



## The SSPX & the Validity of Sacraments

Insidious and perfidious, such has been the strategy of Conciliar Rome in recent years. In his Declaration of 21 November 1974, His Grace Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre expounded the Conciliar and post-Conciliar manoeuvres of the Rome “of neo-Modernist and neo-Protestant tendency.”

At the episcopal consecrations on 30 June 1988 at Écône, he explained in particular: “You know very well, my dear brethren, you know very well that there can be no priests without a bishop. All these seminarians who are here today, if tomorrow the Good Lord calls me back, and it will no doubt be soon, well, from whom will these seminarians receive the sacrament of Holy Orders? From Conciliar bishops, whose sacraments are all doubtful, because we don’t know exactly what their intentions are? It is not possible!”

He had already sounded the alarm 12 years earlier, on 29 August 1976, in his Lille sermon: “And who are these bastards? They are our rites. The rite of the Mass is a bastard rite. The sacraments are bastard sacraments. We no longer know whether these sacraments give grace or not. We no longer know whether this Mass gives us the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ or whether it does not. Priests coming out of seminaries no longer know themselves what they are.” All this had been expounded by the great Archbishop. After his death, Rome had to try and trick the Society, particularly with the question of jurisdiction. The first results were to progressively unfold after the Year 2000 Jubilee in Rome.

**2012: DOCTRINAL PREAMBLE & GENERAL CHAPTER.** The first clear development seems to have been leaked on the internet about the Doctrinal Preamble or Declaration of 15 April 2012 sent by Bishop Fellay to Cardinal Levada, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, despite the clear opposition of the three other Society bishops. This was followed by a stormy debate at the General Chapter in July 2012, which nonetheless finally established the principle of a possible canonical “normalisation” of the SSPX, without first requiring Conciliar Rome to return to Tradition. The “no practical agreement without a doctrinal agreement” principle, which had been reasserted at the 2006 General Chapter, was replaced in 2012 by six conditions for an entente with an unconverted Rome. This clearly was a validation of the process which was to be developed over the following years.

**2014: A STRATEGY CONFIRMED AT THE VATICAN.** On 23 September 2014, Cardinal Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, received at the Vatican Bishop Fellay for two hours, with whom he agreed “to proceed in stages, but within a reasonable time, towards overcoming the difficulties. And this with the desired prospect of full reconciliation.”

**1<sup>st</sup> STAGE: CONFESSIONS 2015-2016.** The Holy See made public Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et misera* of 20 November 2016. In No. 12 of this document, the Holy Father extended beyond the “Year of Mercy” the “ordinary” jurisdiction he had granted to the Society priests on 1 September 2015 to hear confessions during this Holy Year. This was gradually achieved, with a temporary authorisation in 2015 –without any involvement on the part of the Society itself, incidentally– which was renewed for an indefinite period of time in 2016. When questioned on this subject, Bishop Fellay explained that “we only speak of suppletive jurisdiction in the absence of ordinary jurisdiction” (in fact Fr Granges on his behalf, Menzingen, 14.04.2016), which was confirmed by “Every priest who is a member of the SSPX currently confesses with the jurisdiction delegated by the Holy Father, which is the only one to exist to date in the SSPX” (Fr Guyon, 08.08.2017). It follows that only by leaving the SSPX would this “ordinary jurisdiction” be lost and the “state of necessity” restored, so to speak! Yet, the validity of the sacrament given, before or after Francis’ authorisation, cannot be called into question.

**2<sup>nd</sup> STAGE: MARRIAGES 2017.** On 27 March 2017, the same Cardinal Müller, by mandate of Pope Francis, signed a Letter addressed to the bishops of the whole world “regarding permissions for the celebration of marriages of the faithful of the Society of St Pius X.” According to Canon Law, only a cleric with jurisdiction over a territory is by nature a “canonical witness.” The Holy See then allowed the Society priests to celebrate marriages on condition that they receive a delegation from the local bishop. At first sight, there seem to be no problem in this, until one of the spouses might seek an annulment of this union, which can generally be easily obtained from the diocese concerned, which of course would refer to the 1983 Code of Canon Law, which Archbishop Lefebvre described as “worse than the Council.” <sup>1</sup>

**3<sup>rd</sup> STAGE: ORDINATIONS 2016-2017.** On 24 May 2017, the SSPX Bishops have been authorised by Pope Francis to ordain new priests without the approval of the diocesan bishop, according to Bishop Fellay: “Last year, I received a letter from Rome, telling me you can freely ordain your priests without the permission of the local ordinary,” to whom it had however to be notified.” <sup>2</sup> Is it not logical that the SSPX now, in return, accepts new priests in its ranks without conditionally re-ordaining them, as is the case, for instance, of the majority of the Polish district priests? We should not forget that, on 11 January 2022, Bishop Fellay stated that he did not rule out the possibility that bishops would “support us even publicly,” which would make it “unnecessary for the Society to consecrate its own bishops.” <sup>3</sup> Which also means indirectly, that he does not believe in what Archbishop Lefebvre said about “Conciliar bishops, whose sacraments are **all doubtful**,” the very reason why he consecrated four bishops on the same 30 June 1988. And was not Bishop Huonder called upon to consecrate the Holy Oils on Maunday Thursday 2023?

**4<sup>th</sup> STAGE: CONFIRMATIONS 2024.** On 25 April 1988, Archbishop Lefebvre wrote that the new confirmations were “a cause for concern” and, above all, that “the translation of the Latin form is questionable,” as the term “sigillum” has been replaced by a simple “be marked.” “That is why I do not hesitate to confirm conditionally when asked.” Today however the SSPX often refuse these conditional confirmations.

**FINALLY**, the question of sacraments that are “all doubtful” is clear: one must turn to what is certain and not to what is doubtful. To marry with a delegation from the Ordinary is to accept the 1983 Code and implicitly a possible judgement of an officiality perverted by this new Code. With regard to confessions, the priests of the Society have given valid absolutions to the faithful who have appealed to them because of necessity. The fact that Francis is restoring “ordinary” jurisdiction for them cannot in any way invalidate the sacraments of the past. Furthermore, one must take into account the gradual but real shift within the SSPX, many priests of which are infected by a “rallyist” frame of mind: even if their absolution is valid, advice, and even the assessment of the gravity of sins, may also be distorted. Should the confessor even take into account Francis’ new views on homosexuals or remarried divorcees?

If we consider only the faithful’s need to receive the sacraments, we may be led to a practical rallying point. However, due to the virtual absence of valid TLM in a country or region, one may consider taking the limited risk of seeking Society Masses and sacraments, which are valid *per se*, while remaining on guard against comments made by the priest or faithful, and even beware of new priests joining the Society without conditional reordination. Occasional Indult TLM may be “good,” if said by a validly ordained priest, but these cases are few.

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Tissier de Mallerais in *Marcel Lefebvre, une vie*, Clovis, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2002, p. 558.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=31663> & <http://www.revue-item.com/11101/le-vatican-et-la-fsspx-on-approche-toujours-plus-dune-normalisation/>

<sup>3</sup> Eleison Comments, n° 835 dated 15 July 2023, clearly quoting Bishop Fellay’ Spanish interview of 11 January 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqJESRaekTw&t=1908s>, minute 32:41.