are some things [in the Pope John XXIII breviary] that are not very good [In the archbishop's native French, this would translate better as "unfortunate" or "regrettable"—Ed.]... but there are some things good in it.<sup>10</sup> For example, with the centuries, the popes canonized many saints. More and more feasts were created and they took the place of the Temporal Cycle... do you understand? If you have many feasts, feasts, feasts, each day we say always the office of some feast, and no more the Mass of the Temporal... and this Mass, especially the Masses of Lent, are very ancient and magnificent, full of the doctrine of penance and of the Redemption of Jesus Christ. They are very good Masses. And so with this reform of Pope Pius XII, during all of Lent we can say these ancient Masses, and that is a good thing; that is not a bad thing.



But I know, for example, the suppression of the Octave of the Epiphany is a pity... it was very nice, a big feast. But we cannot say that it is a sign of Modernism. To say that it is a sign of Modernism is too exaggerated.

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<sup>10</sup> As with any liturgical reform—the liturgy being both a divine and human matter—revisions can be negatively judged or criticized (e.g., due to the removal of a cherished past practice or perhaps even the introduction of a less-than-ideal solution to an existing issue). Even the Tridentine reforms of the breviary and missal can be criticized. However, this is not tantamount to a wholesale rejection of a reform.

You know that in June, for example, in the breviary before Pius XII we have certain days, three or four octaves in the same time, and we do the commemoration of the Sacred Heart, of St. John Baptist, of Corpus Christi, etc., ...three or four ...it is too much. It is very important to conserve the Temporal cycle.

And as to the reform of Pope Pius XII to the new translation of Psalms... Pope John XXIII was against that. He said that. I heard that myself from Pope John XXIII that he was against the new psalter.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, we cannot say always "that is modernist, this is modernist, that is modernist." Perhaps it was that certain men when in doing this reform of the breviary, in their minds they intended it to be the preparation of a future reform that is modernist. But to say that this reform [published under Pope John XXIII] was modernist, I think that is exaggerated. I do not think it is modernist. We cannot say that it is.

You know that in the breviary, what is the most important thing? It is not the lessons [of Matins]... *but it is the psalms*. That is the very traditional prayer, the psalms, and all psalms [in the Pope John XXIII breviary] remain intact. No change of the psalter. We say in one week all 150 psalms [when we pray the Pope John XXIII breviary], and that is what is important in the breviary. That is what Pope St. Pius X said.<sup>12</sup> When Pope Pius X did his [liturgical] reform, he said, the basis of the breviary is the psalms.

I think that it is very good if we can pray in the same manner in all our houses. I give you an example where there is difficulty over this:

In St. Mary's, Kansas, I sent three sisters last year to Kansas. They are accustomed to pray the breviary of Pope John XXIII. They arrived in Kansas. In all our houses, the sisters pray with the priests, with the brothers, and sometimes some of the faithful likewise pray with them. When they arrived in Kansas, Fr. Collins and Fr. Berry, pray with the old breviary. So they cannot pray with them... the sisters say their prayer in the convent and the Fathers say their prayer in the church... they cannot pray together. That is a pity. I think that it is very important, that is, that the sisters, the fathers, the brothers, and the whole community pray together, all the prayers... so that there is a unity in the community, unity in the prayer, a unity in the Mass, a unity in Communion, etc., all this unity is very, very important... and many good consequences result in the life of the Community from such a unity.

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<sup>11</sup> The context of this comment is that some have asserted that the *Psalterium Pianum* (Pian Psalter) promulgated in 1945 is modernist; however, Pope John XXIII's contrasting statement shows this is an erroneous judgment.

<sup>12</sup> See [\*Divino Afflatu\*](#) (On the Reform of the Roman Breviary) of 1911.

Now the three deacons I will ordain tomorrow, should I raise them to the priesthood next year, along with the one, DeLallo, at Ecône, there will be four new priests for America... if, for example, two of these are stationed at the same priory and if one says, "Ah, no, no, I can say the old breviary only", and another says, "Ah no, no, I take the breviary, the new breviary, the breviary of the Fraternity..."? Then there are two priests who cannot pray together... what a pity. Thus begins a division in the Fraternity. This cannot be. I think that before you receive another superior general, I think it is very important that I give to my successor a unified society.

That is for the breviary and it is the same for other things as well. We must preserve the tradition as we have in Ecône and all the other, seminaries. That is the reason why I ask Fr. [Louis-Paul] Dubroeuq to put together the diurnal<sup>13</sup>... it is very well prepared... and so we publish the diurnal with all the hours from Lauds to Compline. And so if we do another book with Matins, we will have a complete breviary.<sup>14</sup> It will be a good thing because it is always more and more difficult to find a good breviary. I like you to maintain strength in unity here at the seminary.

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<sup>13</sup> This Latin term means "daytime" referring to the breviary's day offices and thus excluding Matins. Later, the Zaitzkofen seminary republished Desclée's 1961 edition of the *Diurnale Romanum* which is still available today in the United States from Angelus Press.

<sup>14</sup> In 2009, the Society finally reprinted the *Brevarium Romanum*. It is noteworthy that during the same year, the Fraternity of St. Peter also republished a 1961 edition with the psalms formatted in columns.

## **Changes in the Divine Office Made by Pius XII**

The following was appended to the above original transcript.

Taken from *Matters Liturgical*:<sup>15</sup>

1. Simples are reduced to commemorations.
2. Semi-doubles are suppressed, henceforth are only of simple rite.
3. The following Sundays are to be under celebrated the double rite of first class: the four Sundays of Advent; all Sundays from the first Sunday of Lent to Low Sunday inclusive; Pentecost Sunday.
4. All Octaves have been suppressed with the exception of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. The days within these octaves are elevated to double rite.
5. Only the following have first Vespers: feasts of first and second class; all Sundays; any feast of our Lord occurring, on a minor Sunday.
6. Dominical prayers, Suffrage of the Saints, and Commemoration of the Cross have been suppressed.
7. Ferial prayers—said at Vespers and Lauds only and then only on the following days: Wednesdays and Fridays in the ferial office of Advent, Lent and Passiontide; on all ember days, with the exception of the ember days of Pentecost when the ferial office is said. The rubrics of the Breviary, prescribing their recitation at other times also, are abrogated as of January 1st, 1956.

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<sup>15</sup> Wuest-Mullaney-Barry (Frederick Pustet; New York, 1959).

## **April 24, 1983—Seminary Conference #1**

### **Non Serviam**

I cannot give ordination because in November [1982], I gave the priesthood to three of you, that is, three young deacons, and I think in January... at the end of January, when I asked young Fr. Zapp to go to St. Mary's to help Fr. De La Tour, he said, "No. I cannot go to St. Mary's. I refuse to go to St. Mary's." For me it was very sad and very bad... a young priest, the first priest [to do this in the Society] ...I ask him to go, and he said "I refuse". Why? Why refuse? Why? He said "I cannot go to St. Mary's, because at St. Mary's they have the rite [liturgy] of Pope John XXIII."

### **The Unveiling—Sedition**

Well, this liturgy is the liturgy of Ecône. It is the liturgy I myself have been using now for twenty years. It is a liturgy we use, more or less everywhere in the Fraternity.

But this fact, this refusal of Fr. Zapp's was an unveiling of another thing more important... [of something far graver] ...more sad. For I know as he said to me [himself] that he was supported by the director of the seminary [Fr. Sanborn]. And so if the director of seminary of Ridgefield helps the seminarians to disobey to the Superior General of the Fraternity, then where are we going? Then what is the seminary? He [Fr. Zapp] is the first priest I ordain here...[at Ridgefield] these three young priests [I ordained], who were here for all of their studies... [the first fruits of this seminary] ...the first to refuse to go to the place [I assigned him] because he refused the liturgy of that place.

The director [himself] of the seminary... he agreed with this young priest... that is impossible! Not only the director of the seminary was agreed with this young priest, but some professors and some priests from the Northeast District. They say [they agreed with Fr. Zapp] because the liturgy of Pope John XXIII is not good; And so they condemn it... they condemned me... and they condemned Ecône... How is this possible??? ...that they condemn the bishop who gave them their ordinations? When these priests, all of them, were at Ecône, they accepted this liturgy. When I gave them ordination, with the liturgy of Pope John XXIII, they accepted this liturgy...they accepted it during two years, three years, etc., ...they accepted it during all that time. When they left Ecône, they changed, and they took another orientation. They decided to abandon what was practiced at Ecône and to keep [solely] to the liturgy of St. Pius X.

### **On the Pope**

Now, not only do they dispute about the liturgy, but also about the pope... you know that some of these priests... they are, in their hearts, against the fact that there is a pope in Rome. They say that there is no pope in Rome, no

pope in the Church, no cardinals in Rome, no more hierarchy in the Church. In their hearts they say all sacraments in the new reform... all sacraments, they are invalid. And so they show that 'their spirit' is not the same as my spirit and my teaching. The teaching I have always given in my seminaries, in Ecône, in Zaitzkofen, in Buenos Aires, in Albano, it's the same... I do not change... I cannot change. [This spirit of theirs,] that is very, very, very sad.

Certainly we are agreed in many doctrines, these priests and I. We have the same doctrine about the Church, about theology, i.e., we follow St. Thomas Aquinas in philosophy, in theology, etc. But to interpret the situation of the Church now, we have not the same meaning, nor the same thinking. This is very dangerous, that is, the way they follow is very, very dangerous. You know that there are other priests in the world, in France, in America, in Mexico, in Deutschland [Germany] ...there are some priests who follow the same dangerous way. They say: "No more pope; no more... all sacraments are invalid, etc." But now they are going, slowly, slowly, into *schism*. That is very dangerous... very dangerous.

### **The Catholic Principle**

What is the first principle to know what we must do in this circumstance, in this crisis in the Church? What is my principle? The principle of the Church is the principle of St. Thomas Aquinas. It is not my choice; it's not my favor; it's not my personal desire... I am nothing... I merely follow the doctrine of the Church... and this doctrine is expounded by St. Thomas Aquinas... So what does St. Thomas Aquinas say about the authority in the Church? When can we refuse something from the authority of the Church?

**Principle:** "Only when the Faith is in question." Only in this case: Not in other cases... only when the Faith is in question... and that is found in the *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 33, a. 4, ad 2m.

St. Thomas' answer is that we cannot resist to the authority; we must obey: "*Sciendum tamen est quod ubi immineret periculum fidei.*" *Periculum fidei*. That is, the danger to our faith... "*etiam publice essent praelate a subditis arguendi.*", that is, the subject can be opposed to the authority if the Faith is in question ["*periculum fidei*"]: "*Unde et Paulus, qui erat subditus Petro, propter imminens periculum scandali circa fidem, Petrum publice arguit,*" that is, St. Paul opposed St. Peter because it was a danger for the Faith [cf. Galatians 2:11].

That is the principle [of St. Thomas], and I cannot harbor another motive to resist the pope... it is very serious to be opposed to the pope, and to the Church. It is very serious, and if we think that we must do that, we must do it [resist the Holy Father] only to preserve our Faith, and not for any other motive.

We must now do an application of the principle. For me I think that the liturgical reform of Pope John XXIII has nothing against the Faith. You can take the *Pontificale*, the *Rituale*, the Breviary, the Roman Missal, and... what is in these books of Pope John XXIII that is against the Faith? Nothing! And so [in an urgent tone]: ...*I cannot refuse this book [of Pope John], because he is the pope, and the pope gave me this book [and I must obey], it is quite another thing with the reform of Pope Paul VI...* in this book of reform of Pope Paul VI is a very grave danger to my Faith... it is precisely: *Periculum fidei*.

So I refuse it, because Ecumenism is the idea and motive of this reform... and this Ecumenism... they say themselves, that is, Pope Paul VI, Bernini, etc., all say the motive of their reform is Ecumenism, and this Ecumenism takes away all [Catholic] things which are displeasing to the Protestant. That is incredible! In our books of Catholic Liturgy? And not only in the liturgy do they remove all that displeases them, but also in Canon Law, in the institution of the Church... But what displeases the Protestant? The doctrine, the Faith, the Catholic Faith. The Sacrifice of the Mass, as sacrifice, the Protestant cannot accept. If we ask to the Protestants they would verify to this... They were present [at the Council] and helped do this reform; and the definition of article 7 on the Mass, is a Protestant definition. So we cannot accept it! It is impossible!<sup>16</sup>

I wrote to the Pope (John Paul II), ten days ago. I wrote that this reform is Ecumenism and this Ecumenism is bad, and I cannot accept it, and I cannot accept this *Novus Ordo* Mass. Thus my response is in the negative, because the pope asked me to accept this New Mass. I said, "No, I cannot accept the

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<sup>16</sup> Regarding these comments—which some might find unqualified—two quotations from three eminent cardinals are notable:

"The accompanying critical study of the *Novus Ordo Missae*, the work of a group of theologians, liturgists and pastors of souls, shows quite clearly in spite of its brevity that if we consider the innovations implied or taken for granted, which may of course be evaluated in different ways, the *Novus Ordo* represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session XXII of the Council of Trent. The "canons" of the rite definitively fixed at that time provided an insurmountable barrier to any heresy directed against the integrity of the Mystery." (Cardinals Alfredo Ottaviani and Antonio Bacci in their accompanying letter of September 25, 1969, to Pope Paul VI for "A Brief Critical Study of the New Order of Mass").

"The analysis of the *Novus Ordo* made by these two cardinals has lost none of its value nor, unfortunately, of its relevance.... The results of the reform are considered by many today to be devastating. It was to the credit of Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci that they discovered very quickly that the change of the rites led to a fundamental change of doctrine." Cardinal Alfons Stickler, Foreword to *The Ottaviani Intervention* (TAN Books, 2004).

Furthermore, the integral participation and contributions of six Protestant ministers with the Consilium in creating an ecumenical Mass was confirmed in *L'Osservatore Romano* on April 23, 1970: "Commission Holds Final Meeting, Pope Commends Work of Consilium" which featured a picture of Pope Paul VI and the ministers.

It is also noteworthy that liberal theologians such as Andrea Grillo also acknowledge a radical difference of doctrine and ecclesiology between the old and new rites of Mass.



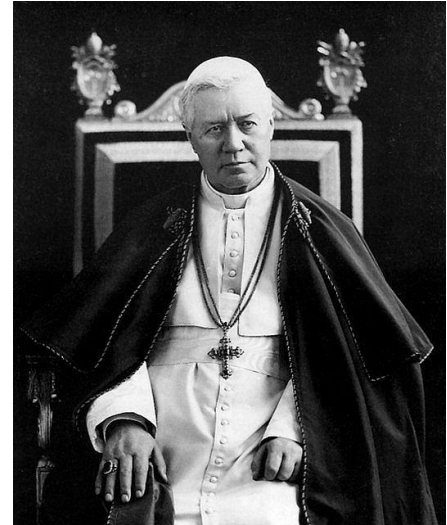
New Mass... never can I accept it." If they do not change this 'New Mass', I cannot accept it. But I know the motive of the reform of Pope John XXIII. I have no reason [as with the reform of Paul VI], but I have a reason and motive to accept [the reform of Pope John XXIII], because [this reform] uses the same principle [found in] *Divino afflatu* [papal decree of Pope St. Pius X].

### ***Divino Afflatu***

If you read this bull of Pope St. Pius X, to his liturgical reform,<sup>17</sup> you will find the same principle that Pope John XXIII used for his reform. The first consideration of Pope Pius X is about the Psalter: he said, the psalter is the essential thing in the breviary... the psalms:

*Accedit quod in Psalmis mirabilis quaedam vis inest ad excitanda in animis omnium studia virtutum.*

[Besides, there is in the Psalms a certain wonderful power for stimulating zeal in men's minds for all the virtues.]



He has a consideration for the psalms, which is very magnificent! It shows that the heart of our breviary is this *psalterium*, and he has a citation of St. Augustine as well to support this. Thus, Pope St. Pius X says:

*Jure igitur optimo provisum est antiquitus et per decreta Romanorum Pontificem, et per canones Conciliorum, et per monasticas leges, ut homines ex utroque clero integrum Psalterium per singulas hebdomadas concinerent vel recitarent.*

[Rightly therefore and most excellently as it's been provided for from ancient times, and through the decrees of the Roman Pontiffs and through the canons of the Councils, and through monastic laws, that both men and clergy should, each week, sing or recite the entire psalter.]

That is the tradition, that is, to say every week all the psalms... that is an ancient rule in the Church... to say all the psalms in the week... and [emphatically] *that is the rule of Pope John XXIII*. So, after he said how magnificent the prayer of the psalms are, he [Pope Pius X] said that with time we have many feasts of holy men... many feasts... and they became so numerous that we could not say all the psalms in a week. So many bishops and cardinals asked for a diminishing of the feasts of the saints.

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<sup>17</sup> [Read the Apostolic Constitution at Romanitas Press.](#)

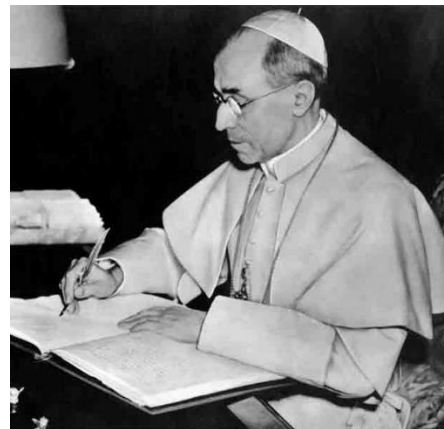
[Continuing from *Divino Afflatu*] No wonder then, that a great many Bishops in various parts of the world have sent expressions of their opinions on this matter to the Apostolic See, and especially during the Vatican [I] Council when they asked, among other things, that the ancient custom of reciting the whole Psalter within the week might be restored as far as possible, but in such a way that the burden should not be made any heavier for the clergy, whose labors in the vineyard of the sacred ministry are now increased owing to the diminution in the number of laborers.

These petitions and wishes, which were Our own, too, before We assumed the Pontificate, and also the appeals which have since come from others of our Venerable Brothers and from pious men, We have decided should be granted, but with care, so that from the reciting of the entire Psalter within the week, no diminution in the cultus of Saints may follow, on the one hand, and on the other, that the burden of the Divine Office may become not more oppressive, but actually lighter.

And so they tried to conserve this rule, that is, to say all the psalms in the week, and to have some feasts, but not so many that we always have the same psalms from the Common of Feasts... and so it is the same rule followed by Pope John XXIII. Perhaps in some details, we can say it should be better, etc.: you know we have no important reason to refuse this reform.

### **It is Pope Pius XII's Reform**

In reality, this reform was done by Pope Pius XII, not Pope John XXIII. When I was Apostolic Delegate in Rome, they asked me to have episcopal conferences, in Madagascar, in Cameroon, and the rest of French-speaking Africa, and in Central Africa... at episcopal conferences, to ask the bishops about a reform of the breviary. You know that was during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII.



But these young priests say that seven men who did this reform were the same ones who did the reform of Pope Paul VI. I said to them. "That is not true". Perhaps in the commission, it is possible that some of these men were there... perhaps Bugnini was a member of this commission [of Pope Pius XII].

You know that during the Pontificate of Pope John XXIII, this pope... removed Msgr. Bugnini from his teaching post at the University of the Lateran. Pope John XXIII was against Bugnini. I knew the president of the commission who

did this reform of Pope John XXIII... it was Mgr. [Cesario] D'Amato, who was the Abbot of St. Paul outside the Walls... he is still there at St. Paul's... I know him very well and I speak many times with him. He was the president of the commission of reforming the liturgy, under the pontificate of Pope John XXIII. He is very much a traditionalist... very traditional... and after, during the Council of Vatican II [under Pope Paul VI] he was put outside [removed] because he was a traditionalist, and they replaced him by Msgr. Bugnini... that is true! That is a big change... a big change... it is not the same. It is not true to say that this reform of Pope John XXIII is the beginning of the reform of Pope Paul VI... it is not true.



Abbot Cesario D'Amato, OSB

So, I have said concerning this reform [of Pope John XXIII], we must obey the pope, especially since we have no reason to refuse it.

### **The Surprise**

If I tolerated... and sometimes I know that some Fathers [after ordination at Ecône], they return to their countries, they use the old liturgy of St. Pius X... I know that... and I tolerated it... but I was surprised that they changed [their attitude, towards] the liturgy we have at Ecône... but in the past these Fathers did not say they were against the liturgy of Ecône... they don't say that... and I thought [all along] they accepted the liturgy of St. Pius X and they likewise accept the liturgy of Pope John XXIII... but now, today, with this fact of Fr. Zapp [his insubordination], now I know [said very distressed] ...now I know that they do not accept [the John XXIII liturgy], they refuse it! And they speak against this institution! That is true! I cannot accept that... that is a rupture... a division in the Fraternity.

### **The Rupture**

How is this possible, that they accept what they are against in the Fraternity? And I think that it is very important to obey to the pope... this obedience is important... because, why don't they [for example] take another liturgy, like the Oriental Liturgy? ...why don't they take the Coptic Liturgy? ...or some other liturgy... why do they pick the liturgy of St. Pius X? ...I have no reason [to disobey]." [Point: It is not a matter of preference or taste, but a matter of obedience to legitimate authority].

## April 25, 1983—Seminary Conference #2

### **I desire to give you the true Catholic Faith**

My desire, my preoccupation is to give to you and all the seminarians in all our seminaries the true Catholic Faith, and the true Tradition. It is not my opinion. I do not like to hear people say: "I have the same thinking as Mgr. Lefebvre"<sup>18</sup> ...No. No. It is not the thinking of Mgr. Lefebvre, but it is the thinking of the Church. It is the ideals of the Church. Personally I have no ideal, I have no thinking, I am nothing! I only have what the Church taught me in my seminary, during all my life, the True Church's teaching, ...and no other preoccupation than this!

So, if there is something you have some hesitation over, about what we must think, I give to you the answer of the Church, that is, what the Church thinks. You can read these things in many books ...I say always to the seminarians of Ecône, that you have a big library, with all the books filled with the Tradition, with all the books of the Fathers of the Church, that is, the Patrology, ...some 245 books of Patrology alone ...you can read what is the Tradition, what is the concepts of the Church. You have all the books of Moral Theology ...all these books as written before Vatican II. You can consult these books and see if I do not give you the doctrine of the Church. It is not my doctrine, it is not my ideas. That is very important, because that is what gives us the Truth [i.e., Church doctrine] and we are very strong in our Faith by this idea that we continue in the doctrine of the Church, as St. Paul says in his epistles, "you must conserve the doctrine, you must keep what I have taught you before," etc. "If I have said something against my teaching that I taught you before, then you cannot accept that." [says St. Paul]. And so that is what makes [St. Paul] very strong, very sure, and that is what is useful for us, that is, what the Tradition says. My preoccupation is to give you this Tradition. Against Tradition nobody can say anything.

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<sup>18</sup> "Mgr." is the abbreviation of *Monseigneur* (meaning "My Lord"), the French term for a prelate. This is distinct from the English abbreviation of "Msgr." for monsignor, i.e., a priest appointed to the papal household.

## **April 26, 1983—Seminary Conference #3**

### **Question and Answer**

Q. What is to become of those priests who have refused to do the Pope John XXIII liturgy, and of those who say, “we do not have a pope?”

A. Well, I asked them to accept the post I assign them to [i.e., to accept the use of this liturgy] ...and they have two-months to think it over and decide, ...I am waiting for their decision. [NB: They gave it only 24 hours later of Conference #4.]

I cannot accept a young priest [whom I assign to a post] saying to me, “I cannot accept going to this place where they do not say the Pope Pius X liturgy.” That is impossible! All young priests must be ready [disposed] to go into the mission, to the priorate, to the seminary, etc., where the Superior General sends us. We must be disposed to [the will of] the Superior General. This attitude: “I cannot go here because they do not celebrate the liturgy of Pius X”, this attitude I cannot accept. If they refuse, well, we no longer have them as members of the Fraternity. It is a pity. That is the reason why I ask you before [your] ordination if you are ready to accept the liturgy of Pope John XXIII.

### **It is truly Pope Pius XII’s reform**

It is not really the Liturgy of Pope John XXIII. If the name “John XXIII” is sickening to you... [laughter] ...then don’t say that name... [more laughter] ...don’t say “Pope John XXIII” but call it “Pope Pius XII”, because really this liturgy is not of Pope John XXIII, but it is of Pope Pius XII. I know that because, as I told you before, I worked [took part] in this reform...

Pope Pius XII sent me to distribute questions to four episcopal conferences in Africa, to ask the bishops what is their thinking about a reform of the Missal and Breviary. We discussed this in these episcopal conferences. With 64 bishops I discussed this, in order to give an answer to the pope [Pius XII]. This reform is not the reform of Pope John, but it is the reform of Pope Pius XII. Pope John XXIII signed [into effect] this reform because Pope Pius XII died, but it was ready.

## April 28, 1983—Seminary Conference #4

### Now their rebellion is clear

Thus, I wrote to this benefactor: "Now their rebellion is clear, against the Superior General, and against the Fraternity." It is now public. That is the result of this state of mind and tendency, that is, extremist and schismatic! It is a schismatic tendency: in regard to the liturgy, in regard to the pope, and in regard to the sacraments of the new reform. Their judgments they have towards these things... they reject and refuse the Liturgy of Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII, because [they say] it is bad.

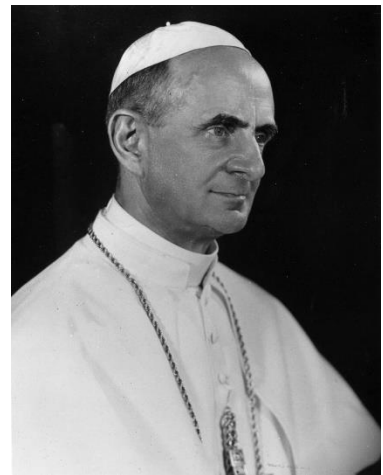
They act in practice, and think as if there is no pope, practically. They [in general] suppress all prayer for the pope. ...They never pray for the pope. Practically [in practice], they think that all sacraments [not in theory, but in practice they say]: "all sacraments of the New Rites are invalid", i.e., all are either invalid or at least doubtful, therefore are held as invalid.

This attitude is not the attitude of the Fraternity. The Fraternity has, as its principle of action in this crisis in the Church, what I gave you before, as found in St. Thomas Aquinas:

We can be opposed to the pope and authority of the Church, if the pope and authority poses a danger to our Faith, that is, *periculum fidei*—that is our principle [cf. *Summa* II-II, q. 33, a. 4, ad 2m].

Thus, the Fraternity holds that there is nothing dangerous to the Faith in the Rite of the Liturgy of Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII. Therefore, we cannot refuse, because there is no danger for our Faith. In Ecône, the liturgy [and rule of the Society] is the Liturgy of Pope John XXIII.

However, it is a danger to our Faith in the Liturgy of Pope Paul VI. This liturgy, we cannot accept. Impossible. Why? Because this liturgy is very "ecumenical", is very bad.



### We cannot continue our way together

And so, we cannot continue our way together. They are always going towards schism, because on this point, they are against Rome: They refuse the liturgy that the pope gave [the liturgy of Pope John XXIII], without a serious reason! If it was a serious reason, then I too would disobey [Pope John XXIII], but when there is not a serious reason, I cannot disobey. Thus, that is the first point: they disobey to the pope, that is, they disobey Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII.

# **April 1983 Superior General's Letter to Friends and Benefactors; #24 (Extracts)**

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

## **Priests of the North-East District refuse to use 1962 liturgy**

What was latent for many years in the relations between most of the priests of the North-East District and the Society of St. Pius X, and was the object of continual difficulties, has just come out into the open by the support given by these priests to the refusal of the Society's liturgy by one of the three young priests I ordained at Oyster Bay Cove on November 3, 1982.

## **This refusal is a result of an extremist way of thinking**

Thus, their long-standing disagreement with myself and the Society has now become a public rebellion. It is the result of an extremist way of thinking and a tendency to schism in the domain of the liturgy, the papacy, and the sacraments of the reform.

They reject the liturgy which has always been used in the Society and consider it evil, the liturgy of Pope Pius XII, signed by Pope John XXIII, and so, the liturgy preceding the Council. They think and behave as if there is no pope, suppressing all prayers for the pope. In practice, they tend to hold almost all the sacraments of the new rites to be invalid.

This radicalism is not the attitude of the Society.

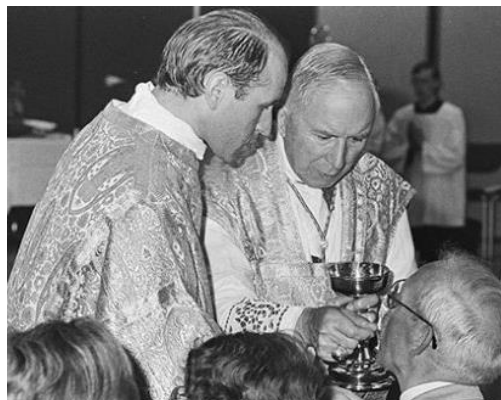
## **Principle which guides the SSPX in the domain of liturgy**

The basic principle of the Society's thinking and action in the painful crisis the Church is going through is the principle taught by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica* (II-II, q. 33, a. 4). That one may not oppose the authority of the Church except in the case of imminent danger to the Faith. Now, there is no danger for the Faith in the liturgy of Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII, whereas there is great danger for the Faith in the liturgy of Pope Paul VI, which is unacceptable.

## Long Island 1983 Conference (Extracts)

November 5, 1983 conference given at Long Island, New York  
Published originally in the December 1983 issue of *The Angelus*.

And that is why I will now proceed to say a few words, as we must do, on the sad situation in which the Society found itself this year in the Northern District of the United States. Well! I have been accused of changing. Changing what? The Mass that I say, the Mass that was said a few moments ago by Fr. Schmidberger,<sup>19</sup> is the Tridentine Mass! It's the traditional Mass! I have never changed anything! It's the same Mass attended by the poor priests who left us: Fr. Kelly, Fr. Sanborn, and the others, while they were at Ecône. And how long were they at Ecône? Fr. Kelly spent two years in Switzerland, Fr. Sanborn three, or maybe, four years, Fr. Dolan the same, Fr. Collins was also at Ecône, they always had the same Mass there the one we say today.



Archbishop Lefebvre  
with Fr. Schmidberger in the USA

So, we have not changed a thing. How can they now say, "The Archbishop is changing"? What? What am I changing? They know perfectly well they spent years at Ecône that they had there the liturgy which we now have, that we have not changed one *iota*, not one thing. They are the ones who have wanted change, who have wanted to go back to an older liturgy or to older practices. They are the ones who wanted change. We wanted to change nothing, not one thing. We have made no compromise with Rome. That charge is not true.

So it is very sad to think that these priests who were ordained by myself and who, after all is said and done, receiving everything from Ecône and the Society, should now be turning against the Society. Why? They say we are making compromises, they say we are going to accept the New Mass, they say things of this kind, which are absolutely false. You can see that for yourselves.

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<sup>19</sup> Fr. Franz Schmidberger had been appointed the Society's Superior General in 1982 and so was accompanying Archbishop Lefebvre during his annual tour of the United States.