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FIRST IN NEARLY 200 YEARS: Vatican Suspends Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

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VATICAN CITY (NC) The Vatican has suspended from his priestly functions retired French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, the traditionalist who refuses to recognize the changes made in the Church by the Second Vatican Council.

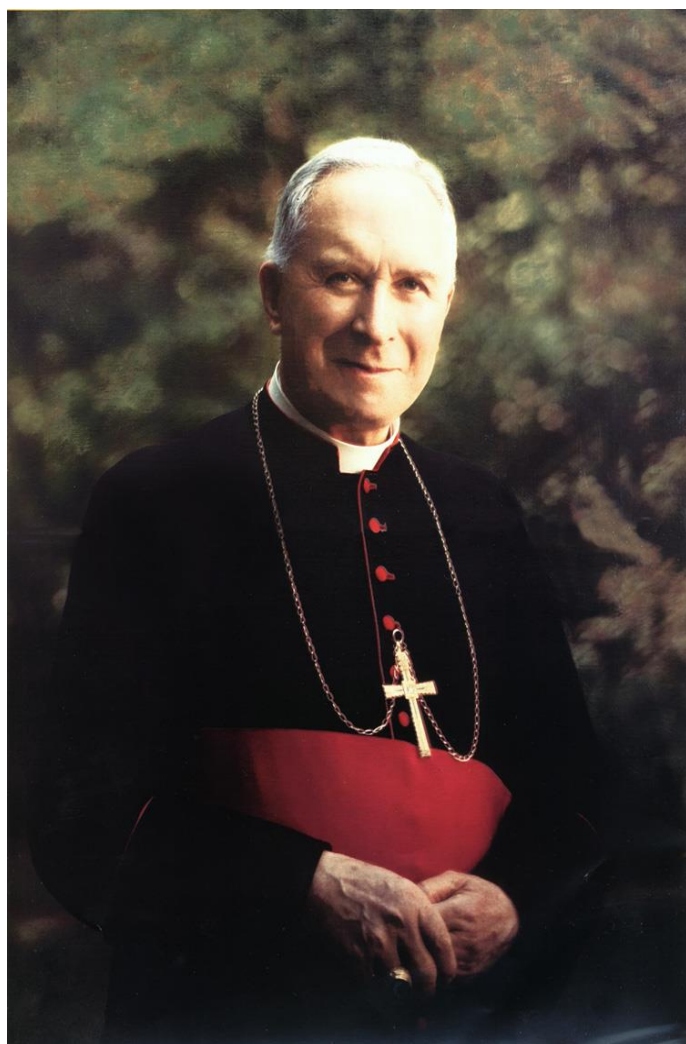


Photo from the Archbishop Lefebvre website

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

In a note made public July 25, the Vatican termed its action “a painful affair” and said that Archbishop Lefebvre “was forbidden to carry out any functions deriving from his Holy Orders. “He cannot celebrate Mass nor administer the sacraments nor preach,” the note said.

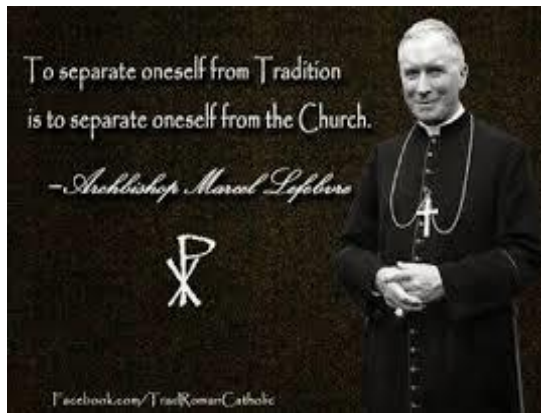
The Vatican pointed out that the Archbishop, 71, son of a wealthy textile manufacturer from Lille, France, had been warned many times to alter his conduct, but to no avail.

In 1970, Archbishop Lefebvre, the former archbishop of Dakar, Senegal, and former superior general of the Holy Ghost Fathers, founded first the Priestly Brotherhood of St. Pius X and then a seminary in Econe, Switzerland, which is based on pre-conciliar teaching.

Mass is celebrated there in Latin and the theology taught ignores the updating of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, Archbishop Lefebvre opposes the coun-

cil's declaration on religious liberty and its statements on Catholic relations with Jews. He has pointedly rejected the liturgical reforms mandated by the council.

In June, after repeated rebukes, Pope Paul VI ordered the controversial archbishop to refrain from ordaining new priests, an order which Archbishop Lefebvre flouted June 29 when he presided at the ordination of 13 priests and 13 sub-deacons who had completed their studies at the Econe Seminary.



Finally, “the Sacred Congregation for Bishops invited the bishop, in the name of the Holy Father, to reconsider,” the Vatican said Saturday, “and it gave him a period of 10 days to show signs of repentance.

“During that period, Archbishop Lefebvre sent only one letter to the Holy Father – a letter which, far from showing signs of or at least some hope of repentance, was, due to a renewal of Archbishop Lefebvre’s rebellious behavior, a cause of further bitterness for His Holiness.

“With the expiration of the 10 day period,” the Vatican communiqué cautioned, “there was no alternative but to convey to the archbishop the punishment which the Supreme Pontiff considers fitting in this case that is, suspension a divinis.” (“A divinis” means from any priestly functions.)

The suspension order was signed by Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, prefect of the Congregation of Bishops. It brought howls of anger from the extreme right in Italy, and the neo-Fascist magazine *Il Borghese* even went as far as to accuse Cardinal Baggio and numerous other Vatican officials of links with a “Jewish Freemansons” plot.

The last such suspension of a bishop, according to knowledgeable sources, involved the famous French statesman Talleyrand – Bishop Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord. At the beginning of the French Revolution Talleyrand defied the church when he led French bishops and clergy in taking the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which supported the laicization of the Church and confiscated its holdings. For this, he was suspended from his priestly and episcopal functions, as is Archbishop Lefebvre at present.

Talleyrand then proceeded to consecrate bishops for a schismatic Church, and for this, he automatically incurred excommunication – just as Archbishop Lefebvre will if he disobeys the present suspension and performs any priestly or episcopal functions.