

Una Voce International 14th General Assembly Rome November, 1999

Msgr. Perl of the 'Ecclesia Dei Commission' was in attendance and his comments are reported below. After reading the statement, Msgr. Perl abruptly left the forum, refusing to answer any questions or receive comments from the delegates.

Recently the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei" has been the object of attacks on the part of certain traditionalist circles, due on the one hand to ignorance of the facts and, on the other, to questionable information published without authorization on the internet. In order to re-establish the truth, the Commission judges it opportune to publish the present clarification.

1. The Pontifical Commission was instituted in 1988 by the Holy Father with "the task of collaborating with the bishops, the Departments of the Roman Curia and with the circles concerned, for the purpose of facilitating full ecclesial communion of priests, seminarians, etc. ... who wish to remain united to the Successor of Peter in the Catholic Church, while preserving their spiritual and liturgical traditions" (Motu Proprio "Ecclesia Dei", n° 6 a). In order to accomplish this task, the Commission must collaborate with the bishops, without whom this ecclesial union is unthinkable. It is then out of the question to criticize the Commission for this collaboration.

2. The Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter was erected in 1988 by the Pontifical Commission with special faculties from the Supreme Pontiff. At no time has the Commission had the intention of changing its statutes. Unfortunately, there have been some internal disagreements in recent months within this religious family. Some documents pertaining to these matters, which should have remained protected by strict confidentiality, have been published. This the Commission can only regret. Those responsible for this publication have done great harm to the Fraternity of Saint Peter. One may ask, moreover, by what right lay associations have become heavily involved in lobbying with regard to a matter which pertains solely to a religious institute.

3. Several priests of the Fraternity of Saint Peter addressed a complaint to the Pontifical Commission. The signatories were making use of their right to appeal to the Holy See -- a right which every faithful Catholic possesses. The Commission has the duty to receive such a recourse and to propose a way to resolve the problems: to this end it took some conservative measures in order to prepare for a serene discussion of the problems by all the members of the Fraternity, while protecting the signatories of the recourse from possible reassignments. Those who maintain that this is an abuse

of power do not understand the true juridical situation: that the Commission exercises the full authority of the Holy See over the aforementioned Fraternity. To state that there is an intention to modify the traditional orientation of the Fraternity is not only absurd, but it gravely offends against the truth and the members of the Pontifical Commission.

4. At the heart of this crisis is the problem of the concelebration of priests who are attached to certain forms of the Latin liturgical tradition at a Mass celebrated according to the rite presently in force. This possibility has been requested and occasionally carried out by some priests in Masses with the diocesan bishop, but categorically refused by the majority. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, after having consulted the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts and requested the advice of the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei", has published "Official Responses" pertaining to this matter in *Notitiæ*, and has explained its reasons to the superiors of the institutes concerned. These responses constitute a statement on the juridical level: those who have the privilege of celebrating according to the liturgical books in use prior to the reform of Paul VI do not lose for that reason the right to celebrate according to the Missal of Paul VI - a right which belongs to every priest of the Roman rite. It is nowhere stated that these priests are obliged to do this, but that they have the right, and that no superior can forbid them from doing what the general law of the Church allows them to do. "An exclusive right" to celebrate according to the 1962 books does not exist and has never existed, and no official text makes such a mention. The texts of the Congregation for Divine Worship are very clear and leave no room for doubt on this point. It is then utterly false to talk about taking away from the Fraternity its exclusive right, because such a right never existed. On the other hand, it should be underscored that there is no intention of taking away the privileges conceded to the priests and to the institutes attached to the Latin liturgical tradition.

5. Concelebration is a manifestation of the communion which exists between the bishop and the priests who have a pastoral mission in his diocese. This sign of communion, reintroduced in the Church by the Second Vatican Council, plays an important role today as an expression of communion between priests - even traditionalists - and the bishops, in the dioceses in which they work. One cannot refuse this liturgical sign without giving the impression that one refuses communion itself. This is why the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei" exhorts these priests to accept concelebration with their bishop since its task is precisely to facilitate this

ecclesial communion of priests and faithful while guaranteeing the respect for their spiritual and liturgical traditions.

RESOLUTIONS TAKEN BY UNA VOCE

In view of suggestions from certain quarters that the Missal of 1965 and its multiple amendments should be used by celebrants of the Traditional Mass of the Roman Rite as set out in the Typical Edition of 1962, this 14th General Assembly of the International Una Voce Federation requests respectfully that the norms of the Motu proprio “Ecclesia Dei adflicta” be adhered to without change. The introduction of the changes found in the 1965 edition would constitute an “interchanging of texts and rites” specifically forbidden by Quattuor abhinc annos, 3 October 1984. We, the 14th General Assembly of the International Una Voce Federation, having placed great hope in the Motu proprio “Ecclesia Dei adflicta”, and in the foundation of the Fraternity of St. Peter for the purpose of giving us the Mass and the sacraments according to the classical and timeless rites found in the liturgical books in use in 1962, we ask respectfully that this sacred liturgy shall always be provided for us by the Fraternity of St. Peter erected under the aegis of the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei. With this in mind we re-affirm our complete and entire confidence in Father Joseph Bisig who has given, and will in the future continue to give, to the Church and to the faithful who are attached to the traditional rite, an inestimable service which is derived from his total fidelity to the decree of erection and constitution of the Fraternity of St. Peter.