

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Regarding the Recent Canonical Decrees Concerning the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X (SSPX) and Local Pastoral Directives

Purpose: This document provides an official summary and explanation regarding the recent decree issued by the Holy See concerning the illicit episcopal consecrations performed by the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X (SSPX), and outlines specific pastoral directives issued by Most Rev. Douglas J. Lucia for the territorial boundaries of the Diocese of Syracuse.

1. Context of the Holy See's Decree

In July 2026, leaders of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X (SSPX) proceeded with the episcopal consecration (the ordination of new bishops) of four of their members at their seminary in Écône, Switzerland. This action was taken in direct defiance of an explicit prohibition by the Holy Father.

According to the Code of Canon Law (Canon 1013), a bishop is strictly prohibited from consecrating anyone as a bishop without a definitive papal mandate. To establish an independent hierarchy without papal approval constitutes an objective act of **schism**—the formal withdrawal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff and from communion with the Church (Canon 751). Consequently, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has declared that the principal actors involved (the ordained bishops and the bishops who consecrated them) have incurred the penalty of *latae sententiae* (automatic) excommunication, whose removal is reserved to the Roman Pontiff.

2. History and the Significance of the 1996 Vatican Clarification

A parallel event occurred in 1988 when the founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, similarly consecrated four bishops without a papal mandate. Following that event, the SSPX claimed the penalties were invalid due to a "state of necessity."

On **August 24, 1996**, the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts issued an official canonical declaration clarifying that a "state of necessity" cannot be subjectively manufactured to justify a grave act of disobedience against the Roman Pontiff. The recent 2026 consecrations replicate the exact same canonical infraction, triggering the exact same legal consequences.

3. Formal Adherence to the Schism by the Lay Faithful

The Holy See's decree includes a serious warning regarding the lay faithful. The decree clarifies that **any of the faithful who formally adhere to the schism incur the same penalty of excommunication** under the conditions established in the 1996 Explanatory Note.

"Formal adherence" is defined as a conscious, deliberate choice to reject the authority of the Pope and the local diocesan bishop in favor of the SSPX hierarchy. This includes supporting their schismatic stance, regular and intentional participation in their liturgical life, or promoting their ideological rejection of the Magisterium. Because the SSPX lacks canonical standing, their sacred ministers are suspended and operate in schism; thus, their Masses are illicit, and the Sacrament of Penance administered by them and Marriages assisted by them are **invalid** from this time forward, except in immediate danger of death (Canons 976 and 1752).

4. Specific Directives for the Diocese of Syracuse

The SSPX has established a presence within the geographic boundaries of our diocese, specifically at **Blessed Virgin Mary Church and Priory** and **Mater Dei Academy** in Warners, NY, and at **St. Athanasius Church** in Endwell, NY. This situation directly affects our diocesan church and those who worship in these chapels. Therefore, out of care for souls, the following pastoral mandates are now in effect:

- **Instruction to the Faithful:** The faithful of the Diocese of Syracuse are instructed to avoid participating in the activities of the SSPX. It is forbidden for Roman Catholics in good standing to receive any Sacraments from them, or to associate oneself with SSPX churches, chapels, and schools. To continue to participate in their pastoral or educational activities after learning of this prohibition constitutes "formal adherence."
- **Invitation to Approved Liturgies:** Those who have been assisting at Mass or Sacraments administered by the priests of the SSPX are invited and warmly encouraged to now look for such spiritual counsel and nourishment at the approved sites within the diocese where the traditional Latin Mass is legitimately offered according to the 1962 Missal and Ritual:
 - **The Diocesan Shrine of St. Mary of the Assumption** in Oswego (*directed by the Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest*). stmarysoswego.com
 - **Transfiguration Parish** in Syracuse (*our diocesan traditional Latin Mass parish*). transfigurationsyr.com
 - **Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish** in Verona (*by indult*). olgcc.org
 - **St. Mary's of the Assumption Parish** in Binghamton (*by indult*). stmarypaul.wordpress.com

Restrictions on Property Use: Effective immediately, permission can no longer be granted for the SSPX to use diocesan churches or other parish property for any liturgical rites or gatherings.

5. Pastoral Care and Reconciliation

The ultimate goal of any canonical censure is the amendment, healing, and reconciliation of the offenders. To all clergy and laity who do not wish to be part of this rupture with the See of Peter, Bishop Lucia remains completely open to receiving you and assisting you in remaining within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. The faithful are urged to pray that the members of the SSPX will return to full, visible communion with the Chair of Saint Peter.

Textual composition assisted by AI-enabled drafting technologies; canonically reviewed and authenticated by the Chancery of the Diocese of Syracuse, July 2, 2026.