

Holocaust-Denying Bishop Defies Vatican

A renegade traditionalist Roman Catholic bishop, who caused an uproar in 2009 by denying the Holocaust, defied the Vatican again on Thursday by consecrating a bishop without permission from Pope Francis.

Bishop Richard Williamson, 75, performed the consecration of Father Jean-Michel Faure, 73, at the Santa Cruz monastery in Nova Friburgo, Brazil, Brother Joao Ribeiro of the monastery told Reuters in Rio de Janeiro.

The consecration, which the Vatican considers illegitimate, was also confirmed in a statement issued in Switzerland by the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), a traditionalist group that expelled both of them in recent years.

"The Society of St. Pius X regrets sincerely that this spirit of opposition has led to an episcopal consecration," the SSPX statement said. The consecration was first reported by the traditionalist blog Rorate Caeli.

In 1988, the founder of the SSPX, the late French Bishop Marcel Lefebvre, consecrated Williamson and three other traditionalist bishops who rejected the modernizing reforms of the 1962-1965 Second Vatican Council. All were excommunicated from the Church because they did not have permission from Pope John Paul.

In 2009, former Pope Benedict lifted the excommunications of Williamson, a Briton, and the three other bishops still alive then to try to heal the schism that began in 1978. Talks since then between the Vatican and the SSPX to reach a reconciliation have stalled.

Williamson's consecration of Faure, which incurs an automatic

excommunication of both men, now creates a new ultra-traditionalist splinter group opposed to any form of dialog with the Vatican. Shortly before Benedict's decree became official, Williamson caused an uproar by telling Swedish television "I believe there were no gas chambers."

He said no more than 300,000 Jews perished in Nazi concentration camps, rather than the 6 million accepted by most historians. He later issued an apology, but the Vatican rejected it as shallow.

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