

et cetera

Lefebvrites

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The archbishop, who was suspended from priestly ministry in 1976 for ordaining priests against Vatican orders, was excommunicated for ordaining four bishops June 30 against Vatican wishes and despite personal appeals by Pope John Paul.

The four new bishops and a retired Brazilian bishop who assisted at the ceremony were also excommunicated.

Bishop Richard Williamson, one of the four new bishops and the only U.S. resident among them, told reporters in Farmingville, N.Y., July 10 that followers of the archbishop are praying for "the restoration of the papacy."

Pope John Paul II, he said, has violated Church teachings by visiting a synagogue in Rome, praying for peace with various religious leaders in Assisi, and meeting on several occasions with leaders of other Christian religions.

"I'm sure he does not intend to destroy the Catholic Church, but his confusion is such that this is what he does," Bishop Williamson said after celebrating Mass at St. Michael the Archangel Church in Farmingville.

Lay followers of the archbishop incur excommunication if they participate in liturgies celebrated by schismatic priests, ask for or receive the sacraments from those priests (except in extreme cases), or donate money to Archbishop Lefebvre's cause, according to a professor of canon law at two pontifical universities in Rome.

In a Vatican Radio interview, Father Tarcisio Bertone, who teaches canon law at Lateran and Salesian universities, said such participation in Archbishop Lefebvre's movement constitutes "formally adhering to the schism."

Father Bertone later was named to the Vatican commission headed by Cardinal Mayer.

In a letter read at July 10 Masses in the Archdiocese of Paris, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger also warned Catholics that they would incur excommunication if they engage in an "explicit act of adhesion" to Archbishop Lefebvre's movement.

The archbishop, he said, "has formed a schismatic group, separated from Rome and from the Catholic Church."

While followers of Archbishop Lefebvre illicitly celebrated the pre-Vatican II Tridentine liturgy at St. Nicolas de Chardonet Church in Paris July 3, Cardinal Lustiger presided at a legitimate celebration of the Tridentine Mass at the Cathedral of Notre Dame before a congregation of about 12,000.

Many of Archbishop Lefebvre's followers live in Paris, where they took over the unused St. Nicolas Church 10 years ago.

The Mass at Notre Dame was an example of the Church's desire to meet the needs of

traditionalist Catholics, Cardinal Lustiger said.

A Vatican plan to reconcile Lefebvrites and other traditionalists is not a concession to dissidents, Cardinal Lustiger said at a July 2 press conference. Rather, the plan — which includes wider celebration of the Tridentine Mass — is "proof that the Church welcomes all those who wish to remain Catholic," he said.

English Cardinal George Basil Hume of Westminster also asked Lefebvrites "to reaffirm their loyalty to the successor of St. Peter and to remain within the unity of the Catholic Church."

By ordaining bishops, Archbishop Lefebvre "is in effect making a public declaration that only he and the Fraternity of St. Pius are the true guardians of Catholic truth and witness to Catholic tradition," Cardinal Hume said.

Father Ward said he and the majority of Lefebvrite priests don't believe the pope's efforts at reconciliation go far enough to preserve the faith they are fighting to maintain.

"Maybe the pope has good intentions," Father Ward said. "If he brings back the traditional Mass, that would be a wonderful thing," he said. But "if he doesn't reform the seminaries that are bringing up modernist priests, this work will be fruitless."

Father Ward said he doesn't think that Pope John Paul is any more serious about maintaining Catholic tradition than was Pope Paul VI, who suspended Archbishop Lefebvre a dozen years ago.

"Just because he made concessions, you can't say he's more traditional than Paul VI; he's a better politician," Father Ward said.

Just as the fourth-century Egyptian bishop Athanasius was exiled by Pope Liberius, but later canonized, Father Ward said Archbishop Lefebvre someday will be honored for preserving the faith.

Contributing to this story were Agostino Bono in Rome, Robert Nowell in London, Owen Williams in Paris and Tracy Early in New York.

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