

BLOGS

Bishop Schneider: Suppression of Summorum Pontificum would be an ‘abuse of power’

The auxiliary bishop of Astana, Kazakhstan discussed what would happen if the Vatican moved to restrict the Traditional Latin Mass. Commenting on the situation of the SSPX – and whether priests might seek to join the SSPX should the Old Mass be restricted – Schneider said it is ‘difficult’ to say that SSPX priests ‘are outside the church or are schismatic when they possess the ordinary faculties of Confession given by the Pope himself.’



Maïke Hickson

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July 14, 2021 ([LifeSiteNews](#)) – Bishop Athanasius Schneider, in a new radio interview, has commented on the rumors that Pope Benedict's *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, which freed the Traditional Latin Mass, might be soon altered so as to limit the use of this rite. The prelate thinks that such a move would be an “abuse of power” and a “great damage to the life of the Church.” Should it come, priests “can continue to celebrate this Mass because it is the Mass of the entire Church and the faithful have a right [to] what's holy.” Schneider also thinks that the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) is “not outside the Church,” that one can go there for the Sacraments, and that, in case Rome would insist other traditional priests concelebrate the Novus Ordo, some of these priests might actually join the SSPX.

Speaking on radio with Joe McClane of *Catholic Drive Time*, Bishop Schneider, the auxiliary bishop of Astana, Kazakhstan, first discussed the matter of *Summorum Pontificum*. As LifeSite has reported, there are numerous rumors that the Pope is planning to restrict the use of the Traditional Latin Mass. Catholic author Dr. Taylor Marshall thinks that the Pope could do so by insisting that all traditional priests occasionally concelebrate with their diocesan bishop and priest in a Novus Ordo Mass. The traditional Catholic blog *Rorate Caeli* reported that a document modifying *Summorum Pontificum* might come as early as this Friday. The French national newspaper *Le Figaro* also had a report saying that the document has already been signed and is awaiting publication.

When asked about this possible development, Bishop Schneider stated that “it would be a great damage for the life of the Church.” He insisted that “the traditional liturgy is a treasure of the entire Church, not only of the present day, but also of the Church of the past centuries.”

“It is a treasure of the saints; almost all the saints we know grew up in this form of the liturgy,” the prelate added. To limit the use of the traditional rite, Bishop Schneider insisted, is “an abuse of power.”

Speaking about such “a possible hypothetical situation, if it will really happen,” Schneider expounded, then priests “can continue to celebrate this Mass because it is the Mass of the entire Church and the faithful have a right [to] what's holy.” He thinks that the priests and “especially the young people” will not allow themselves “to be deprived of this great treasure of faith, of spirituality.”



but “I think it would be a violation of the spirituality.” To force these priests to celebrate the New Mass (the Novus Ordo), Schneider went on to say, would be a “violation, kind of spiritual, of their rights, which the Church gave them.”

Many traditional priests were ordained in the traditional rite, and they grew up in it, noted Schneider. He reminded his audience that when priests are ordained in a certain rite – for example, an Eastern Catholic rite –they cannot be forced to offer Mass in another rite. Stated the bishop:

The Church cannot force someone from another rite, for example, to celebrate another rite. And these two forms of the...Mass, the Novus Ordo and the traditional one, are really [different] when we are honest. They are two different rites, not only forms, because this is, it's a difference, a very great difference. And so I think they should not be forced to do this.

Commenting on the possibility that traditional priests would be forced to celebrate a Novus Ordo Mass – for the sake of “unity,” as some would say – and that some priests, for example of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP), might refuse to do so, Bishop Schneider was not sure what the Vatican would then do. But he insisted that concelebration in one rite was “never a requirement” as “a sign of unity.”

Here, he referred to clergy from the Eastern rite churches, whose priests “when uniting themselves with Rome in the past centuries,” were not asked to concelebrate with the Holy Father.

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Bishop Schneider also explained that concelebration was very limited in the past 1,500 years and “forbidden by the old canon law.” For priests, there was only case of concelebration: at their own priestly ordination, they would then concelebrate with their bishops. Such an obligation to concelebrate, he continued, “will contradict the entire history of the Church.” Therefore, “it would be an abuse of power for force a priest to concelebrate.”

Unfortunately, as Bishop Schneider expounded, it is not possible for those priests who would refuse to concelebrate and receive penalties, to appeal against the penalties, because there can “never be an appeal against the Vatican.”



about the SSPX.” He asked Bishop Schneider to comment on the canonical status of the SSPX, since the bishop was a member of the visitation of the SSPX that the Vatican had undertaken under Pope Francis in 2015, thus having been able to receive “incredible insight into this.” The speaker admitted to having had “false information for the longest time.”

“The Society of Saint Pius X,” Schneider responded, “was founded by Marcel Lefebvre, a very holy man, I think, a man of God, who had a lot of merits in a difficult time of the Church, even during the Council and after the Council.”

Founded 50 years ago in Switzerland with the approval of the local bishop and of the Vatican, the SSPX later came “into conflict with the Vatican” over some criticism of the statements of the Second Vatican Council. They also wanted to celebrate exclusively the traditional Latin Mass, Schneider explained. Then “mistrust” grew between the SSPX and the Vatican when the Pope would not approve of their proposed four candidates for the episcopal consecrations. It was then clear to Lefebvre, Schneider continued, that the Holy See would not “approve” a future SSPX, with its “constructive” criticisms of some “expressions of Vatican II.”

The 1988 consecrations of four of their own bishops then led to the excommunication of Lefebvre and his four bishops (next to Bishop de Castro Mayer who had been present at the consecrations).

Under Pope Benedict XVI, however, “there were made two very important steps to normalize the situation,” Schneider went on to say. In 2007, “Pope Benedict issued a *Summorum Pontificum*, giving the freedom to the priests to celebrate this Mass; in some way he re-established the rite of the traditional Mass of the Church, which was always one of the main demands of Archbishop Lefebvre and the Society of Pius X.”

Two years later, Bishop Schneider continued, Pope Benedict removed the excommunication of the four bishops. However, this still left some canonical problems open. It was under Pope Francis that “two other important steps” were taken, according to the Kazakh prelate. Pope Francis granted SSPX priests faculties to hear Confessions, extended “all over the world.”

“That was very generous,” Bishop Schneider commented, and then continued:

It's difficult to say that these priests are outside the church or are schismatic when they possess the ordinary faculties of Confession given by the Pope himself. And then the pope authorized the bishops of the parish priests to grant the priests of SSPX the faculties to assist canonically at marriages, matrimonies.

respective dioceses, in addition to telling the faithful who attend such SSPX marriages that to assist at these Masses is licit.

Comments the bishop: “So we see there is a situation which is always closer to a canonical normalization and this is good. We have to be happy that this situation can be resolved and the SSPX can be present and operate inside the Church for the benefit of the Church, for the renewal of the Church” for the sake of preserving “the tradition of the faith, in the liturgy, and the spiritual life, because basically, actually the SSPX does no other thing as the Church believed, as the Church worshiped, as the Church lived, until the Council, all these centuries.”

Bishop Schneider concluded that “we have to hope they [the SSPX] will get the full recognition. I hope soon, it would be good. And then the SSPX will be a normal reality as other realities inside the Church. It is necessary for our time in this crisis, in these times of darkness and confusion.”

According to the prelate, it is necessary that the Church be enriched by such communities as the SSPX, “priests and laypeople who simply keep the faith of all ages, the Mass of all ages, and this they will do, the priests and faithful of the SSPX.”

Asked by the radio host as to whether it is licit to attend SSPX chapels, Bishop Schneider answered that if there are no other possibilities, “of course, because they can confess licitly,” one can “go to the [Sacrament of] Confession with the approval of the pope. And the same priest who gave them... absolution – it would be strange that they cannot assist at his Mass.”

He went on to say that “the Sacraments, the Holy Mass are given for the salvation of souls, for the benefit of the souls. I think that when it is difficult for the normal Catholics to reach the Traditional Mass and there is a possibility closer to the Society of St. Pius X, they can go there or to get a good catechism for the children or young people. Therefore, I think since they are not outside the Church – in spite of some unresolved canonical problems, it seems to me that it is licit that laypeople can go” to SSPX Masses.

Speaking of a situation in which *Summorum Pontificum* were to be suppressed or limited and traditional priests were asked to celebrate the Novus Ordo Mass, the radio host also asked, “if that were to happen and God forbid, but if that were to happen, how would that affect the SSPX? Would those priests also be asked to celebrate the Novus Ordo? Would they do that?”

Bishop Schneider, in his final answer, responded by saying:

See. Therefore they will not be forced, I think. And in this case, I think, if the other priests of the Fraternity of St. Peter and others will be forced to concelebrate the New Mass, I think that there will be priests who will join the Society of Saint Pius X because they have, in this case, some more independence to keep the tradition of the Church. But I hope that it will not happen. Let us pray first that the Holy Spirit will illuminate the Pope not to limit the *motu proprio* of Pope Benedict and also that the Society of Saint Pius X can receive a fuller recognition from the Church.

As one senior Vatican source told LifeSite with regard to the possible restriction of *Summorum Pontificum*, this probable approach of canceling or limiting the traditional Mass is being done over the heads of the faithful concerned. He stated:

The rumors about *Summorum Pontificum* are not only about the matter of the rite itself, but about the dictatorial way of deciding (quite antisynodally) over the heads of the people concerned, treating them like little defiant children who are forced by force to follow the (supposedly) better insight of their parents, or like recruits in a Prussian barracks yard drilled by an obdurate sergeant without any sense or reason.

It is important to point out, even before the publication of the dictate, the totally impossible way in which the *Fratelli tutti* ideologues tend to behave. Others are defamed as rigid in order to make plausible against them a rigorous action before the world that contradicts all the principles of Christian fraternity and the so often quoted “tenderness.”

Wounds are constantly being reopened and trouble spots opened that are in opposition to St. Peter's service to the unity of the whole Church in faith and fidelity to the revealed truth.

Dr. Maïke Hickson was born and raised in Germany. She holds a PhD from the University of Hannover, Germany, after having written in Switzerland her doctoral dissertation on the history of Swiss intellectuals before and during World War II. She now lives in the U.S. and is married to Dr. Robert Hickson, and they have been blessed with two beautiful children. She is a happy housewife who likes to write articles when time permits.



Witness in Our Time.

Hickson has closely followed the papacy of Pope Francis and the developments in the Catholic Church in Germany, and she has been writing articles on religion and politics for U.S. and European publications and websites such as LifeSiteNews, OnePeterFive, The Wanderer, Rorate Caeli, Catholicism.org, Catholic Family News, Christian Order, Notizie Pro-Vita, Corrispondenza Romana, Katholisches.info, Der Dreizehnte, Zeit-Fragen, and Westfalen-Blatt.

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