



July 8, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you. Many of you have heard the deeply concerning news regarding the public and intentional disobedience of the Priestly Society of St. Pius X, known as the SSPX, against the stated will and pleas of the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, in attempting to ordain four bishops in Switzerland on July 1, 2026. This action, carried out in direct defiance of Pope Leo XIV and without his papal mandate, is the ecclesiastical crime of schism, which carries with it automatic excommunication. On July 2, 2026, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, with the Holy Father's approval, issued a decree of excommunication for this crime of schism, which applies to all clergy of the SSPX and to its adherents.

By "adherent," we mean a person who:

- attends SSPX services exclusively because they consider the *Novus Ordo* Mass to be invalid (the *Novus Ordo* being the current ordinary form of the Mass, introduced following the Second Vatican Council),
- is a member of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Pius X, or
- does not participate in any true Catholic parish, formally shares the doctrinal positions of the SSPX, and does not accept the Second Vatican Council as valid.

If anyone persists in thus adhering to the schism of the SSPX, they can be denied Catholic burial. Further, SSPX clerics invalidly attempt to witness marriages or offer the Sacrament of Penance, and all other Sacraments they celebrate are gravely illicit, as of July 2, 2026.

Holy Mother Church is always ready and willing to reconcile the clergy, religious, and laity of the SSPX. As such, she has set down specific procedures for the clergy and laity to follow for reconciliation. Those who have formally joined or who have regularly attended the SSPX and desire to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church are to make a formal act of full adherence to Catholic doctrine and obedience to the Catholic hierarchy, under the jurisdiction of the local Diocesan Bishop. Any lay person to whom this applies should contact the Office of the Bishop of Helena.

For the laity who have attended services of the SSPX for liturgical or spiritual reasons only, and who, while aware of the tensions with the Holy See, did not and do not reject the Magisterium or the authority of the Roman Pontiff, it is sufficient for them to be reconciled by presenting themselves to a priest in full communion and expressing their decision not to attend the SSPX services in the future.

I urge all of you to remain steadfast in communion with our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV, with the bishops in communion with him, and with the whole Church, and to refrain from taking part in celebrations and activities promoted by the SSPX.

Let us pray that the SSPX repent totally of their schismatic activity and return to the one true Roman Catholic Church. Let us all continue to pray for Pope Leo XIV that Almighty God will grant him an abundance of grace to continue to teach, sanctify, and govern us all in accord with God's holy will.

In Christ, I am

+ Austin A. Vetter

Most Rev. Austin A. Vetter
Bishop of Helena

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