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Semitic Bishop? He Didn't

New York 2/03/2009 09:17 PM GMT (TransWorldNews)

It was widely reported that Pope Benedict XVI lifted the ban of ex-communication with the Society of St. Pius X and its four Bishops. Yet, the full story has not been told. As sometimes happens, the media got it wrong. The media often focuses on one action without researching the details. This omission has made headlines, fueled a controversy, and promoted negativity.

Without question, public statements made by Bishop Richard Williamson, are holocaust-denial of an absurdly extreme nature, revolting to any normal person, and ill suiting any position as a minister of any religion, let alone a Catholic Bishop. With this in mind, when we heard that Pope Benedict XVI had lifted the ban of excommunication, as with others, we were initially shocked. How could it be possible that a Pope who has made so many positive advances in Jewish-Catholic relations could do this? Yet, rather than simply condemning this act as many others, Pave the Way Foundation researched this matter in depth, and inquired with Vatican officials in Rome and knowledgeable experts in canon law, in order to have a clear picture of what was done and why it was done. The full story will surprise many who listened only to the sensationalized and incomplete story in the news media.

First, one must realize that Vatican actions typically do not concern themselves with years, but rather with centuries. History has shown that past schisms from excommunications and defections from the Catholic Church have spawned new religious communities and faiths. The Pope's lifting the ban of excommunication has effectively only opened a door whereby this radical right wing conservative group, (with an estimated over 1,000,000 devotees in number), may only just begin to talk to Vatican officials to eventually be brought back to the mainstream Catholic beliefs. These beliefs include the acceptance of the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council and the declaration *Nostra Aetate*. This also includes the declaration that anti-Semitism is a sin. If the Pope did not take action to begin to close this schism, our children, and grandchildren might one day see a new virulent right wing religion spring up.

Why did Benedict act now? It was timed to coincide the 50th anniversary commemoration of the Second Vatican council. This was the event, which caused the *split* with French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, founder of this group. However, the lifting of the excommunication definitely does not mean that these bishops are welcomed back into the church with open arms. Far from it. These Bishops have been invited just to be able to speak to church officials only just the first step in beginning the long road back to full

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communion. There remains a long list of obligations to which they have to conform and to answer multiple charges and violations according to canon law.

Unfortunately, it was only after the excommunication was lifted, that the Swedish interviewed of his outrageous remarks surfaced. Since this lifting of the excommunication, the Vatican ordered Williamson silenced though his superior who also issued a public apology. It is important to note that Catholic clergy around the world have universally condemned Bishop Richard Williamson's outrageous statements.

Should we allow the bizarre statements and beliefs of this one-man, and media omissions, damage Jewish-Catholic dialogue, which has consistently been highlighted as a major focus for the Catholic Church and this papacy? We say No!

About Pave the Way Foundation

Pave the Way Foundation is dedicated to bridging the non-theological gap between religions through cultural, technological, and intellectual gestures. The Foundation has a simple yet monumental vision: To enable all the world's religions to mutually realize that extremism, politics and personal agendas must not be allowed to poison the true benevolent message common to all faiths. Bigotry and hatred must be abolished by the true faithful embracing their similarities and savoring their differences. More information on the Foundation can be found at www.ptwf.org.

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