

# Communiqué on the death of His Excellency Bishop Williamson

February 1, 2025

His Excellency Bishop Williamson went to his eternal reward yesterday, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025, at 11:23pm GMT following a final agony of “a matter of minutes.” He had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage during the evening of Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January when he was taken to hospital. He spent his final days in a peaceful though declining state, surrounded by clergy and faithful continuously praying at his bedside for the intercession of the Blessed Mother to whom he had been so devoted throughout his life and whom he credited for leading him to the Holy Catholic faith in his twenties.

Born on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1940, the feast day of St. John of God, in London, England, Richard Nelson Williamson was the second of three sons born to John and Helen Williamson; a middle class and non-observant Anglican family. An intelligent boy, he received a scholarship to study at Winchester College, where he received a classical humane education, before attending Cambridge University where he read English Literature. Following his graduation, Richard Williamson spent two years teaching at a school in Ghana before attaining a position at St Paul’s School for boys in London during the tumultuous 1960s.

During these years Williamson spent more and more time asking questions of history, culture and meaning. His passions for Beethoven, Shakespeare and many other classics of the Western Canon, which were to endure for his whole life, increasingly opened his mind to man’s spiritual dimension. Serendipitous encounters with the writings of St Thomas Aquinas and St

Augustine of Hippo, as well as interest in the great Marian apparitions of the modern age, led to him exploring the Catholic religion and in 1971 he was received into the Catholic Church by Fr John Flanagan.

Amidst the neo-modernist Conciliar turmoil, Williamson's pursuit of a vocation was rebuffed by both the diocese of Arundel and Brighton and London's Brompton Oratory. With Fr Flanagan's encouragement, Williamson thereafter entered the Society of St Pius X seminary of Écône, Switzerland, under Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1972.

With his solid grounding in the classics and languages, Richard Williamson was one of the first group of seminarians to be ordained in the hot summer of 1976. A natural teacher, he remained in the Society's seminaries first as a Professor in Weissbad, Switzerland, then in Écône itself until 1982. He became a trusted confidante and lieutenant of Monsignor Lefebvre. When French film crews visited the Écône seminary in the 1970s it was the seminarian Williamson who was assigned to accompany and be interviewed by them. When conciliar Rome was tentatively offered one bishop for the Society during Archbishop Lefebvre's negotiations with Cardinal Ratzinger in the 1980s, it was Father Richard Williamson who Monsignor Lefebvre named.

The longest period of his clerical career was spent as the rector of the Society's St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, first at Ridgefield, Connecticut from 1982–1988 and then at Winona, Minnesota from 1988–2003. In the midst of this period Father Richard Williamson was consecrated a bishop, along with Frs Bernard Fellay, Alfonso de Galarreta and Bernard Tissier de Mallerais. The Écône consecrations, dubbed "Operation Survival" by Monsignor Lefebvre, were intended to preserve the survival of the traditional Catholic sacraments as the Church's Crisis goes on. Bishop Williamson would later abide by this mission as co-consecrator of Bishop Rangel in 1991, following the death of Bishop de Castro Mayer of Campos,

Brazil.

While serving as professor in the Maria Co-Redemptrix seminary in La Reza, Argentina, Bishop Williamson expressed views at variance with the 'sacred narrative' of both the Secular Regime and the Conciliar Church about the supposed genocide of Jews during the Second World War during a 2008 interview with a Swedish Television company. These comments were subsequently used to ignite an enormous confected media storm in 2009 when Pope Benedict XVI claimed to lift the alleged "excommunications" of the SSPX bishops that had followed the Écône consecrations.

Virtually confined in London by the SSPX leadership following this episode, Bishop Williamson strongly criticised the attempted reproachment with Rome, spearheaded by the Superior of the Society, Bishop Fellay, as a deviation from Archbishop Lefebvre's essential principle of the Society's engagement with Rome – that there should be no practical agreement without doctrinal agreement regarding the errors circulating during and after Vatican II.

Being unwilling to retract his criticism, Bishop Williamson was expelled from the SSPX in 2012 and took up residence at Broadstairs in Kent beside the sea where St. Augustine of Canterbury landed to bring the Gospel to the Anglo-Saxons. The Bishop himself remained remarkably energetic and apostolically active from this moment until the end of his life. He helped found a network of "independent pockets of Resistance, gathered around the Mass . . . with no structure of false obedience such as served to sink the mainstream Church in the 1960s, and is now sinking the Society of St. Pius X." He travelled around the world frequently, visiting these outposts of 'Resistance' and became a prominent episcopal voice on the internet and social media where his highly popular online sermons and conferences helped attract a new generation of young people to the faith and tradition.

Perhaps his most enduring legacy will be the lineage of bishops that he consecrated, beginning in 2015 with Fr Jean-Michel Faure. The consecrations of Dom Thomas Aquinas Ferreira de Costa (2016) and Fr Gerardo Zendejas (2017) followed. In doing so, the late-Bishop acted to maintain the transmission of traditional sacraments of certain validity for the good of the faithful in doubt. With the Covid pseudo-pandemic of 2020–22 and the consequent worldwide governmental tyranny, an additional motivation was to ensure traditional sacraments for the faithful across the world given the prospect of travel restrictions and persecutions. Thus, Bishop Williamson privately consecrated Fr Giacomo Ballini (2021), Fr Michał Stobnicki (2022) and Fr Paul Morgan (2022). A son of Archbishop Lefebvre he followed his pastoral practice until the end.

A fearless beacon of truth in a darkening modern world, Bishop Williamson was admired and loved by faithful all around the world. He will be greatly missed.

A devoted apostle of Our Lady, Her Rosary and the message of Fatima, let us pray that she interceded for him at the hour of his death.

*Fidelis inveniatur*