



REMISSION OF EXCOMMUNICATION AGAINST LEFEBVRE BISHOPS

VATICAN CITY, 24 JAN 2009 (VIS) - The Congregation for Bishops has published a decree signed by its prefect, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, and dated 21 January, concerning the Pope's remission of the excommunication pronounced on four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1988.

The complete text of the decree is given below:

"In a letter of 15 December 2008 addressed to Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, president of the Pontifical Commission 'Ecclesia Dei', Bishop Bernard Fellay once again requested - also in the name of the other three bishops consecrated on 30 June 1988 - the removal of the excommunication 'latae sententiae' formally pronounced by a decree of the prefect of this Congregation for Bishops on 1 July 1988. In that letter Bishop Fellay affirmed, among other things, that 'we continue firmly resolute in our desire to remain Catholics and to put all our strength at the service of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the Roman Catholic Church. We accept her teachings in a filial spirit. We firmly believe in the Primacy of Peter and in its prerogatives, and for this reason the current situation causes us much suffering'.

"His Holiness Benedict XVI - in his paternal compassion for the spiritual discomfort expressed by the parties concerned, because of the excommunication, and trusting in the commitment they expressed in the aforesaid letter to spare no efforts in examining outstanding questions through the requisite discussions with the authorities of the Holy See in order to reach a prompt, full and satisfactory solution to the original problem - has decided to reconsider the canonical position of Bishops Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson and Alfonso de Galarreta, which arose following their episcopal consecration.

"With this act it is hoped to consolidate reciprocal relations of trust, and to intensify and stabilise the relations of the Fraternity of St. Pius X with this Holy See. This gift of peace, coming at the end of the Christmas celebrations, also wishes to be a sign to promote the Universal Church's unity in charity, and to remove the scandal of division.

"It is hoped that this step will be followed by the prompt attainment of full communion with the Church by the entire Fraternity of St. Pius X, thus

demonstrating true faithfulness and true recognition of the Magisterium and authority of Pope with the sign of visible unity.

"On the basis of the powers expressly granted to me by the Holy Father Benedict XVI, and by virtue of this decree, I remit the sentence of excommunication 'latae sententiae' declared by this congregation on 1 July 1988 against Bishops Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson and Alfonso de Galarreta. At the same time I declare that, as of today's date, the decree then issued is devoid of juridical effect".

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