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09 August 2026 + Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Some of you might be aware of a recent excommunication imposed on the Society of St. Pius X, a religious sect of the Catholic Church that has held to the exclusive celebration of the Mass and the sacraments according to the traditional Latin rites prior to the Second Vatican Council. Some people have confused this group with approved apostolates that celebrate the traditional Latin Mass, including the Mass at Cor Jesu Oratory (Sacred Heart Church) in Edson. I share with you portions of a recent letter prepared by Bishop Battersby to give greater clarity to the situation. The complete letter can be found on our diocesan website, especially for those who may have some direct connection with the Society of St. Pius X.

To the faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse,

On July 1, 2026, bishops of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) consecrated four priests as bishops without a pontifical mandate and against the expressed will of the Holy Father. The Society has long existed in an irregular canonical situation, and its ministers do not exercise legitimate ministry in the Catholic Church. In response, on July 2, 2026, Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a decree declaring that the bishops who performed the consecrations and those who received them had committed schismatic acts and had incurred automatic excommunication. Furthermore, the Dicastery declared that the sacred ministers of the Society are now considered to be in schism and are therefore subject to the excommunication established by canon law. While a strong penalty, it must always be remembered that excommunication is not intended to be permanent but is a charitable call to repentance and reconciliation.

The present matter is not about the celebration of the Mass or the sacraments according to the liturgical books in use prior to the Second Vatican Council. Rather, the primary issue is the unity of the Catholic Church under the primacy of the Holy Father and the College of Bishops in union with him. Through episcopal ordination itself, bishops receive the office of sanctifying, teaching, and governing the People of God. By their nature, however, these responsibilities can only be exercised in communion with the Holy Father and the College of Bishops. By proceeding with these episcopal consecrations without a pontifical mandate, the leadership of the Society committed a schismatic act, thereby leading the Society into schism, which the Church describes as the refusal of submission to the Holy Father. This is a sorrowful moment for the whole Church, and I share that sorrow with you. Whenever there is division in the Church, the entire body of Christ is affected. "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor 12:26).

Furthermore, I would remind the faithful that the Mass celebrated according to the 1962 Missal (The Traditional Latin Mass) is offered in full communion with the Church at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, at Cor Jesu Oratory near Boyd, and at St. Mary's Oratory in Wausau, where the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest offers the traditional Latin Mass and sacraments each day.

Finally, to all who have been affected by these events, I entreat you to seek the counsel of priests of the diocese as you discern the Lord's call to abide in communion with Peter and the Church Christ founded. Successive Roman Pontiffs, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis, and now Leo XIV, have labored for decades toward the full reconciliation of the Society. Those decades of patient labor have now been gravely

wounded by the acts of July 1, but the Church does not stop praying for unity, because Christ Himself prayed for it on the night before He died, that they may all be one (John 17:20-23). Please pray for those who are hurt or confused by these recent events. Pray for the clergy and lay faithful of the Society, that they may seek reconciliation with Christ and His Church. And pray for unity among all Christians, beginning here in our own diocese.

I entrust all those affected by this moment to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and I assure you of my prayers,

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Most Reverend Gerard W. Battersby

Bishop of La Crosse