

Cardinal Castrillón: SSPX not in schism

Catholics who attend SSPX masses not schismatic

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Darío Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos has repeatedly affirmed that the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) is not a case of formal schism on at least five separate occasions in public interviews, as recently as March 17 and over the past 2-1/2 years. Msgr. Camille Perl, long-time secretary for the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei (PCED), has repeatedly affirmed in personal letters that such Catholics incur no penalty and no sin for merely fulfilling one's Sunday obligation at a church or chapel served by the SSPX.

"Signs of the Times" Show SSPX Not Schismatic

The primary question this article will attempt to answer, through a reading of "the signs of the times" as the Second Vatican Council encouraged us to do, is what the present attitude and position of the Church is, as viewed through many recent articles and correspondence from the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei (PCED), and particularly, Cardinal Castrillón.

Are Catholics who attend SSPX chapels out of necessity truly attempting to be "more Catholic than the pope?"

Cardinal Castrillón's most recent interview with an Italian journalist published on March 17, 2007, repeats this affirmation that while there may be a danger of schism and/or heresy for some priests and bishops within the SSPX, theirs is not a formal schism.

Cardinal Castrillón: Church Esteems Fruitful Life of Archbishop Lefebvre

Catholic journalist Simone Ortolani published this most recent interview on the *Nihil Obstat* Catholic website. His Eminence re-emphasized that the *motu proprio* easing restrictions on the Traditional Latin Mass was with the pope for his action, just as Msgr. Michael Schmitz of the Institute of Christ the King said in two recent interviews. Ortolani asked Cardinal Castrillón if Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre would be rehabilitated by the Church. Cardinal Castrillón's response follows:

Retracing the complete life story of Archbishop Lefebvre, we are certain of the great esteem and appreciation of the Church for him. He was considered worthy of being an Archbishop, Apostolic Delegate, Superior General of his religious congregation; by speaking to people who knew him during the exercise of his ministry, the fecundity of his life is discovered.

Yet, with the same clarity, according to the most genuine tradition of the Church,

it cannot be accepted that a bishop may consecrate another bishop without pontifical mandate, or that the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Councils, and in particular for their importance, in Ecumenical Councils, can be disputed.

Archbishop Lefebvre — it is important to stress this — signed the documents of the Second Vatican Council, even though he was critical towards them, either regarding the texts, or regarding their interpretation.

Cardinal Castrillón, in his capacity as PCED president, has recently rehabilitated priests formerly associated with the SSPX and a few of which were ordained by Archbishop Lefebvre. Along with the September 8, 2006 regularization of the Institute of the Good Shepherd in France, and in the same spirit as Archbishop Lefebvre and the current pope, the priests are charged with the freedom to completed an analysis, study and constructive criticism of the theology of the Second Vatican Council documents in the light of Tradition.

Schismatic Actions but not Formal Schism

Later in the March 17 interview, Cardinal Castrillón affirmed once again publicly, "The Fraternity of St. Pius X is not a consolidated schism per se, but its history has included some schismatic actions..." The Cardinal continues to explain the illegal consecration of bishops against the express will of the Holy Father and further warns about the danger of schism, and schism leading to heresy and vice versa, according to St. Jerome.

"I know there are in the Fraternity people filled with good will," Cardinal Castrillón said. "The Superior General, His Excellency, Bishop Bernard Fellay, has in the past years persevered in dialogue."

Pope awaits SSPX with "Open Arms"

He continued, "I hope the open arms of Pope Benedict XVI will be understood as a *kairos*, an opportune moment, and pacifying the consciences of the faithful and of the lay people, a full effective and affective unity of the Fraternity with the Church and the vicar of Christ will be reached."

Once again, His Eminence confirmed the SSPX is not in formal schism, but that there may be a danger of schism leading to heresy and vice versa within the movement without full canonical regularization, and that Pope Benedict XVI has "open arms" to welcoming the SSPX into full canonical regularization within the Church.

SSPX Bishops and Priests not Schismatics

In a much overlooked and little discussed interview published February 8, 2007, in the German *Die Tagespost*, Cardinal Castrillón said he rejected the term and idea of "ecumenism" from within the Church as a reasoning behind the continuing discussions

and open communications with the leadership of the SSPX. Specifically, he said the following:

Please accept that I reject the term "ecumenism *ad intra*." The bishops, priests and faithful of the Society of St Pius X are not schismatics. It is Archbishop Lefebvre who has undertaken an illicit Episcopal consecration and therefore performed a schismatic act. It is for this reason that the Bishops consecrated by him have been suspended and excommunicated. The priests and faithful of the Society have not been excommunicated. They are not heretics.

Again, it bears repeating. The president of the PCED, Cardinal Castrillón has repeatedly stated in at least five separate public interviews in Catholic and secular media that the lay faithful and priests of the SSPX are not schismatics nor in formal schism.

Catholic Laymen Incur No Penalty

Following this quote in the German interview, Cardinal Castrillón emphasized again what he said in the March 17 interview, his fearing the possibility of schism and heresy, quoting St. Jerome. However, the fact remains that the lay faithful who attend SSPX masses to fulfill their Sunday obligation are not sinning nor incurring any canonical penalty by doing so.

In a February interview for the Argentinian [Panorama Católico Internacional](#) and first appearing in [El Catolicismo](#), the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Bogotá, Colombia, while explaining the mission of the PCED, Cardinal Castrillón said, "We take care of those who did not wish to follow Archbishop Lefebvre — which is not exactly a schism."

And further, in explaining the current status of the SSPX, Cardinal Castrillón said, "The Saint Pius X associations are in a process of reinsertion with permanent visits and a correspondence which asks for the ancient rite." He added, "They are 500 priests and 600,000 faithful, a growing number, with monasteries and seminaries, some of them full."

PCED Shifts its Course

The PCED is the Holy See's curial organization responsible for relationships with traditionalist Catholics and relations with the SSPX bishops and priests. Although it is currently not of the same canonical status as that of a curial Congregation, it is evident that the language, tone and word choice of the PCED has moderated significantly since the promulgation of the *Ecclesia Dei Adflicta* document of July 1988, and even more profoundly after the initial meeting of Bishop Bernard Fellay and Cardinal Castrillón with Pope John Paul II in December 2000, during the year of the Jubilee in Rome.

It is important to note that in nearly every instance of personal correspondence with the PCED by Catholics, Msgr. Perl, the secretary, has affirmed the right of Catholics to

attend SSPX chapels and masses with no spiritual sin, nor canonical penalty attached. Correspondence of such matters from the PCED or a curial congregation can be acted upon by Catholics with a clear conscience of moral certitude.

Danger of Heresy and Schism Greatest Where?

Of course, Msgr. Perl has always emphasized that the PCED does not, and cannot, encourage long-term attendance at SSPX chapels due to what it calls the danger of potential schism, as Cardinal Castrillón emphasized as his fear in his two most recent interviews.

However, to ensure a fair and balanced picture, in many dioceses and parishes in the U.S. Catholic Church today, the danger of becoming a heretic and/or schismatic is often greater by repeatedly attending many of those churches and masses with priests who are technically within full canonical communion — *de jure*, but not *de facto*.

So, while in individual circumstances at some SSPX chapels, there may be some closet sedevacantist or schismatic laymen, which Msgr. Perl and Cardinal Castrillón rightly warn us about, this same warning should be issued and emphasized for the greater establishment Church worldwide where dissident priests and bishops roam around unchecked by the Holy See, "seeking the ruin of souls."

In 2001, after a meeting between Bishop Bernard Fellay, SSPX Superior General, and two of the three other SSPX bishops with Cardinal Castrillón, Bishop Fellay said that the Cardinal had told him that he found them to be "neither heretics nor schismatics."

First Sign of "No Formal Schism"

Shortly after his March 13, 2004 meeting with Cardinal Castrillón during a visit to Rome, *Una Voce* International (FIUV) President Ralf Siebenbürger was the first to publicly relay this new attitude in the officialdom of Catholicism that they considered the SSPX priests and bishops not to be in formal schism. Siebenbürger said the following regarding the FIUV delegation meeting with the President of the PCED, Cardinal Castrillón:

He mentioned that such a proper jurisdiction had only been granted to the Fraternity of St John Vianney at Campos, as the founder of that Fraternity, Bishop de Castro Mayer, had gone much farther than Archbishop Lefebvre. The Cardinal underlined that Archbishop Lefebvre had never founded a proper structure of his fraternity that could be considered as a concrete act of schism. In contrary, Bishop de Castro Mayer had founded a counter-diocese which had been a clear schism. In order to solve this schism, the proper jurisdiction had been granted to the Fraternity and to its faithful at Campos.

What is particularly interesting is that this supposed private conversation between the FIUV president and the PCED president was circulated widely on the internet prior to

being expunged from nearly every public site. Reportedly, some within the FIUV hierarchy and the PCED were not at all enamored by this widely circulated report, and ended up eventually being one of the primary reasons for the short-lived FIUV presidency of Ralf Siebenbürger. Of course, Cardinal Castrillón has since confirmed publicly on numerous occasions, especially recently, these same facts regarding the SSPX not being in formal schism.

Groundbreaking 30 Days Interview

In a *30 Days* interview appearing soon after Bishop Fellay's August 29, 2005 meeting with the Holy Father, Cardinal Castrillón again confirmed that the SSPX situation was not a matter of formal heresy, but one of canonical regularization. In answer to a question about the historical situation leading up to the August 2005 meeting, Cardinal Castrillón said, "Unfortunately Monsignor Lefebvre went ahead with the consecration and hence the situation of separation came about, even if it was not a formal schism." Although the cardinal does continue to affirm the original *Ecclesia Dei Adflicta motu proprio* by Pope John Paul II that Archbishop Lefebvre ordained four bishops without a papal mandate, he is careful to add the caveat that it was not a "formal schism."

Later in the same *30 Days* interview, he affirmed that the case of the reconciliation of St. John Maria Vianney priests in Campos, Brazil, was a much different situation, hence a formal schism, than that of the SSPX: "There the situation was very different, because while the Saint Pius X Fraternity is an unrecognized association, served by bishops who declare themselves "auxiliaries," in Brazil instead Bishop Castro Mayer when he renounced the diocese, was followed by 50 or so priests who in fact maintained a parallel organization to the diocese."

Again, this is a reaffirmation that the Cardinal and the Holy See recognize that the bishops of the SSPX do not claim any specific jurisdiction and are canonically auxiliary bishops, ordained by Archbishop Lefebvre in what he believed to be "a state of emergency," to administer the sacraments and catechize the lay faithful in the traditional manner prior to the post-conciliar upheaval and chaos. In other words, the Cardinal acknowledged again in a public interview that the SSPX bishops and priests were not in formal schism, even if they continue to be in a canonically irregular situation.

Cardinal Castrillón Declares SSPX not in Schism on Italian TV

Shortly after the publication of the *30 Days* interview, Cardinal Castrillón was interviewed on Italian television channel 5, November 13, 2005 regarding the status of the SSPX. In this interview, the Cardinal said the following:

We are not confronted with a heresy. It cannot be said in correct, exact, and precise terms that there is a schism. There is a schismatic attitude in the fact of consecrating bishops without pontifical mandate. They are within the Church. There is only the fact that a full, more perfect communion is lacking — as was

stated during the meeting with Bishop Fellay — a fuller communion, because communion does exist.

Church Clarification to "Adherence to the Schism"

On September 29, 2006, some news regarding a PCED ruling for the Archdiocese of Salzburg was posted at http://www.musicasacra.com/blog/archive/2006_09_01_sacredmusic_archive.html, which is a web blog dedicated to the restoration of sacred music.

While never making its way into the mainstream secular or Catholic media, this announcement in the official *Gazette of the Archdiocese of Salzburg* contained an English translation from the *Verordnungsblatt der Erzdioezese Salzburg* no. 5 (5 May 2006) page 85, with the headline "Priestly Fraternity of St Pius X : Information."

Relevant parts of the extended text, shown below, include the following regarding the proper attitude of dioceses and parish priests regarding baptisms administered by priests of the SSPX.

Laymen Who Attend SSPX "Catholic Faithful" Per PCED

The communication to the Archdiocese of Salzburg came from the PCED with a brief history and outline of the facts concerning how the Holy See views the canonical situation of the SSPX:

- The four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre are excommunicated. Priests ordained within the Fraternity are suspended for lack of a valid incardination.
- Regarding the faithful who sympathize with the SSPX, we must insist that
 - a. we are dealing with Catholic faithful who — provided they have performed no explicit actions — in no way wish to leave the Roman Catholic Church;
 - b. attending Masses celebrated by priests of the SSPX is not in itself a delict and does not bring about excommunication;
 - c. only those of the faithful who see the SSPX as the only true church, and who make this visible externally, incur the penalty of excommunication;
 - d. it is consequently not at all appropriate to regard as non-Catholic the children baptized in the chapels of the SSPX, and to treat their marriages to another Catholic as mixed marriages;
 - e. when baptism by a priest of the SSPX is attested in writing and the parents of the newly baptized do not see the SSPX as the only true church, then this attestation suffices for registration of the baptism in *the*

Liber Baptizatorum of the parish of baptism, under the running number 0.

On the basis of this registration, a baptismal certificate can be issued.

- The earlier edict concerning marriage to a Catholic who was baptized in an SSPX chapel (see below) is to be applied only if the Catholic thus baptized sees in the SSPX the only true church and who makes this visible externally.
- In order to prevent misunderstandings, the Archiepiscopal Chancery Office will examine each case individually.

From the Archiepiscopal Chancery, on 10 May 2006. Protocol number 579/06.

According to the author of this website, several months earlier the same Chancery Office in Salzburg (in the *Verordnungsblatt* 2006, page 126) had published an edict according to which persons baptized by an SSPX priest were considered to be "non-Roman Catholic Christians," who in the event of marriage to a Catholic, were to be treated as though they were entering a "mixed marriage."

It is clear from the contents of the official communiqué issued by the PCED for the Archdiocese of Salzburg that those lay faithful who attend SSPX chapels and have their children baptized there are Catholics in good standing who should be treated as such by the Archdiocese.

Because this new edict was published publicly after a specific communication from the PCED, it may be regarded as the official view of the Holy See regarding the status of Catholics baptized at SSPX chapels by SSPX priests or SSPX priest "friends" who serve SSPX chapels.

Extra SSPX Nulla Salus

Perhaps the most interesting nugget emanating from this PCED official communiqué is this apparent further updated interpretation and clarification of the original meaning from the *Ecclesia Dei Adflicta* document of this sentence: "Everyone should be aware that formal adherence to the schism is a grave offense against God and carries the penalty of excommunication decreed by the Church's law."

I should make clear to readers that I am no canon lawyer and have no canonical education nor training. However, it seems evident that the official Salzburg communiqué further defines the canonical meaning of "formal adherence to the schism," which of course, the PCED president admits is no longer truly a formal schism.

This "adhering to the schism" would include only Catholics who hold as a belief that "only those of the faithful who see the SSPX as the only true church, and who make this visible externally, incur the penalty of excommunication," as stated by the PCED.

In other words, if a Catholic makes visible in his writings or in his external verbal speech, that he adheres to *extra SSPX nulla salus* at the exclusion of the rest of the visible Church, or perhaps parades around in public with a placard on his body demonstrating in the streets stating the same, then he is indeed schismatic and incurs excommunication.

The objective juridical penalties incurred by the priests and bishops of the SSPX are of a different magnitude and canonical stature, so it is difficult to simply apply this directive to them. However, it can be reasonably concluded that the vast majority of priests and bishops of the SSPX do not adhere to *extra SSPX nulla salus* as a dogma of Faith, which would incur the penalty of excommunication and formal schism.

German Priest & Professor: Bishops & Church Reject Communion with SSPX

The respected German canonist Dr. Georg May, professor emeritus of Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, summarized the irony shown above in a January 12, 2003 letter, when he wrote: "The SSPX is not schismatic because she neither rejects the subordination to the Roman Pontiff nor rejects the communion with the bishops (can. 751)." And the explicit irony is found in the immediate following statement where Prof. Georg said, "Rather, the latter reject communion with the Society."

Prof. Georg was the Professor of Canon Law, Law of Church-State Relations and Canonical History from 1960 to 1994 at Mainz University. He has been a well-respected priest for more than 40 years in the Archdiocese of Mainz. The Professor's conclusions appear to be consistent with those of the Holy See as expressed in numerous public interviews and written correspondence emanating from the PCED, specifically Cardinal Castrillón and Msgr. Camille Perl, president and secretary of the commission.

1. The SSPX is not schismatic, because she neither rejects the subordination to the Roman Pope nor rejects the communion with the bishops (can. 751). Rather the latter reject communion with the Society.
2. Because the Society is not schismatic, its members are not excommunicated. Both are untrue allegations, made by those, whom the reflective mirror presented to them by the Society irritates.
3. Absolutely nobody incurs any punishment by attending the masses of the Society. Of course one can fulfill one's Sunday obligation by attending a Sunday mass in a chapel or church of the Society. Whoever alleges otherwise, reveals that he merely fears concurrence.

Traditionalist Catholic Parents Obey the Church & "Signs of the Times"

Traditionalist Catholic parents merely desire to adhere to the dogmas, doctrines, liturgy and devotional practices of the Church of all time. Traditionalist Catholics understand that we must obey the authentic magisterium in matters of faith and morals, but even moreso,

we understand the importance of bringing our children up with full access to the traditional devotions, music, architecture and liturgical patrimony of the Church in this culture of death. And many Catholic parents have begun to recognize that the establishment Church, in many ways (most recently with the forced participation in even "conservative" dioceses, so-called, of sex education, sex abuse programs designed by dissident priests and the homosexual education establishment) is not only not aiding them in combating this culture of life, but is often even serving as a roadblock to grace for them and their children. In such cases, the Church recognizes "the salvation of souls" is the highest good, and Catholic parents must rely upon their well-formed Catholic consciences to guide them in making these many individual decisions for their families.

Of course Catholic parents want to adhere to, and be obedient to the doctrines and legitimate juridical documents to which we are required to assent, that are issued by the Holy See and our bishops. We strive to be "as Catholic as the pope" and all the saints and fathers and doctors of the Church, whom we rely upon for spiritual sustenance, as well as prayer and the traditional sacraments.

And finally, we strive not to be "more Catholic than the pope," but only as Catholic as God's grace and our cooperation will allow us to be according to our states in life.

Most of all, we want to provide a safe haven for the spiritual growth of our children and grandchildren. And increasingly, as the Holy See has recognized, this "safe haven" is often found outside of the normal visible means of walking to our neighboring parish church.

By recognizing the plain words of Cardinal Castrillón and Msgr. Perl that the Church allows Catholics to fulfill their Sunday obligation by attending SSPX chapels, if necessary, for our sanctification and peace of mind, we are being obedient sons to the Church and being not "more Catholic than the pope," but actually living our lives in the heart and soul of the Church.

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