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## Welcome Back Lefebvrists

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Distinctly Catholic

My colleague John Allen reports on the possibility that the Society of St. Pius X may have agreed to sign the doctrinal preamble the Vatican demanded as a precondition to their reunification with the Catholic Church.

This news, if all the i's get dotted and the t's crossed, will be greeted by some of my liberal friends with much gnashing of teeth. They should relax. It is entirely a good thing when someone, anyone, returns to the fold. Rome has not budged to make this happen. No doctrine has been compromised to affect the reunion. As I mentioned the other day in quite a different context, diversity is a good thing and bringing the Lefebvrists, with all their lace and other quirkiness, can only add to the rich tapestry of Catholicism in the twenty-first century. It is time for liberals to stand with James Joyce who famously said that being Catholic means "here comes everybody." And so it does.

There are certain intellectual and cultural affinities within the Society of St. Pius X that must be addressed, most especially a residual, and sometimes quite lively, anti-Semitism. But, it will be easier to remove that particular sin from within the fold than without. And, it will be curious to see how the conservative bishops in the U.S. respond to the Society's continual suspicion of religious liberty per se! Politics makes strange bedfellows.

But, the bigger point is this. Recall the parable of the lost sheep. The Master said that the good shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to go off in search of the one lost sheep. There is rejoicing when the lost sheep, the lost pearl, the prodigal, return. So let it be if this news proves true and the reunion is affected.

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