

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

August 23, 2011 at 10:13am

Traditionalist leader to talk with Vatican officials

by Carol Glatz by Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- The head of a group of traditionalist Catholics will meet with the Vatican Sept. 14 to continue a series of doctrinal discussions.

The Vatican confirmed Aug. 23 that Bishop Bernard Fellay, superior general of the Society of St. Pius X, will travel to Rome in mid-September to meet with U.S. Cardinal William J. Levada, the head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The superior of the society in Germany, Father Franz Schmidberger, said on the group's website that the meeting would discuss the results of doctrinal dialogues from the past two years.

The priest, who is not expected to attend the September meeting, said the discussions will focus on the society's "point of view of canon law," adding that the atmosphere of previous talks had been "very good."

The talks were launched in late 2009 in an effort by Pope Benedict XVI to repair a 21-year break with the society. The pope said that full communion for the group's members would depend on "true recognition of the magisterium and the authority of the pope and of the Second Vatican Council."

However, Bishop Fellay has said the society has been using the talks as a means to show the Vatican the contradictions between the church's traditional teachings and its practices since Vatican II.

The dialogue with the Vatican was not a search for compromise but "a question of faith," Bishop Fellay said in February.

Father Davide Pagliarani, superior of the society in Italy, said "the canonical situation in which the society presently finds itself is (the) result of its resistance to the errors that infest the church."

"Consequently, the possibility of the society arriving at a regular canonical situation does not depend on us but on the hierarchy's acceptance of the contribution that tradition can make to the restoration of the church," he said in an interview published in English Aug. 13 on the society's website.

Pope Benedict XVI placed the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei" under the authority of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in July 2009. He said the commission would be responsible for talks aimed at restoring "full communion" with members of the Society of St. Pius X, founded by the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.

The Vatican said the talks have focused on the concept of tradition, liturgical reform, interpretation of the Second Vatican Council in continuity with Catholic doctrinal tradition, church unity, ecumenism, the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions, and religious freedom.

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