

B16's Unfinished Business: The Lefebvrists

Michael Sean Winters | Feb. 20, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

Pope Benedict XVI had clearly hoped that affecting a reunification with the only group to formally enter schism after Vatican II, the Society of St. Pius X, would be one of the significant achievements of his papacy. Many Catholics could not see much value in the effort: The Lefebvrists represented a branch of the Gallican Church that had long been willing to cast aspersions against the Holy See, dating back to the pontificate of Leo XIII and their efforts to scuttle his Ralliement policy, and even further, back to the days of Cardinal Consalvi and the reconciliation between Church and State he negotiated with Napoleon.

I have never begrudged the Pope his enthusiasm for the project: Certainly the Petrine ministry exists to serve the unity of the Church and bringing schismatics back within the fold is undeniably a part of that. But, the discussions with the SSPX also showed, I hope conclusively, that Benedict was not willing to compromise with the authority of the Second Vatican Council. The SSPX was required to acknowledge Vatican II in its entirety and, if they proved to be unwilling to do so, no reconciliation could be reached.

[According to Vatican Insider](#) [1], Archbishop Muller of the CDF has given the SSPX until Friday, the Feast of the Chair of Peter, to accept the deal Rome has proffered. I hope they do so but doubt they will. I doubt, too, that the next Pope will pursue the effort. But, that does not mean Benedict was wrong to pursue it. As he said from the loggia on the day of his election, he is a humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord. None of us have the right to expect our efforts will meet with success. We do, after all, worship a crucified God. Benedict was right to try. The SSPX is wrong to resist. And while the new pope should never close a door on anyone, it may be time for the Church to move on.

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[1] <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/the-vatican/detail/articolo/lefebvriani-lefebvrianos-lefebvrans-22445/>