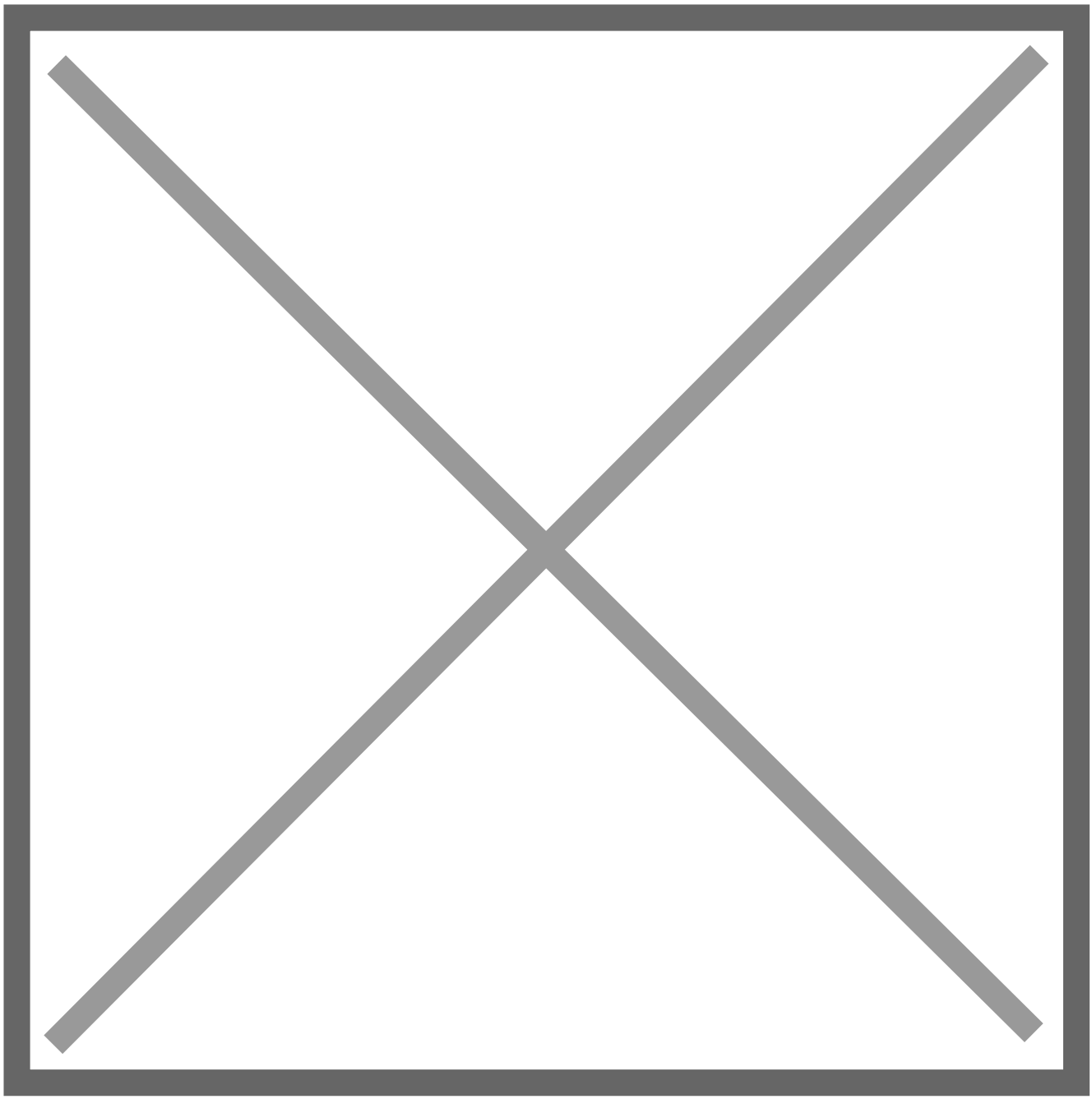
News



Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Fr. Davide Pagliarani, superior general of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X, are pictured in a combination photo. In a statement released June 24, 2026, SSPX issued an open letter to Pope Leo XIV and the College of Cardinals asserting its adherence to Catholic tradition while proceeding with plans to consecrate four new bishops without a papal mandate. (OSV News/CNS/Pablo Esparza/KNA via CPP/Jean-Matthieu Gautier)

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The traditionalist Society of St. Pius X issued an open letter to Pope Leo XIV and the College of Cardinals asserting its adherence to Catholic tradition while proceeding with plans to consecrate four new bishops without a papal mandate.

In a statement that included a 28-page "Profession of Faith" published June 24, the traditionalist society, commonly known as SSPX, said the Catholic Church is facing pressures from within and without that "which push her in every possible direction, except — it seems to us — the right one."

"It is not for the Society of Saint Pius X to indicate the path to follow, but rather for the two-thousand-year Tradition of the Church, faithfully guarded and transmitted by the Apostolic See through the centuries, and which many now regard, in practice, as an outdated reality, subject to perpetual development," the society said.

The letter was signed by several leaders of the movement, including Fr. Davide Pagliarani, superior general of the SSPX, and Bishop Bernard Fellay, his predecessor and the society's first counselor general.

Fellay was one of four bishops consecrated without a papal mandate by the society’s founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, in 1988. The ordination prompted St. John Paul II to excommunicate Lefebvre (1905-1991) and the bishops. The excommunication

of the bishops was lifted by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009.

In February, Pagliarani announced the society would proceed with the consecration of new bishops July 1, following a breakdown in communication with the Vatican after requests for an audience with Leo went unanswered.

Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, offered to continue dialogue with the SSPX on the condition that the society suspend its decision to consecrate new bishops.

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After the SSPX chose not to accept, Fernandez said the consecration of bishops without a papal mandate would be considered "a schismatic act" and would incur excommunication.

Speaking to journalists outside the papal summer residence at Castel Gandolfo June 16, Leo said that while he considered making a final appeal to them to maintain communion with the Church, the decision to proceed "is their choice."

"Certainly, division among Christians is always a painful point. But they refuse to accept certain fundamental elements of the Church, starting with several points from the Second Vatican Council," the pope said. "If they make that choice, I am sorry, but we must move forward."

The SSPX said it believed that faith, "contained in Tradition and taught by the constant Magisterium," is the foundation of unity in the Church and the means of "establishing union and communion among the members of the Mystical Body of Christ."

"We are persuaded that, in the unstable and extremely perilous context that now confronts us, the finest contribution one can offer to the universal Church is that of a sincere and integral profession of Catholic Faith," the society said,

Nevertheless, the traditionalist society expressed its hope that the "Profession of Faith" would one day serve "as a basis for an honest discussion with the Holy See, in a spirit of peace, brotherhood, and charity."

In the 28-page declaration, the society said it embraced "the entire truth of the Catholic Faith," while denouncing so-called "errors" that obscured doctrine, disfigured liturgy and disintegrated "Christian social order, gravely harming the salvation of souls."

Among the "modern errors" the society noted was ecumenism, which it said was predicated on the "idea that the Holy Ghost would not refuse to use separated communities as means of salvation."

The SSPX also rejected "the idea that non-Christian religions might reflect a ray of truth which illumines every man, or might be legitimate paths by which God positively leads men to salvation."

According to the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio ("The restoration of unity"), while the means of salvation rest upon the Catholic Church, separated churches and communities are not "deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation."

Furthermore, the Vatican II Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate ("In Our Time"), states the Catholic Church does not reject what is true and holy in non-Christian religions, which often "reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men."

In its "Profession of Faith," the traditionalist society also rejected post-conciliar liturgical fullreforms, which it believed departed "considerably from the traditional liturgy," and "brought Catholic liturgical expression closer to Protestant conceptions."

Making a slight against synodality, which Leo has said was "intrinsic to the life of the Church," the SSPX said it rejected "synodalist conceptions" that would transform the Catholic Church "into a consultative, parliamentary, or democratic structure" and subject to fluctuating opinion or outside pressure.

The society also rejected the concept of religious freedom, which, according to the Vatican II declaration Dignitatis Humanae ("Of the Dignity of the Human Person"), is regarded as a fundamental right.

Instead, the SSPX argued that heads of state have a "right and duty" to favor the Catholic Church and oppose other religions and "false forms of worship."