

Tens of thousands sign petitions backing or criticising pope

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Tens of thousands of people have signed petitions either backing or criticising Pope Benedict for readmitting ultra-traditionalist Bishop Richard Williamson into the Roman Catholic Church. The supporters are ahead in statistical terms, but this isn't really a representative sample so it's hard to draw any firm conclusions. It does give some idea, though, of how much interest the issue has created.

The Süddeutsche Zeitung in Munich reports today that about 30,000 people, including many theologians, have signed a petition criticising the readmission of ultra-traditionalist Bishop Richard Williamson and urging Pope Benedict to defend the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. The petition (here in English translation) was launched by the lay reform movement Wir sind Kirche (We are Church), which the SZ says will present it to German bishops holding an assembly in Hamburg next week.

Searching on the support side, I found a French-based petition claiming 47,222 signatures so far. It praises Benedict for lifting the excommunications of the four SSPX bishops and adds: "By this brave gesture, You acted (as) the Good Shepherd of the flock entrusted to You by God." The site includes a "letter of encouragement" by Rev. Régis de Cacqueray, head of the large French chapter of the SSPX, and sports a selection of logos from traditionalist websites — mostly not SSPX — supporting the petition.

One other petition that popped up on a google search was on the website of the French Catholic weekly La Vie, this one critical of the move as its title signals: "No negationists in the Church." It doesn't tally its figures but it has 90 intellectuals as initial signatories and over 6,000 comments from readers.

Any other petitions like this out there?

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