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Lefebvrite head: 'Not ready to accept Vatican II'

by John Thavis by Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY

The head of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X said his order is not ready to accept the Second Vatican Council, which the Vatican has set as a condition for full reintegration in the church.

Bishop Bernard Fellay, superior general of the Swiss-based society, said Vatican II has brought "only losses" among Catholic priests and the faithful. He made the remarks in an interview with the Swiss newspaper *Le Courier* published Feb. 26.

Pope Benedict XVI recently lifted the excommunications of Bishop Fellay and three other bishops, who were ordained against papal orders in 1988, as a step toward dialogue and reconciliation. The Vatican later said the society would have to recognize the teachings of Vatican II and of post-conciliar popes to be in full communion.

In the interview, Bishop Fellay was asked if the society was ready to meet the condition of accepting the council.

"No. The Vatican has recognized the need for preliminary discussions in order to take up fundamental questions that arise precisely from the Second Vatican Council. To make recognition of the council a preliminary condition is to put the cart before the horse," Bishop Fellay responded.

He added that he expected the church to critically review Vatican II, because "its results are pure losses."

"The fruits of the council have been to empty seminaries, novitiates and churches. Thousands of priests have abandoned the priesthood and millions of faithful have ceased to practice the faith or have turned to the sects. The religious belief of the faithful has been distorted. Truly, these are peculiar fruits," he said.

Asked about his society's long-standing opposition to the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue initiated by Vatican II, Bishop Fellay said such dialogue was too superficial and had led to "great confusion." He said any dialogue with other Christian churches or other religions should make it clear that the Catholic Church is "the sole possessor" of the fundamental unity that leads to the truth.

He said any discussions about the society's status in the church would depend on whether positive results come out of the "doctrinal discussions" with the Vatican. No timetable has been announced for these talks.

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