

The General House of the Society of St. Pius X announced by [Communiqué](#) (available at present only in French [Updated: English version is now available [here](#)]) that the Superior General of the SSPX, Fr. Davide Pagliarani, met with Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), at the Cardinal's invitation on November 22, 2018. The Superior General was accompanied by Fr. Emmanuel du Chalard while the Cardinal was joined by Archbishop Guido Pozzo, Secretary of the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission.

The meeting provided an opportunity for the Cardinal Prefect to meet with the newly elected (July of 2018) Superior General of the SSPX, who will serve in this capacity for twelve years. The meeting lasted for 2 hours and was held in the Congregation's offices in Rome.

The [Communiqué](#) makes clear that the primary concern of the SSPX, and hence the primary obstacle to a juridical solution to the unjust persecution of the Society, is the defense of and witness to the perennial doctrines of the Faith. The Communiqué states that the “doctrinal question remains absolutely fundamental (*“la question doctrinale reste absolument primordiale”*). The Communiqué makes clear that the SSPX and Rome have been unable to agree the text of a doctrinal declaration that the SSPX could sign for seven years (since the conclusion of a round of doctrinal discussions ordered by Pope Benedict XVI) because of an irreducible doctrinal divergence (*“divergence doctrinale irréductible”*) between the parties. Such a statement makes clear that the differences are not merely diplomatic nor linguistic. It is not a problem of finding the right words. There is truly a doctrinal divergence between the Roman authorities' insistence on the continuity between the novelties of and flowing from the Second Vatican Council and the perennial doctrine of the Church to which the SSPX remains faithful. The Holy See reaffirmed that no juridical solution would occur without the SSPX signing a document of a doctrinal character. Since the Roman authorities have insisted in every draft of such a document that the SSPX accept the orthodoxy of the documents of Vatican II and the legitimacy of the *Novus Ordo Missae* and other changes following the Council, no document has been accepted by the SSPX for seven years.

The Communiqué indicates that further doctrinal discussions may commence but clarifies the expectations of the SSPX. The Superior General recognizes that God may be calling the SSPX to engage in the discussions of the doctrinal ruptures not necessarily to persuade the Roman authorities of the truth of the perennial doctrine but to provide to the whole Church an uncompromising witness to the Faith (*“de porter devant l'Eglise le témoignage inconditionné de la foi”*). The members of the Society reaffirm that they stand ready even to give their very lives for this public witness to the Faith.

The carefully chosen wording of the Communiqué demonstrates that the Superior General

has a very profound and realistic attitude toward relations with Rome. He makes clear that the SSPX will not sacrifice their witness to the Faith for a resolution of juridical injustice. Yet, he is open to continued conversations with the Roman authorities, but again, without giving a false hope of any particular outcome. Even if the Society theologians fail to persuade the Roman authorities to return to Tradition (a likely outcome, humanly speaking), the efforts are not in vain for they give to the whole Church a witness to the Faith. The SSPX by continuing the discussions remains the stumbling block to the total abandonment of Tradition by the Church. The Superior General recognizes that the “means, the terms, and the moment” of the return of Rome to Tradition remain ultimately in God’s hands, not his own. Yet, as he waits for the fullness of time to arrive, he will continue to lead the Society on the path of public witness to the Faith even at cost of their lives.

One would hope that the critics of the Society who have claimed that an unacceptable compromise with Rome that would betray the Faith was imminent would finally, after seven years, accept that they may have been too hasty in their judgment. This latest Communiqué is a sure sign that the Superior General remains fully committed to the path cleared by Archbishop Lefebvre with respect to Rome: Do not submit to novelty and error, but continue to go to Rome to witness to the Faith.