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Traditionalists add spice to the Catholic stew

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Bishop Bernard Fellay, superior of the Society of St. Pius X, meets people after ordaining priests in Econe, Switzerland, June 29, 2009. (CNS photo/Denis Balibouse, Reuters)

If ever an object lesson were needed in the complexities of running the universal Catholic Church, a recent interview with Bishop Bernard Fellay, the Swiss head of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X, offers it in living color. It may be an especially apposite read for liberals, both inside and outside the church, who sometimes struggle to grasp that there?s actually Catholic life to the right of the pope.

Granted, although its bishops are no longer excommunicated, the Society of St. Pius X -- which broke with Rome in 1988, when the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre ordained bishops in defiance of the pope -- has no formal standing in the church. Granted, too, we journalists probably pay more attention to the traditionalists than their real-world following might justify, largely because they often say and do inflammatory things that make great copy.

Even with those stipulations, the climate of opinion represented by the Society of St. Pius X nonetheless remains an important part of the broader Catholic conversation.

In terms of news value, the headline from the Feb. 2 Q&A with Fellay, posted on the society?s American web site, is that a round of talks with the Vatican is coming to an end without resolution -- because, in Fellay?s view, Rome refuses to concede the ?contradictions? between the eternal Catholic faith and the innovations introduced by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

Fellay also announces that two new stumbling blocks have emerged along the path to reconciliation: Benedict XVI?s plan to host an inter-religious summit in Assisi this October, and the May 1 beatification of Pope John Paul II.

Read the full article here: **Traditionalists add spice to the Catholic stew** [1]

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