



S S P X

Interview with the Superior General of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X

“Suprema lex, salus animarum”

“The supreme law is the salvation of souls.’ It is upon this higher principle that, ultimately, the entire legitimacy of our apostolate depends.”

1. *FSSPX.News: Reverend Superior General, you have just publicly announced your intention to proceed with episcopal consecrations for the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X on 1 July next. Why did you choose to make this announcement today, 2 February?*

Don Davide Pagliarani: The feast of the Purification of the Most Blessed Virgin is of great significance within the Society. It is the day on which candidates for the priesthood receive the cassock. The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, which we celebrate today, reminds them that the key to their formation and preparation for Holy Orders lies in self-giving, which passes through the hands of Mary. It is an important Marian feast because, in announcing a sword of sorrow to Our Lady, Simeon clearly shows her role as Co-Redemptrix alongside her divine Son. We see her associated with Our Lord from the very beginning of His earthly life until the consummation of His sacrifice on Calvary. In the same way, Our Lady accompanies the future priest in his formation and throughout his entire life—it is she who continues to form Our Lord in his soul.

2. *This announcement has been a persistent rumour in recent months, especially since the death of Bishop Tissier de Mallerais in October 2024. Why did you wait until now?*

Like Archbishop Lefebvre in his time, the Society has always been anxious not to precede but follow Providence, allowing itself to be guided by its indications. A decision of such importance cannot be taken lightly or in haste.

In particular, since this decision clearly concerns the supreme authority of the Church, it was deemed necessary first that we approach the Holy See—which we did—and wait for a reasonable period for a response. This was not a decision that we could take without concretely manifesting our recognition of the authority of the Holy Father.

3. *In your homily, you stated that you had indeed written to the Pope. Could you tell us more about this?*

Last summer, I wrote to the Holy Father to request an audience. Having received no reply, I wrote to him again a few months later, in a filial and straightforward manner, without concealing any of our needs. I mentioned our doctrinal divergences, but also our sincere desire to serve the Catholic Church without respite, for we are servants of the Church despite our irregular canonical status.



To this second letter, a reply from Rome reached us a few days ago, from Cardinal Fernández. Unfortunately, it took no account whatsoever of the proposal we put forward, and offers nothing that responds to our requests.

This proposal, given the very particular circumstances in which the Society finds itself, consists concretely in asking that the Holy See agree to allow us to continue our work—temporarily, in our exceptional situation—for the good of the souls who turn to us. We promised the Pope to devote all our energy to the safeguarding of Tradition, and to make of our faithful true sons of the Church. It seems to me that such a proposal is both realistic and reasonable, and that it could, in itself, be approved by the Holy Father.

4. *But then, if you have not yet received this approval, why do you nevertheless consider it necessary to proceed with episcopal consecrations?*

This is an extreme means, proportionate to a real and likewise extreme necessity. Indeed, the mere existence of a necessity for the good of souls does not mean that, in order to respond to it, any initiative whatsoever is automatically justified. But in our case, after a long period of waiting, observation, and prayer, it seems that the objective state of grave necessity in which souls, the Society, and the Church find themselves today calls for such a decision.

With the legacy left to us by Pope Francis, the fundamental reasons that justified the consecrations of 1988 still exist and, in many respects, impel us with renewed urgency. The Second Vatican Council remains more than ever the compass guiding today's churchmen, and they are unlikely to change course in the near future. Furthermore, the major orientations already taking shape in this new pontificate—particularly through the most recent consistory—only confirm this. An explicit determination to preserve the line of Pope Francis as an irreversible trajectory for the entire Church is discernible.

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It is sad to acknowledge, but it is a fact that, in an ordinary parish, the faithful no longer find the means necessary to ensure their eternal salvation. Missing, in particular, are both the integral preaching of Catholic truth and morality, and the worthy administration of the sacraments as the Church has always done. This deprivation is what constitutes the state of necessity. In this critical context, our bishops are growing older, and, as the apostolate continues to expand, they are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the faithful worldwide.

5. *In what way do you believe that last month's consistory confirms the direction taken by Pope Francis?*

Cardinal Fernández, speaking in the name of Pope Leo, invited the Church to return to Pope Francis's fundamental intuition expressed in his key encyclical, *Evangelii gaudium*. Put simply, he believes that the Gospel should be proclaimed by reducing it to a primitive and essential expression, a series of concise and striking formulas—the “kerygma”—with a view to eliciting an “experience”, an immediate encounter with Christ. Everything else should be set aside, however precious it may be. In concrete terms, all that is Tradition is considered as accessory and secondary. It is this method of the new evangelisation that has produced the doctrinal emptiness characteristic of Pope Francis's pontificate, and is keenly felt by many in the Church.

In a similar vein, one must provide new and relevant answers to the emerging questions of our time, but, according to Cardinal Fernández, this is to be done through synodal reform, rather than by rediscovering the classical and ever-valid answers provided by the Tradition of the Church. It is by these means, in the “breath of the Spirit” of this synodal reform, that Pope Francis has been able to impose catastrophic decisions upon the whole Church, such as authorising Holy Communion for the divorced and civilly remarried, or the blessing of same-sex couples.

In summary, through the “kerygma”, the proclamation of the Gospel is isolated from the whole corpus of traditional doctrine and morality. And through synodality, traditional answers are replaced by arbitrary



decisions, with a high risk of being absurd and doctrinally unjustifiable. Cardinal Zen himself considers this method manipulative and considers attributing it to the Holy Ghost blasphemous. Unfortunately, I fear that he is right.

6. *You speak of service to the Church, but in practice, the Society can give the impression of challenging the Church, especially if episcopal consecrations are envisaged. How do you explain this to the Pope?*

We serve the Church first and foremost by serving souls. This is an objective fact, independent of any other consideration. Fundamentally, the Church exists for souls; her purpose is their sanctification and their salvation. All fine speeches, the various debates, the major themes upon which one discusses or might discuss, have no meaning if they do not have as their finality the salvation of souls. It is essential to recall this because the Church is in danger of busying herself with both everything and nothing. Ecological concerns, for example, or the preoccupation with the rights of minorities, of women, or of migrants, risk causing the essential mission of the Church to be lost from view. If the Society of Saint Pius X strives to preserve Tradition, with all that this entails, it is solely because these treasures are vital for the salvation of souls, and because it aims at nothing else but the good of souls, and that of the priesthood—ordered to their sanctification.

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In so doing, we place what we preserve at the service of the Church. We offer the Church, not a museum of old and dusty things, but Tradition in its fullness and fruitfulness. Tradition, which sanctifies souls, transforms them, and gives rise to vocations and authentically Catholic families. In other words, it is for the Pope himself, as such, that we preserve this treasure until the day when its value will once again be understood and when a Pope will wish to make use of it for the good of the whole Church. For it is to the Church that Tradition belongs.

7. *You speak of the good of souls, but the Society has no mission over souls. On the contrary, it was canonically suppressed more than fifty years ago. On what basis can any mission of the Society towards souls be justified?*

It is quite simply a question of charity. We do not wish to attribute to ourselves a mission that we do not have, but at the same time, we cannot refuse to respond to the spiritual distress of souls who are increasingly perplexed, disoriented, and lost. They are calling for help. And, after searching for a long time, it is quite natural that they find deep joy, light, and consolation in the riches of the Tradition of the Church. To these souls, we have a true responsibility, even if we do not possess an official mission. It is the same for someone in the street—if he sees another in danger, he is bound to come to that person's aid according to his means, even if he is neither a fireman nor a policeman.

The number of souls who have thus turned to us has increased over the years, particularly in the last decade. To ignore their needs and abandon them would mean betraying them, and thereby betraying the Church herself, for once again, the Church exists for souls and not to feed vain and futile discourse.

This charity is a duty which commands all others. The very law of the Church provides for it. In the spirit of ecclesiastical law, which is the juridical expression of this charity, the good of souls comes before everything else. It truly represents the law of laws, to which all others are subordinate and against which no ecclesiastical law can prevail. The axiom “*suprema lex, salus animarum*”—“the supreme law is the salvation of souls”—is a classic maxim of canonical tradition which is explicitly taken up by the final canon of the 1983 Code. In the present state of necessity, it is upon this highest principle that the entire legitimacy of our apostolate and of our mission towards the souls who turn to us depends. For us, we fulfil a role of supplying for a deficiency, in the name of that same charity.



8. *Are you aware that contemplating episcopal consecrations could place the faithful who have recourse to the Society before a dilemma: either the choice of integral Tradition with all that it implies, or “full” communion with the hierarchy of the Church?*

In reality, this dilemma is only apparent. A Catholic must preserve *both* integral Tradition and communion with the hierarchy. He cannot choose between these goods, because they are both necessary.

But too often it is forgotten that communion is founded essentially upon the Catholic faith with all that this entails—beginning with a true sacramental life—and this requires the exercise of a governance that preaches this same faith and ensures that it is put into practice, using its authority not arbitrarily, but truly with a view to the spiritual good of the souls entrusted to its care.

It is precisely to safeguard these foundations—these conditions necessary for the existence of communion in the Church—that the Society cannot accept what opposes and distorts that communion, even when this comes from those who themselves exercise authority in the Church by right.

9. *Could you give a concrete example of what the Society cannot accept?*

The first example that comes to mind dates back to 2019, when Pope Francis, on the occasion of his visit to the Arabian Peninsula, signed, together with an imam, the well-known Abu Dhabi declaration. Together with the Muslim leader, he affirmed that the plurality of religions had been willed as such by divine Wisdom.

It is evident that a communion founded upon the acceptance of such a statement, or which would include it, would simply not be Catholic, since it would constitute a sin against the First Commandment and the denial of the first article of the Creed. I consider such a statement to be more than a simple error. It is simply inconceivable. It cannot be the foundation of Catholic communion, but rather the cause of its dissolution. I believe that a Catholic should prefer martyrdom rather than accept such an affirmation.

10. *Throughout the world, awareness of the errors long denounced by the Society is growing, particularly on the internet. Would it not be better to allow this movement to develop and to trust in Providence rather than intervene with a strong public gesture such as episcopal consecrations?*

This movement is certainly positive, and one can only rejoice in it. Undoubtedly, it illustrates the soundness of what the Society defends, and there is every reason to encourage this dissemination of the truth by all available means. That said, it is a movement with limits, for the battle of faith cannot be restricted to, nor exhausted by, discussions and position-taking on the internet.

The sanctification of a soul certainly depends upon an authentic profession of faith, but this must lead to a devout Christian life. On Sundays, souls do not need to consult the internet; they need a priest who hears their confessions and instructs them, who celebrates the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for them, who truly sanctifies them and leads them to God. Souls need priests. And to have priests, bishops are required, not “influencers”. In other words, we must return to reality—that is, the reality of souls and of their concrete, objective needs. Episcopal consecrations have no other purpose but to guarantee, for the faithful attached to Tradition, the administration of the sacrament of Confirmation, of Holy Orders, and of all that flows from them.

11. *Do you not think that, despite its good intentions, the Society could in some way end up considering itself to be the Church, or attributing to itself an irreplaceable role?*

In no way does the Society claim to take the place of the Church or to assume her mission. On the contrary, it retains a deep awareness that it exists solely to serve her, relying exclusively on what the Church herself has always and everywhere preached, believed, and practised.

The Society is likewise deeply conscious that it is not she who saves the Church, for Our Lord alone preserves and saves His Spouse—He who never ceases to watch over her.

In circumstances it did not choose, the Society is simply a privileged means of remaining faithful to the Church. Attentive to the mission of her Mother, who for twenty centuries has nourished her children with doctrine and the sacraments, the Society devotes itself with a filial spirit to the preservation and defence of integral Tradition—taking advantage of an unparalleled freedom to remain faithful to this inheritance. According to the expression of Archbishop Lefebvre, the Society is nothing more than a work “of the



Catholic Church, which continues to transmit doctrine”; its role is that of an “envoy”. And it desires nothing so much as to see all Catholic pastors join it in the fulfilment of this duty.

12. Let us return to the Pope. Do you think it is realistic to believe that the Holy Father might accept, or at least tolerate, that the Society consecrate bishops without a pontifical mandate?

A Pope is first and foremost a father. As such, he is capable of discerning a right intention, a sincere will to serve the Church, and above all, a genuine case of conscience in an exceptional situation. These elements are objective, and all those who know the Society can recognise them, even without necessarily sharing its positions.

13. That is understandable in theory. But do you think that, in practice, Rome could tolerate such a decision on the part of the Society?

The future remains in the hands of the Holy Father and, of course, Providence. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the Holy See is sometimes capable of showing a certain pragmatism, and even a surprising flexibility, when it is convinced that it is acting for the good of souls.

Let us take the current case of relations with the Chinese government. Despite a genuine schism of the Chinese Patriotic Church, despite the uninterrupted persecution of the underground Church faithful to Rome, despite agreements regularly renewed and then broken by the Chinese authorities, in 2023, Pope Francis approved, *a posteriori*, the appointment of the Bishop of Shanghai by those authorities. More recently, Pope Leo XIV himself ultimately accepted, *a posteriori*, the appointment of the Bishop of Xinxiang, designated in the same manner during the vacancy of the Apostolic See, while the bishop, faithful to Rome—who had been imprisoned several times—was still in office. In both cases, these were clearly pro-government prelates, imposed unilaterally by Beijing to control the Catholic Church in China. It should be clearly noted that these were not merely auxiliary bishops, but residential bishops, that is, ordinary pastors of their respective dioceses (or prefectures), possessing jurisdiction over the local clergy and faithful. In Rome, it is perfectly well known for what purpose these pastors were chosen and unilaterally imposed.

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The Society’s case is entirely different. For us, it is obviously not a matter of favouring a communist or anti-Christian power, but solely of safeguarding the rights of Christ the King and of the Tradition of the Church, at a time of general crisis and confusion in which these are gravely compromised. The intentions and the ends are clearly not the same. The Pope knows this. Moreover, the Holy Father knows full well that the Society has no intention whatsoever of granting any jurisdiction to its bishops, which would amount to creating a parallel Church.

Frankly, I do not see how the Pope could fear a greater danger to souls coming from the Society than from the government in Beijing.

14. With regard to the traditional Mass, do you think that the necessity of souls is as grave today as it was in 1988? After the well-known vicissitudes of the rite of Saint Pius V, its liberation by Benedict XVI in 2007, and the restrictions imposed by Francis in 2021, in what direction are we heading with the new Pope?

As far as I am aware, Pope Leo XIV has maintained a certain discretion on this subject, which arouses great expectation in the conservative world. Very recently, however, a text by Cardinal Roche on the liturgy—intended initially for the cardinals participating in last month’s consistory—was made public. There is no reason to doubt that it corresponds, in its broad lines, to the orientation desired by the Pope. It is an unambiguous text, and above all, logical and coherent. Unfortunately, it is based on a false premise.

Concretely, this text, in perfect continuity with *Traditionis custodes*, condemns the liturgical project of Pope Benedict XVI, according to whom, the ancient rite and the new rite are two more or less equivalent



forms, expressing the same faith and the same ecclesiology, and therefore capable of mutually enriching one another. Concerned for the unity of the Church, Benedict XVI sought to promote the coexistence of the two rites and, in 2007, published *Summorum Pontificum*. For many, this occasioned a providential rediscovery of the Mass of all time; but over time, it also gave rise to a movement calling the new rite into question—a movement deemed problematic and which *Traditionis custodes*, in 2021, sought to stem.

Faithful to Pope Francis, Cardinal Roche is now attempting to promote an elusive unity of the Church according to an idea contradictory to that of Benedict XVI. While maintaining the assertion of a continuity from one rite to the other through reform, Cardinal Roche firmly opposes their coexistence. He sees in it a source of division, a threat to unity, which must be overcome by returning to an authentic liturgical communion. “The primary good of the unity of the Church is not achieved by freezing division, but by finding ourselves in the sharing of what cannot but be shared.” In the Church, “there ought to be only one rite”, in full syntony with the true meaning of Tradition.

This is a just and coherent principle, since the Church, having one faith and one ecclesiology, can have only one liturgy capable of expressing them adequately. But it is a principle applied to a wrong conception of Tradition. Consistent with the new post-conciliar ecclesiology, Cardinal Roche conceives Tradition as something evolving, and the new rite as its sole living expression for our time. The value of the Tridentine rite can therefore only be regarded as obsolete, and its use, at most, a “concession”, and “in no way a promotion.”

That there is a present “division” and incompatibility between the two rites now appears more apparent than ever. But let there be no mistake, the only liturgy that adequately expresses, in an immutable and non-evolving manner, the traditional conception of the Church, of Christian life, and of the Catholic priesthood—that is, Tradition—is the liturgy of all time. On this point, the opposition of the Holy See appears more irrevocable than ever.

15. Cardinal Roche nevertheless has the honesty to acknowledge that there are still specific problems in the implementation of the liturgical reform. Do you think that this could lead to an awareness of the limits of that reform?

It is astonishing that, after sixty years, a real difficulty in applying the liturgical reform is still admitted, and its riches are still to be discovered. This is a refrain heard whenever this subject is addressed, and which Cardinal Roche’s text does not evade. But instead of sincerely questioning the intrinsic deficiencies of the new Mass, and therefore the overall failure of the reform, instead of facing the reality that churches are emptying and vocations are declining, instead of asking why the Tridentine rite continues to attract so many souls, Cardinal Roche sees no other solution than an urgent preliminary formation of the faithful and seminarians.

Without realising it, he thus enters into a vicious circle, for it is the liturgy itself that is meant to form souls. For almost two thousand years, souls—often illiterate—were edified and sanctified by the liturgy, without the need for any prior formation. Failing to recognise the intrinsic incapacity of the *Novus Ordo* to form and edify souls and continuing to demand ever better prior formation seems to me to be the sign of an irremediable blindness. One arrives at shocking paradoxes: the reform was intended to foster a greater participation of the faithful; yet the faithful abandoned the Church en masse, because this insipid liturgy failed to nourish them—and this would supposedly have nothing to do with the reform?

16. Today, in many countries, groups outside the Society still use the 1962 Missal. Such possibilities hardly existed in 1988. Would this not be a sufficient alternative for the time being, rendering new episcopal consecrations premature?

The question we must ask ourselves is this: do these possibilities correspond to what the Church and souls truly need? Do they respond sufficiently to the necessities of souls?

It is undeniable that, wherever the traditional Mass is celebrated, it is the true rite of the Church that shines forth with a profound sense of the sacred, which is not found in the new rite. However, one cannot abstract from the framework within which these celebrations take place. Independent of the goodwill of one party or another, and especially since *Traditionis custodes* and its confirmation by Cardinal Roche, the framework is that of a Church in which the only official and “normal” rite is that of Paul VI. The



celebration of the rite of all time, therefore, takes place under a regime of exception. Those priests attached to this rite receive, by gratuitous benevolence, dispensations which allow them to celebrate it, but these dispensations are inscribed within the logic of the new ecclesiology. They therefore tacitly accept that the new liturgy remains the criterion of the piety of the faithful and the authentic expression of the life of the Church.

17. Why do you say that one cannot abstract from this exceptional framework? Is not good, nevertheless, being done? What concrete consequences would be regrettable?

From this situation, at least three harmful consequences result. The most immediate is a profound structural fragility. Priests and faithful who benefit from certain privileges allowing them to use the Tridentine liturgy live in anxiety about the future—a privilege is not a right. So long as authority tolerates them, they may carry on their religious practice without being troubled. But as soon as authority formulates particular demands, imposes conditions, or suddenly revokes, for one reason or another, the permissions granted, priests and faithful find themselves in conflict, with no means of defending themselves to effectively guarantee the traditional assistance that souls have a right to expect. How, then, can such cases of conscience be avoided in the long term, when, between two irreconcilable conceptions of the life of the Church—embodied in two incompatible liturgies—one enjoys complete legitimacy while the other is merely tolerated?

Furthermore—and this is probably more serious—the reason for the attachment of these groups to the Tridentine liturgy is no longer understood. This gravely compromises the public rights of the Tradition of the Church and thereby the good of souls. Indeed, if those attached to the Mass of all time are deemed to accept that the modern Mass be celebrated throughout the Church, and if they are believed to claim for themselves only a particular privilege linked to a preference or a proper charism, how can it then be understood that this Mass of all time stands in irreducible opposition to the new Mass, remains the sole true liturgy of the whole Church, and that no one may be prevented from celebrating it? How can it be known that the Mass of Paul VI cannot be recognised, because it constitutes a considerable departure from the Catholic theology of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and that no one may be compelled to celebrate it? And how are souls to be effectively turned away from this poisoned liturgy, to drink from the pure sources of Catholic liturgy?

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Finally, a more remote consequence flowing from the previous two: the fear of breaking a fragile stability by behaviour deemed “disturbing” reduces many pastors to a constrained silence, when they should be raising their voices against scandalous teaching which corrupts faith or morals. The necessary denunciation of errors that undermine the Church—required by the very good of souls who are threatened by this poisoned nourishment—is thereby left undone. One may enlighten another in private, if able to discern the harmfulness of a given error, but it may be only a timid whisper, in which truth struggles to express itself with the required freedom—especially in the shadow of tacitly accepted, contradictory principles. Once again, souls are no longer enlightened and are deprived of the bread of doctrine for which they remain hungry. Over time, this progressively alters mentalities and gradually leads to a general and unconscious acceptance of the various reforms affecting the life of the Church. Towards these souls, too, the Society feels a responsibility to enlighten and not to abandon.

This is not a matter of judgment and condemnation, but of opening one’s eyes and acknowledging the facts. We are obliged to recognise that, insofar as the use of the traditional liturgy remains conditioned upon at least an implicit acceptance of the conciliar reforms, the groups who benefit from it cannot constitute an adequate response to the profound necessities experienced by the Church and by souls. On the contrary, to take up an idea already expressed, Catholics today must be offered a truth without compromise, served without conditioning, together with the means to live it fully, for the salvation of souls and the service of the whole Church.



18. That being said, do you not think that Rome might show itself more generous in the future with regard to the traditional Mass?

Rome may adopt a more open attitude in the future, as happened in 1988 in analogous circumstances when the old Missal was granted to specific groups in an attempt to draw the faithful away from the Society. Should this happen again, it would again be more of a political decision than a doctrinal one. The Tridentine Missal is intended solely to adore the divine majesty and to nourish faith; it must not be instrumentalised as a tool of pastoral adjustment or as a variable of appeasement.

However, greater or lesser benevolence would change nothing of the harmfulness of the framework described above, and would therefore not substantially modify the situation.

Moreover, the scenario is more complex in reality. In Rome, both Pope Francis and Cardinal Roche saw that broadening the use of the Missal of Saint Pius V inevitably triggers a questioning of the liturgical reform and of the Council on a scale that is both troublesome and, above all, uncontrollable. It is therefore difficult to foresee what will happen, but the danger of becoming trapped in a logic that is more political than doctrinal is real.

19. What would you like to say in particular to the faithful and to the members of the Society?

I would like to emphasize that this is a time for prayer and preparation of hearts, souls, and minds. We must prepare ourselves to receive the grace that these consecrations will occasion for the whole Church. This should be done with recollection, peace, and trust in Providence, which has never abandoned the Society and will not abandon it now.

20. Do you still hope to meet the Pope?

Yes, certainly. It seems to me extremely important to speak with the Holy Father. There are many things I would like to share with him that I was not able to include in my letters. Unfortunately, Cardinal Fernández's response does not address the possibility of an audience with the Pope. It also evokes the possibility of new sanctions.

21. What will the Society do if the Holy See decides to condemn it?

First of all, let us recall that in such circumstances any canonical penalties would have no real effect.

Nevertheless, should they be pronounced, the Society would certainly accept this new suffering without bitterness, as it has accepted past sufferings, and would sincerely offer it for the good of the Church. It is for the Church that the Society works. And there is no doubt that, should such a situation arise, it could only be temporary, for the Church is divine and Our Lord will not abandon her.

The Society will continue to work to the best of its ability to be faithful to Catholic Tradition and to humbly serve the Church by responding to the needs of souls. It will also continue to pray with filial devotion for the Pope, as it has always done, while awaiting the day when it may be freed from any unjust sanctions, as was the case in 2009. We are sure that one day the Roman authorities will acknowledge, with gratitude, that these episcopal consecrations providentially contributed to preserving the faith, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Interview given at Flavigny-sur-Ozerain on 2 February 2026
on the feast of the Purification of the Most Blessed Virgin