

Why these conferences?

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Society.

To remind us why we do what we do.

What is the purpose of the SSPX?

Short answer: the priesthood and all that pertains to it.

Msgr. Lefebvre speaks later in life about the dream that he had in the cathedral of Dakar where he was apostolic delegate about founding a society of priests who were faithful to the true understanding of their sacerdotal office. Not social workers, not community organizers, but men of God imbued with the supernatural spirit. Men whose only aim was to live their Mass and save souls.

Before that assignment he had been stationed as the bishop of Tulle in France, where he began to see priests losing touch with their purpose in life as priests. The young ones especially were discouraged.

He had been superior general of his congregation just a few years before but was forced to resign when he realized that his desire to avoid modernizing the congregation fell on deaf ears. He found little to no support for his traditional and conservative mindset among his confreres, so he entered retirement.

1. House of studies for seminarians. They would take classes in Fribourg and just have a place to stay and be in a good environment.
2. Eventually it became clear that a full seminary with its own professors would be necessary
3. The Society was founded as a Pio Unio by Bishop Charriere, a friend of Msgr. Lefebvre's who would soon retire.
4. The seminary was established in Ecône

There is a whole history of how he founded the Society - I highly encourage you to go to marcellefebvre.info (For YouTube, in the description)

Spiritan Origins

What congregation was Archbishop Lefebvre a member and eventually a superior of? The Spiritan Congregation was founded in 1703 by Claude Poullart des Places on Pentecost Sunday. Poullart des Places had been educated by the Jesuits in Paris, and while still a young man and a seminarian, founded the congregation for poor young seminary students. He himself was ordained in 1707, and many began to join the little group, but Poullart des Places died of a lung infection only 2 years after his ordination.

After his death, the congregation only grew in size and developed a more precise purpose: the salvation of the most poor and needy souls. This would eventually translate into Spiritan Fathers being sent to missionary lands all throughout the world through the Paris foreign missions society. By the time of the congregation's suppression in 1792 by the French Revolution, the congregation numbered 1300 priests.

It was Father Francis Libermann, founder of the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary who was asked to combine with the Spiritan congregation in 1848. Under his direction the congregation would prosper again, taking as their focus the missions in Africa, but also in many other countries throughout the whole world.

It would among the largest religious congregations in the world in the 20th century. (5000 priests by Vatican II)

The purpose of the Spiritan congregation at the time of the archbishop's entering was the salvation of souls, especially those most in need. It was an apostolic and missionary society of priests who take vows and live in community

« Le but général de la Congrégation est de se dévouer au salut des pécheurs par une vie toute apostolique ; l'objet spécial vers lequel doit tendre son zèle, et auquel seront consacrés ses travaux, ce sont **les âmes les plus nécessiteuses et les plus abandonnées.** »

« Les moyens que la Congrégation emploie, pour arriver au but qu'elle se propose, sont généralement ceux qui ne sont pas opposés à **la vie de communauté**, et qui de leur nature n'exposent pas ses Membres au péril prochain de se relâcher et de perdre l'esprit qui les doit animer. » (Chapitre I, art. 1 ; Chapitre II, art. 2, Règlements de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit, 1849)

Msgr. Lefebvre - Father of Priests

"Very flexible and pleasant, smiling, firm in his principles, very popular with his pupils, and appreciated by the priests. From the beginning of his missionary life, he showed an inclination and a particular talent for training priests."

Three of his students would go on to become bishops

Understanding this background and seeing how Msgr. Lefebvre had as his primary role as seminary rector and later apostolic delegate and bishop for so many years the formation and sanctification of priests, it is no wonder he would be inspired by God to found a society focused on sanctifying priests.

[READ: PURPOSE OF THE SOCIETY - STATUTES]

The Society's Purpose Lived Out

The Society exists for priests, their education, formation, and sanctification.

This extends beyond its own members to any priests who seek help in any way.

The brothers and oblates add the religious aspect to the society (very important, but not talking about now)

Necessarily, because priests exercise an apostolate, the society has Mass centers and schools, which provide strong Catholic families and future priests.

It is easy to get lost in the weeds, but there is only one thing that Msgr. Lefebvre saw as necessary for a world and Church in turmoil: Holy priests who live their Mass. Everything else flows from that: community life, parishes, schools, religious and lay coadjutors, etc.

You might imagine the work of the Society with

1. Christ on the cross in the center
2. Which is the essence of the Mass
3. Which is the reason for the priesthood
4. and since the Mass is essentially apostolic - parishes/schools

Priory Life Protects Priests

Community life is particularly important as this is necessary for the health and survival of the Society's purpose.

Just as Europe in the dark ages preserved and caused Christendom to grow throughout hundreds of years in the monasteries and communities of the Benedictines, so too will the crisis in the Church find its solution in these healthy microcosms of Christendom, centered around Our Lord Jesus Christ crucified.

This is why our attachment to the Tridentine rite is so crucial, not because of an aesthetic preference, but because it is the best expression of the spirit of Christ. The New Mass is an artificial pasting together of elements imbued with the spirit of Protestantism. You can celebrate it with as much reverence as you like, but it will always be, at its root, corrupted by its origins in the watered-down Christianity of the late 20th century.

It is because our communities are all about the priesthood and thus the Mass that we cannot compromise on this point: the life of the Church depends on it, in a way similar to 1500 years ago when barbarians swept over Europe. It was the Mass and all that flows from it that gave birth to Christendom, and it will do this again.

If you want to see the Society grow and flourish, we will find it only when priests live a community life as the first apostles did in poverty, simplicity, and charity, centered around the Mass, the expression of who they are.

A priest who wants to go off on his own way or act as an independent community organizer or pundit has no place in our society. We priests, like the first Christians, must live out our priesthood in imitation of the master.

Full circle: the society exists for the priesthood. In the current crisis, this will help establish the reign of Christ the King.