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9th July 2026



Pastoral Letter concerning the status the Society of St Pius X

Dear Fathers, Deacons, Religious, Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Warmest greetings of peace in Christ the Lord.

I write to clarify the stated position of the Holy See with regard to the Society of St Pius X.

In recent days, many within the Church have learned about the consecration of four bishops in the Society of St Pius X (the Society) that occurred without a mandate from the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV and against his earnest entreaty for the Society to retrace their steps. As a result, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith has exercised its authority and, on 2 July 2026, declared this to be a schismatic act. It means that the principal consecrator, the assisting bishop who performed the consecrations and the four priests who were consecrated have been excommunicated.

Excommunication is the Church's public declaration that a person's actions have caused a grave rupture in ecclesial communion. It is a medicinal penalty, intended not to condemn but to invite conversion, by prohibiting excommunicated persons from participating in the Church's sacramental life and from exercising ecclesiastical rights until reconciliation is achieved.

This development has understandably caused sorrow, confusion, and concern among many faithful Catholics, particularly those who have found spiritual nourishment, friendship, and community within the Society of St Pius X congregations and ministries.

The purpose of this letter is to be clear about the significance of what has occurred.

The clergy (priests and deacons) of the Society of Pius X are now considered, in canon law, to be in schism with the Catholic church and subject to excommunication. Consequently, confessions which are heard by the Society's priests and marriages at which the priests of the Society preside are invalid. The celebration of Mass by their priests remains valid, though illicit – as it is being celebrated contrary to the law of the Church.

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The responsibility for this fracture in the ecclesial Body of Christ remains firmly with the leadership of the Society of St Pius X. Their act of choosing separation over communion,

has consequences that extend far beyond the leaders. It is a decision that has wounded the unity for which Christ worked and prayed and has created confusion and distress among the faithful.

It is also important to be clear about what this situation does not mean. Many faithful people have now found themselves caught in a conflict they did not create. Some may feel wounded, betrayed, uncertain, or displaced. Others may simply be trying to make sense of complex ecclesial and theological matters.

Each person of faith involved with the Society of St Pius X now faces choices that require prayerful discernment. The Church respects the dignity of conscience and the freedom of every believer. Yet genuine freedom is never free from consequences. Decisions about ecclesial affiliation, worship, ministry, and spiritual oversight carry real implications for one's participation in the life of the Church. Our tangible sign of Catholic unity is through the authority of Pope Leo XIV and through him the communion of twenty-three Eastern Catholic Churches who recognise the Papacy.

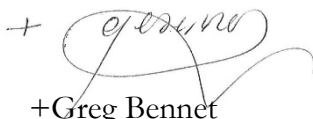
For that reason, I encourage Catholics in good standing to carefully consider their participation in the Society's liturgical ceremonies. Reception of Communion at Society of St Pius X Masses is a visible sign of participating in the break in communion with the successor of St Peter.

I am mindful of separating this issue from participation in the older form of the Mass. There are some in our community who prefer to celebrate Mass in accordance with the 1962 Missal and this form of celebration is in communion with the Pope i.e. Clergy of the Personal Parish of Saint John Henry Newman.

I encourage all who may be affected by this situation to seek counsel, engage in prayer, and consider carefully what it means to remain connected to the wider life of the Catholic Church. The path of communion remains the path to which Christ continually calls us. Be assured that the doors of our parishes are always open to those who seek Christ and I encourage any Catholics who wish to seek counsel to discuss this situation with their Parish Priest.

This is a difficult time for many. Let us pray for all involved: for Pope Leo, for those who have separated themselves from being in communion with the Church, and for all who are seeking peace and healing.

With every grace and blessing

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+Greg Bennet
Bishop of Sale