

FSSP Further Clarifications

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Since there is a lot of confusion regarding what is now known as Protocol 1411, I'll try to dispel some of the confusion relative to 1411 in the measure I have been able to piece things together. Some publications have, in the rush to publish an English translation of 1411, made a number of false or inaccurate suppositions or judgements that must be clearly and firmly refuted.

What is this "Protocol 1411"? It is a document issued by the Pontifical Congregation of Divine Worship. It has the form of a response to three dubia or questions. Protocol 1411 is the official number of the document. First it should be said that although it has been signed by the president of this Congregation, this document will not have force of law until it is officially promulgated in one of the official publications of the Holy See. The English translation published in the magazine *The Remnant* is not an official translation and was published without the permission of either the author or the translator.

What does it say? It says that any priest who has the privilege of using the 1962 typical edition of the Roman Missal (so-called Tridentine Latin Mass) under the Indult and the provisions of the *Motu Proprio Ecclesia Dei Adflicta* also retains the right of celebrating Mass according to the current normative Roman Missal (*Novus Ordo*) and thus cannot be forbidden by his superior from either celebrating or concelebrating according to the rites of this Missal. It is important to specify that it does not force any priest to celebrate or concelebrate according to the 1969 Roman Missal but simply gives him the freedom of doing so. It is important also to notice that Canon Law says that no priest can be forced to concelebrate (Cf. Canon 902).

It has been said that this document was the response of the Holy See to a letter signed by 16 European priests, members of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, on those questions. However, this is not true. A letter was indeed signed on June 29, 1999 by 16 priests of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter addressed to His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Felici, President of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* and delivered to the said Commission in early July 1999. But Protocol 1411 had been in the works for months beforehand and was already signed or about to be signed. The letter of those priests was addressed to the President of the Commission *Ecclesia Dei* and not

to the Prefect of the Congregation of Rites who prepared and approve Protocol 1411. The letter of those priests addressed policies and internal matters in the Fraternity. The priests are currently in dialogue with Very Reverend Josef Bisig, FSSP Superior General of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter to resolve these differences. They also specifically wrote in that letter that they did not want to be bi-ritual. No text of that letter has been released by the Commission or the Fraternity as it is an internal matter to the Fraternity.

Moreover, it must be said that Protocol 1411 is not intended exclusively for the Fraternity of St. Peter. The name of the Fraternity is not mentioned in the document. It addresses all Roman Rite priests, who have received an indult to celebrate the Sacrifice of Mass by using the typical edition of the 1962 Roman Missal either because of an individual request or because of membership in an institute. The underlying premise of the document is that “the use of the 1962 missal (has been) conceded by indult”. Because it is an indult, it does not take away the general law of the church regarding the normative rite of the Latin Church. This argument would apply to all those who have received the indult.

The priests of the Fraternity of St. Peter believe that the document of the Congregation of the Rites does not apply to the Fraternity for a number of reasons and support the intervention of their Superior General to the Congregation of Divine Worship to that effect. In brief, the Fraternity is not under the regime of an indult but under the regime of a particular law. One recalls that the Fraternity was founded by priests of the Society of St. Pius X who chose to remain in the Church when Archbishop Lefebvre and his society broke away in 1988. Those priests were told that the Holy Father wanted them to start a new society under the proviso of the protocol signed by Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Lefebvre on May 5, 1988 and later denied by the latter. They signed the doctrinal part of this protocol which clearly stated that they accepted the current code of Canon Law “without prejudice to the special discipline granted to the Society by particular law”. The particular law here referred was later specified in the decree erecting the Fraternity and approving its constitutions as the use of all liturgical books in force in 1962. Thus, we are governed in our use of liturgical books not by an indult but by a particular law which takes precedence for us on the general law of the church.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that our saying the old Mass exclusively is not an act of defiance to the lawful authority of the Church. All the priests of the Fraternity profess a strong attachment to the Church and especially to her hierarchy. We work

in keeping or restoring unity for those faithful who love “the liturgical, spiritual, and disciplinary traditions” of the Roman Rite referred to by His Holiness Pope John Paul II in his motu proprio *Ecclesia Dei Adflicta*. The Fraternity is like a harbor in the Church where priests may say exclusively the Tridentine Mass and remain in good standing. Our liturgical preference does not prevent us from collaborating with other priests who do not share it. We work together for the same glory of God and salvation of souls under the authority of the same Bishop within the bark of Peter but according to our own charism.

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