

Confidential

PONTIFICAL COMMISSION ECCLESIA DEI

Protocol N. 512/99
1999

Rome, 1.3 July

Very Rev. Joseph Bisig,
Superior General,
Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter.

Dear Father,

You are certainly not ignorant of the action undertaken by a group of priests of the Fraternity of St. Peter, who presented a formal recourse to the Holy See on 29 June last. In this recourse, they declare their opposition to the following points:

- the actual line of the Fraternity in liturgical matters and the implementation of the major lines set out by the Second Vatican Council
- the convocation of the General Chapter foreseen for this year as the manner of preparing for the election of the participants in this election, which, according to the opponents is destined to perpetuate this line by inserting it definitively in the Constitutions
- the manner of governing the Fraternity, which tends to silence all voices in opposition to the actual line, and which does not encourage a fraternal understanding between the members, but carries the danger that the Fraternity is totally isolated in the Church.

Given the quite important number of signatories of this recourse, equivalent to about a third of the incardinated members of the institute, and given the gravity of the problems raised, this Pontifical Commission cannot but take into consideration this action. The facts enumerated in the letter of recourse add to other facts which have already, in recent times, come to the knowledge of this Pontifical Commission.

For these reasons, this Pontifical Commission has decided to act without delay, in order to avoid negative and damaging consequences to the Fraternity itself and to the work of integrating the traditionalist faithful into the reality of the Church. The root cause of the present difficulties seems to be a lack of confidence in the hierarchy of the Church at all levels, from the Holy See to the Bishops. Maybe there is at the foundation of this attitude a certain disdain/mistrust of the work of the Second Vatican Council which above all implies the liturgy reformed by Pope Paul VI at the end of this Council. The refusal of all concelebration in the Mass celebrated according to the rite in force is unfortunately the manifestation of this. As is known, such a lack of confidence was already at the origin of the schism of Archbishop Lefebvre and persists there still. It is our duty to take preventative measures to avoid a similar evolution in your institute.

Having consulted the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and with its agreement, this Pontifical Commission, exercising the authority of the Holy See over the Fraternity of St. Peter, in virtue of the faculties which were given to it by the Sovereign Pontiff, John-Paul II,

has decided the following:

I. The authorization given on 3 March 1999 (Prot. 443/99) to be able to anticipate the general Chapter of the Fraternity of St. Peter by a year and to hold it during the course of the summer of the present year, is withdrawn.

2. An assembly of all the incardinated members of the Fraternity is to be convoked during the Autumn of 1999, either at Wigratzbad, Rome, or indeed somewhere else. This assembly will have as its aim the discussion of disputed ecclesiological and liturgical questions in a free exchange of ideas under the presidency of the Cardinal President of this Commission or of his delegate. The Cardinal President will, at the end, set out the dispositions for the future, not only of the future governance of the Fraternity but also for the liturgical practice, which will certainly guard the liturgical identity, guaranteed by indult, granted to the fraternity at its moment of foundation.

3. While waiting for this assembly - which does not require publicity or antecedent discussions among the priests and indeed even less so amongst the seminarians - you are requested to manage only those current affairs of the institute and to abstain from making changes which are not strictly necessary.

This Pontifical Commission hopes that you, father, as Superior General of the Priestly Fraternity, will collaborate with it to reestablish the internal peace of the Fraternity and to guarantee in it a mature healthy development which, while maintaining its specified, will give it the possibility of finding its place amongst the other institutes of consecrated life and of apostolic life.

Please accept, Father Superior General, the expression of my highest consideration.

Angelo, Cardinal Felici.,
President.
Camillo Perl,
Secretary.