A letter from Archbishop Shawn McKnight regarding the Holy See's announcement concerning the Society of Saint Pius X.

I have received the announcement from the Holy See regarding the episcopal consecrations carried out by bishops of the Society of Saint Pius X without the required pontifical mandate and subsequent excommunication. This action is a source of profound sorrow for the whole Church because it wounds the visible unity that Christ desires for his body.

The Catholic Church teaches that bishops exercise their ministry in communion with the Successor of Saint Peter and the College of Bishops. Because of the unique role entrusted by Christ to Saint Peter and his successors in safeguarding the unity of the Church, the consecration of bishops without authorization from the Roman Pontiff constitutes a grave offense against ecclesial communion and carries the canonical consequences established by the law of the Church (cf. Can. 1387).

This development is particularly sorrowful because the Holy See has, for many years, sought reconciliation and full communion with the Society of Saint Pius X. Pope Benedict XVI lifted the excommunications previously incurred by their bishops. Pope Francis subsequently granted to the priests of the Society the universal faculty to validly hear confessions. He also authorized local diocesan bishops to grant the priests of the Society faculties to assist at marriages, faculties that Archbishop Emeritus Naumann and I have granted.

Successive Roman Pontiffs have demonstrated patience, generosity, and a sincere desire to heal divisions within the Church. The Holy Father himself, in his letter on June 29, 2026, has recognized the sincere devotion to Catholic tradition, priestly formation, and missionary zeal found among the many members of the Society. Precisely because these are genuine gifts, the Church has continued to hope that they will flourish within full ecclesial communion. The actions taken by the Society's leadership stand in contrast to our repeated efforts at reconciliation.

At the same time, the Church never ceases to pray and work for unity. The canonical penalties, specifically excommunication, announced by the Holy See are not intended as expressions of hostility or rejection, but as medicinal measures that reflect the seriousness of the offense and are ordered toward repentance, healing, and the eventual restoration of communion.

I wish especially to address those members of the faithful who have attended missions or apostolates associated with the Society of Saint Pius X. Many have been Catholics who sincerely desire to worship God, love the Church, and remain faithful to the Catholic tradition as they understood it. They should know that they are loved by the Church and remain the object of our prayers for unity.

Nevertheless, the faithful should be aware that, as the Holy See has explained, the ministry exercised by the Society is not legitimate in the life of the Church: the sacraments celebrated by its ministers are illicit, and the sacraments of Penance and Matrimony administered by them are now invalid. Because participation in the worship and apostolic life of a schismatic community objectively expresses and fosters separation from the Church's communion, Catholics may not knowingly take part in the Society's liturgical celebrations, apostolates, or other activities. Such participation is not merely discouraged but is gravely contrary to the unity of the Church and, when undertaken with full knowledge and deliberate consent, is sinful.

Clergy and laity alike are further admonished not to adhere to the Society's schism, lest they incur the penalty of excommunication *latae sententiae*. We therefore encourage all who have participated in the Society's apostolates to remain united to the Holy Father and to seek the guidance of our priests regarding any questions that may arise from this unfortunate situation, especially if they have concerns about the validity of sacraments they may have received.

Fidelity to Sacred Tradition is never opposed to fidelity to the Successor of Peter. Rather, both are gifts entrusted by Christ to his Church and serve together to safeguard the deposit of faith and promote the salvation of souls. The Church's living Tradition is preserved by remaining close to the Successor of Peter, by adhering to the apostolic faith handed down through the centuries and safeguarded within the communion of the Church.

We continue to pray that those who have taken this step may one day be restored to full communion. The Church's doors remain open, and our hope remains that the unity for which Christ prayed may one day be fully realized. At this sorrowful moment, let us pray that the seamless garment of Christ, wounded by division, may once again be visibly restored.