



STATEMENT FROM THE BISHOP about 'The Society of St. Pius X' (SSPX)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with sorrow and a heavy heart that I write to you today. On 1st July, against the express directive of the Holy Father, and so without a papal mandate, four priests of the Society of St. Pius X, the SSPX, were ordained bishops at Écône in Switzerland. By this defiant act, the two consecrating bishops and the four new bishops incurred excommunication *latae sententiae*, the most serious penalty of all. The SSPX and its members reject teachings of the Second Vatican Council and many of the developments since. With this ordination, they have formally broken away from the Church. Please pray for them and for all involved. In response, the Vatican has declared the ordinations a 'schismatic act.' Sadly, this means that all the bishops and priests who belong to the SSPX and the laypeople who exclusively attend their services are now excommunicated. The Masses they offer are illicit. Attendance at them does not fulfil the Sunday obligation. The sacraments they celebrate - of marriage and confession - are invalid.

As a Bishop, I cannot help but feel the pain of this, not least because the SSPX has centres within the Diocese of Portsmouth, including a well-known school. I must now urge all Catholics not to take part in their activities and boldly to reaffirm their unity with the Pope and with the bishops in communion with him.

At the same time, I appeal to the priests and laity of the SSPX, urging them to full communion with the Catholic Church. There is a canonical process for this: please ask Bishop's Office. Many Catholics, especially among the young, feel drawn towards the pre-conciliar liturgy and its spirituality. In future, rather than attend illicit celebrations, I invite them to participate in the *Vetus Ordo* Masses already offered in the Diocese in Bournemouth, Southampton, Portsmouth and Reading.

In conclusion, please pray for unity in the Church, for the Holy Father, and for the members of the SSPX that they may repent and return to full communion.

In Corde Iesu,

+Philip

Bishop of Portsmouth

Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 16th July 2026