



14 July 2026

To the People of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

Re: Pastoral Letter regarding the Society of St. Pius X

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with sadness that I write to you about the fact that the leadership of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) has not responded to Pope Leo XIV's plea for the preservation of unity within the Church and has instead carried out the schismatic act of ordaining bishops without a pontifical mandate. The unity of the Church, for which Christ prayed, is gravely harmed by this action. As Bishop, I am especially concerned for Catholics who, to this point, have been attached to the SSPX.

On July 2, 2026, Victor M. Cardinal Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a decree clarifying that those who participated in the ordination of the SSPX bishops without the pontifical mandate have committed the crime of schism. An explanatory note issued by the Dicastery on the same date clarifies that all sacred ministers (bishops, priests, and deacons) belonging to the Society of St. Pius X must be considered schismatic. Lay faithful who formally adhere to the SSPX are also to be considered schismatic.

Any sacraments celebrated by the priests of the SSPX are illicit. This means that the celebrations are not permitted by the law of the Church, and that the cleric who offers the Sacrament commits the canonical and moral fault of disobedience in each instance. The Masses these priests celebrate make the Sacrament of Unity into an occasion of division within the Church, and so they should be firmly rejected and avoided by all the Catholic faithful.

I invite those in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle who are in any way attached to the SSPX to separate themselves from this schismatic sect, repent where necessary, and seek (or hold fast to) union with the Ministry of Peter in the person of the Bishop of Rome — Pope Leo XIV. With solicitude and charity, the Church remains open to receiving our brothers and sisters who, until now, have been members or associates of the SSPX. Priest members of the Society should leave the SSPX and seek reconciliation with the Church. The Lay faithful

should practice their Catholic faith in a parish that maintains full communion with the Catholic Church by remaining united with me and our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV.

I assure those who have been attached to the SSPX of my prayer for their good and for the restoration of unity in the Church. I ask all faithful Catholics to pray for restored unity in the Church. The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has urged bishops to adopt an attitude of listening and cordial availability towards those who request this unity.

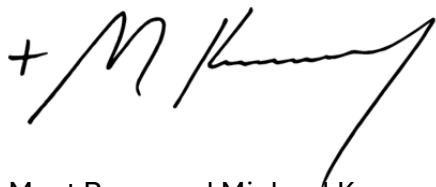
I welcome all members of the SSPX who wish to return to full communion with the Church. I encourage them to take this step and I pray for it. I urge all clergy and people of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle to, if the opportunity arises, engage in an open and friendly manner with those faithful of the SSPX so as to achieve the unity in the Church for which Christ prayed. Those who wish to return to full communion are asked to first contact their local Catholic Parish and have a discussion with a priest in communion with the Holy Father.

It is worth noting that simply attending a SSPX Mass does not necessarily indicate full adherence to the Society. Some simply prefer the older form of the Mass in Latin. The Church asks such people to come to Mass celebrated by a priest in full communion with the Holy Father.

I remind all the faithful that for those who wish to be Sacramentally and liturgically cared for with the use of the 1962 Missal, the Diocese has entered into a relationship with the Fraternity of St. Peter- District of Oceania. This Community gathers for Mass at St. John's Oratory in Maitland every Sunday Morning at 9.30am and celebrates Mass in accordance with the 1962 Missal and is in full communion with the Vicar of Christ – Pope Leo XIV.

Please beg the intercession of Pope St. Pius X, that his name may always give glory to God and never be a sign of division in the Eucharistic community that he cherished. Please ask for Mary, Mother of God and of the Church, to intercede for this unity which Her Son so ardently desired.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by stylized initials and a surname, likely representing Michael Kennedy.

Most Reverend Michael Kennedy
Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

+MK/kc