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Pope tells SSPX traditionalists they must accept Second Vatican Council

Alessandro Speciale Religion News Service | Sep. 27, 2012

Pope Benedict XVI has reportedly told members of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X they must accept the Second Vatican Council, a move that might seal the fate of years of negotiations to bring the group fully back into the Catholic fold.

The Italian religion news portal Vatican Insider reported Thursday that society Bishop Bernard Tissier de Mallerais revealed at a conference in France on Sept. 16 that Benedict wrote a letter "with his own hand" to the group's superior, Bishop Bernard Fellay.

According to Tissier de Mallerais, Benedict stated in the June 30 letter that the society, "in order to be truly reintegrated into the Church," must "truly accept the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar Magisterium."

Vatican sources confirmed the report's accuracy.

Benedict's bottom line would most likely be unacceptable for the society, bringing to an end the pontiff's effort to heal a decade-long schism in the Catholic church.

The society rejects the modernizing reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), including church acceptance of ecumenism and religious freedom, and its rejection of anti-Semitism.

The pope sought to heal the rift first by liberalizing use of the traditional Latin Mass in 2005, then by removing the excommunication of the SSPX's four bishops, including Bishop Richard Williamson, a vocal denier of the Holocaust, in 2009.

After three years of doctrinal talks, the Vatican submitted a final offer to the group June 13. The society still hasn't officially responded, though leaked documents slammed the offer as "clearly unacceptable."

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