



## DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



October 31, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the last several weeks I have received several inquiries regarding the ecclesial status of the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) and the advisability of receiving sacraments in SSPX churches, chapels, and from SSPX clerics. The recent frequency and sincerity of inquiries have prompted me to issue this message with succinct and clear answers to commonly asked questions about this complicated matter.

1. Are the bishops and priests of the SSPX in full communion with the Catholic Church?

No. While the SSPX is not in formal schism with the Catholic Church, they are also not in full communion or good standing with the Catholic Church. For example, the SSPX does not accept the authentic teaching of Vatican II including the authentic reforms of the Liturgy, the teaching on religious liberty for Catholics and our separated brethren in the Protestant tradition, and also the repudiation of blame assessed against the Jewish people for the death of Jesus Christ, as all taught by Vatican II and subsequent teachings of the Holy See since Vatican II.

2. Do the bishops and priests exercise legitimate ministry within the Catholic Church?

No. While bishops and priests of the SSPX administer valid sacraments, they do so illicitly. To align with the SSPX knowingly and formally is to align with an illicit and irregular relationship with the Catholic Church, her hierarchy and her teaching. To celebrate a sacrament validly but illicitly foments discord and does not foster communion within the Church. Pope Benedict XVI summed this up beautifully in 2009,

“As long as the Society of Saint Pius X does not have canonical status within the Church, its ministers do not exercise legitimate ministries in the Church...In order to make this clear once again: until the doctrinal questions are clarified, the Society has no canonical status in the Church, and its ministers---even though they have been freed of the ecclesiastical penalty of excommunication---do not legitimately exercise any ministry in the Church.”

3. Since the sacraments celebrated by SSPX bishops and priests are valid, why can't a Catholic receive them?

For the reasons listed above, if a Catholic is able to receive the sacraments at a Catholic church from clerics in good standing, then there is no reason to attend and receive sacraments at an SSPX church or chapel illicitly from a priest without faculties and not in full communion with the Catholic Church. One notable exception would be to receive the

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Sacraments of Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and Viaticum in danger of death if no other priest in good standing is readily available. There is no acceptable reason in the Diocese of Fort Worth, for a Catholic to seek out an SSPX Mass or sacraments because of the proximity and availability of so many churches within the Diocese of Fort Worth. Even if a Catholic were to express a perceived spiritual advantage for the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass and other sacraments administered in accord with the 1962 Missal, a Catholic is able to do so through the ministry of the priests of the Fraternity of Saint Peter (FSSP) at Saint Benedict Catholic Church in Fort Worth. There is no need, especially curiosity, to attend an SSPX Mass at a chapel or church within the territory of the Fort Worth Diocese.

In conclusion, I ask you to renew with me through fervent prayer the authentic communion enjoyed by us together with our Holy Father and the members of all those local churches and their bishops who enjoy full communion with him in his office as the Vicar of Christ and the Bishop of Rome. Let us call to mind the words of Saint Luke recorded in the Acts of the Apostles which describe the full communion enjoyed by the Church, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Let us pray that all of us in the Diocese of Fort Worth might align ourselves with this authentic and sound teaching as we pray for the reunion of all Christians. With prayers and every good wish for you, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*+ Michael F. Olson*

+Michael F. Olson, STD, MA  
Bishop of Fort Worth