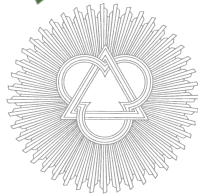

Most Holy Trinity Seminary Newsletter



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My dear Catholic people,

R.I.P. Bishop Richard Williamson On January 29th, Bishop Richard Williamson passed away after lasting about a week with a cerebral hemorrhage. He was eighty-four years old, soon to turn eighty-five in March.

I first met Bishop Williamson when he showed up at Ecône in 1972, if my memory serves me right. During the next three or so years, as we both progressed in studies, I would speak rather frequently with him, the opportunity being a welcome respite from constantly speaking a foreign language.

He was a man of profound intelligence. During his seminary years, he made it his business to read every single word of St. Thomas' *Summa*, and to make a summary of the contents of each article. He had an excellent grasp of the philosophy and theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Another strong quality which I noticed about him was that he very accurately had his finger on what was wrong with the modern world. He taught me many things, which I appreciate.

His tragic flaw, like that of Bishop Tissier's, was his exaggerated attachment to Archbishop Lefebvre. This flaw unfortunately affects the entire Society of Saint Pius X. It muffles theological thinking, deduction, and research. It creates the attitude that all we need is the Archbishop's word; nothing else is necessary. If theology should con-

tradict him, then there is something wrong with the theology.

Bishop Williamson was also very much attached to apparitions and messages from heaven, and excessively so. It was as if he needed a constant communication from heaven, a direct telephone line, so to speak, in order to assess what he must do and think. I believe that this misplaced credulity was the basis of his unconditional and blind attachment to the thoughts and policies of Archbishop Lefebvre, as if he were a "living voice from heaven."

As everyone knows, Bishop Williamson exited the Society of Saint Pius X in 2012 or thereabouts, when the Society was seemingly on the verge of making compromises with the modernist heretics in the Vatican in order to gain their approval. He then founded the "Initiative of Saint Marcel," what is now more popularly known as the "SSPX Resistance." The idea was that they would adhere to the hard line of Archbishop Lefebvre against the modernists.

As I have pointed out many times, however, Archbishop Lefebvre had a hard line and a soft line in regard to the heretics. He shifted positions many times over the years, depending on "the weather" in Rome. When Rome went soft, he went soft. When Rome went hard, that is, bold in its assertions of heresy, then Archbishop Lefebvre took the hard line. Bishop Williamson preferred to see only the hard line of Archbishop Lefebvre, and

refused to face the reality that the Society of Saint Pius X, in pursuing the soft line with the modernists since 2012, could also point to a whole series of statements and acts of the Archbishop to justify itself.

The theological flip-flopping of Archbishop Lefebvre also led to the 1983 expulsion of nine American priests, and to the severance of the Italian priests in 1986, who later founded the Institute of Our Mother of Good Counsel in Verrua Savoia, Italy.

There could be more of the same this year. Two of the four bishops who were consecrated in 1988 are now dead. Bishop Fellay will be sixty-seven years of age in April. The Society of Saint Pius X must consecrate new bishops.

They are seeking Vatican approval for this act, but are ready to accomplish it even against the will of Jorge Bergoglio, whom they consider to be the Vicar of Christ on earth, although he himself repudiates that title.

I do not see how the Vatican will approve their consecrating new bishops, unless concessions are made whereby the Vatican can somehow control the SSPX, and give it status something like the Fraternity of Saint Peter, i.e., accepting of Vatican II but with the traditional Latin Mass.

The modernist inmates of the Vatican also may demand to have the right to approve or disapprove of elected superiors of the SSPX. They may also insist that the consecrations be done by a “bishop” consecrated in the new rite of consecration.

An interesting letter has appeared, written in Archbishop Lefebvre’s own hand. It is not signed by him, but it is certainly authentic, as is evident from his distinctive handwriting. It is dated October 28, 1988. He says in it that he thinks that *all* of the Novus Ordo sacraments are of doubtful validity owing to defect of intention. This means that he thought, even thirty-seven years ago, that the Vati-

can II clergy no longer were performing certainly valid sacraments, for they lacked the requisite intention to do what the Church does.

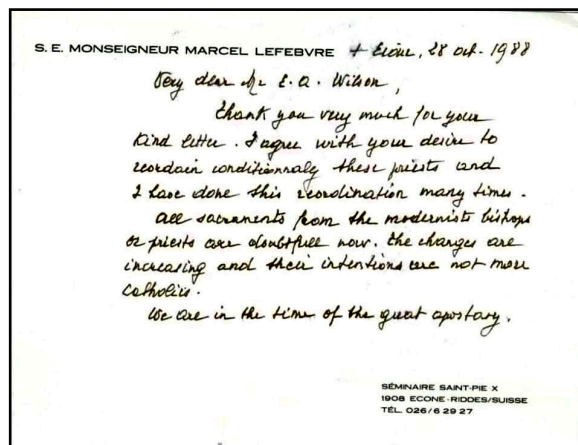
Such a position obviously affects the priesthood and the episcopacy. For one must be a validly ordained priest in order to be consecrated a bishop. Furthermore, many, if not most, theologians consider the rite of episcopal consecration to be sacramental. Hence it must be concluded that the Novus Ordo episcopal consecrations are at least doubtful. In other words, the entire Novus Ordo episcopacy and priesthood, at least since 1988, labors under doubtful validity, according to Archbishop Lefebvre.

Therefore, I think that the Society of Saint Pius X is in for a rough year. They will probably refuse any overtures which the modernists may make, and will go forward with “illegal” episcopal consecrations, using their own bishops. In accordance with the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the Vatican inmates will respond, with an excommunication, just as they did in 1988.

When all of this occurs, the Society of Saint Pius X will have a hard time perpetuating the myth that it is “with the pope,” unlike the evil sedevacantists who are “against the pope.” But all that remains to be seen.

The Old Guard is getting old. One by one the young seminarians of the 1960’s and 1970’s, who reacted against Vatican II, first in their Novus Ordo seminaries, and then by going to Ecône, are now dying off. In 2018, we lost Father Collins. In 2020, we lost Father Cekada, in 2022, Bishop Dolan, in 2023, Father Guépin, in 2024, Bishop Kelly and Bishop Tissier de Mallerais, and now Bishop Williamson. Other “old guard” priests are ailing, some with serious diseases.

This month I will turn seventy-five, and although I consider myself to be in good health,



Photograph of the note written by Archbishop Lefebvre in 1988

nevertheless, at seventy-five, one just waits for the visit to the doctor in which he tells you that you have a major health problem that is incurable. No one lasts forever. My father used to say, "No one is getting off this ship alive."

It is for this reason that I have always held that the training of new priests is of capital importance. I am in my fiftieth year of the priesthood, and forty-two of those years have been consecrated to the formation of new priests.

These new priests, some of whom will become bishops one day, must carry the torch of the traditional Faith for the rest of their lives. We do not know what the future holds for us in regard to events in the Catholic Church. But we do know that the Catholic Church cannot change in anything that is essential to her any more than God could change. What is essential to the Roman Catholic Church is the fact that it is protected by the Spirit of Truth from altering or inventing any dogma, liturgical act, or pastoral discipline which would contradict what was taught and practiced in the past. For this dogma of the assistance of the Holy Ghost to the Catholic Church, we must be prepared to give every sacrifice, even the death of martyrdom, just as countless men, women, and children in the past gave their lives in affirmation of other dogmas of the Catholic Faith.

Because the Old Guard is aging and dying off, the young men of our parishes and schools should give deep thought to becoming priests. The priesthood is absolutely essential to the survival of the Church. I marvel at how young people volunteer for the armed forces, when there is a strong chance that they will lose their lives or become permanently maimed in battle, or even in training accidents, as we just saw recently in Washington D.C. Yet these same young persons seem reluctant to give their lives to God's "armed forces," the holy priesthood or religious life, in which they will gain far more merit than if they were to pursue a life in the world. And if they should lose their lives for the Faith, as martyrs did in the past, they will receive an everlasting crown of martyrdom for having attested to the truth of the Catholic Faith by making the ultimate sacrifice to God.

Let the young men pray to God to know His will. Yes, there are sacrifices in the priesthood, but

there are also sacrifices and hardships in the married state, and in the single state.

Diverse reactions to Vatican II. In the 1960's and 1970's, the reaction to Vatican II and its changes was generally unified. "The changes were bad; tradition is good." All traditionalists fought under that banner and were fairly well united in conviction and spirit. The problem of the pope was naively "solved" by assigning the evil changes to his weakness and indecisiveness, and to his being surrounded by an "evil entourage."

As time progressed, the old model which I just described did not work any more. Paul VI was discovered to be neither weak nor indecisive. Vatican II was studied in detail and shown to contain heresies. The theology of the Church's infallibility and indefectibility was studied in greater depth. Soon it was concluded that Vatican II could not be interpreted in an orthodox manner, but was the manifesto of a radical revolution in the Catholic Church, in an attempt to transform it into a dogma-less humanitarianism, that is, exactly what we see today.

All of this research and contemplation of theological principles led to many controversies which we now see within the traditional movement.

There are three "camps," as I see it:

(1) *The indultists.* This is a generic term for any priest or group of priests who are retaining the traditional Latin Mass, with its John XXIII reforms, under the auspices and permission of the Novus Ordo hierarchy. This would include many diocesan priests, as well as various groups such as the Fraternity of Saint Peter, Christ the King, Good Shepherd, and others. In principle they accept Vatican II, but may attempt to give it a "traditional" interpretation.

(2) *Recognize and Resist.* These hold that the Novus Ordo pope and bishops are truly the Catholic hierarchy in the fullest sense of the word, and that they enjoy the power from God to rule the Catholic Church. They hold, at the same time, that whatever doctrines, liturgical laws, or pastoral disciplines which they consider to be against tradition, they are free to reject. In practice they act as though Novus Ordo hierarchy does not even exist. *Recognize and Resist* is represented princi-

pally by the Society of Saint Pius X and its “resistance” groups which have pursued the hard line of Archbishop Lefebvre.

(3) *Sedevacantists*. These hold that the Novus Ordo hierarchy does not have the power to rule the Catholic Church, owing to either their public defection from the Catholic Faith, or to their defect of intention in assuming the role to rule the Church.

They are subdivided into *totalist*, and *material-formal sedevacantists*. The *totalists* hold that owing to public denial of the truths of the Catholic Faith and public adherence to heresy, the Novus Ordo hierarchy cannot rule the Catholic Church, and that their appointments and elections are also invalid for the same reason. *The material-formal sedevacantists* hold that the Novus Ordo hierarchy possess legitimate elections and appointments to their offices, but do not receive the power corresponding to these offices owing to their evil intention of imposing a new religion on the Catholic Church.

Both the *totalist* and the *material-formal sedevacantists* hold that the Novus Ordo “popes” and “bishops” are false popes and bishops respectively.

The reason for this variety of responses to Vatican II is that the Church has never been confronted with a problem like this one. At no time in her history has she been attacked from within, at least not on a universal level. Consequently, there is a difference of opinion as to how to react to the problem.

The fact that there is divergence is a sure sign that there is no pope, since all of the persons holding these diverse positions would heed the voice of the Roman Pontiff, and the arguments would be settled.

Nonetheless, there is a certain commonness among all these differing groups, inasmuch as they all find Vatican II and/or its changes something unacceptable or at the very least deficient.

I compare it to a battle, where there are two sides of the battlefield, that of modernists versus that of the traditionalists. All these traditional groups are fighting on the same side of the battlefield, but some are using nuclear weapons, whereas others are using only pea shooters.

I also think that the traditional movement would not have undergone these divisions if Archbishop Lefebvre had not been so ambivalent regarding Vatican II, the Novus Ordo religion, and the Novus Ordo hierarchy. All of the divisions stem from Archbishop Lefebvre’s lack of continuity on these issues.

All of the persons in these various positions are well-intentioned, and simply want to be good Catholics. These good intentions, however, must never minimize the importance of adhering to what is demanded by Catholic faith, law, and sacred theology.

Prospects for next year. At this writing we are showing only light interest for entering the seminary next year. It is still early, however, to make a good estimate. Usually April is the strongest indicator of the number of new students we will have.

There are, however, two Novus Ordo priests who are interested in joining us, one in South America, another in Europe. It is a difficult transition for them, as they must be trained sufficiently in order to function using pre-Vatican II theology and pastoral practices.

Please remember our deacons in your prayers, and pray for more vocations.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Rev. Donald J. Sanborn
Rector