



Office of the Bishop

Bismarck Diocese

P.O. Box 1575
Bismarck, ND 58502-1575

Phone: 701-223-1347
Fax: 701-223-3693
www.bismarckdiocese.com

July 9, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

No doubt you have heard the very tragic news regarding the public and intentional disobedience of the Priestly Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). Against the stated will of the Holy Father Pope Leo XIV, they attempted to ordain four men as bishops. This action is an ecclesiastical crime which carries with it automatic excommunication.

Despite the pleas of our Holy Father, they disobeyed and took this schismatic action on July 1, 2026, in Switzerland. On July 2, 2026, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, with the Holy Father's approval issued a decree of excommunication for the crime of schism. This excommunication applies to all clergy of the SSPX, they are schismatics; it applies to all adherents to the SSPX be they religious or laity and they are now schismatics also.

An adherent would be a person who attends SSPX services exclusively because they consider the *Novus Ordo* Mass to be invalid. They are members of the Third Order of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X, do not participate in any true Catholic parish, they formally share the doctrinal positions of the SSPX, and they do not accept the Second Vatican Council as valid. As such, if they persist in their schism, they can be denied Catholic burial. If they attempt to receive the Sacrament of Penance from an SSPX cleric the absolution is invalid; and if they attempt marriage in the presence of an SSPX cleric it is invalid, all as of July 2, 2026. All other sacramental rites administered by the SSPX are gravely illicit.

The decree of excommunication states in part: "The excommunication newly separates the bishops and priests of the Fraternity of St. Pius X from the Church of Rome. As for the lay faithful, those who formally adhere to the Fraternity are to be considered excommunicated." Holy Mother Church is always ready and willing to reconcile the clergy, religious and laity of the SSPX. It has set down specific procedures for the clergy and laity to follow.

The procedure for the laity who have formally joined or who regularly attend the SSPX and who request to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church involves a formal act of full adherence to Catholic doctrine and obedience to the Catholic hierarchy, under the jurisdiction of the local Diocesan Bishop who guarantees the unity of the particular Church. Any lay person to whom this applies should contact the Office of the Bishop in Bismarck.

The procedure for the laity who attended 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, is simpler. For these lay persons it is sufficient for them to address themselves to a priest in full communion with the decision not to attend the SSPX in the future.

One of the explanatory notes attached to the decree of excommunication is addressed to all Roman Catholic lay faithful. "Finally, all the faithful are urged to remain steadfast in communion with the Roman Pontiff, 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 aforementioned Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X."

Again, this is a sad turn of events. Let us all pray daily that the SSPX recant and repent totally and unconditionally of their schismatic activity and that they return to the one true Roman Catholic Church. Let us all continue to pray for Our Holy Father Leo XIV that Almighty God will grant him in abundance the graces to continue to teach, to sanctify and to govern all of us in accord with His holy will.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+1 David D. Kagan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and a stylized 'K'.

The Most Reverend David D. Kagan
Bishop of Bismarck