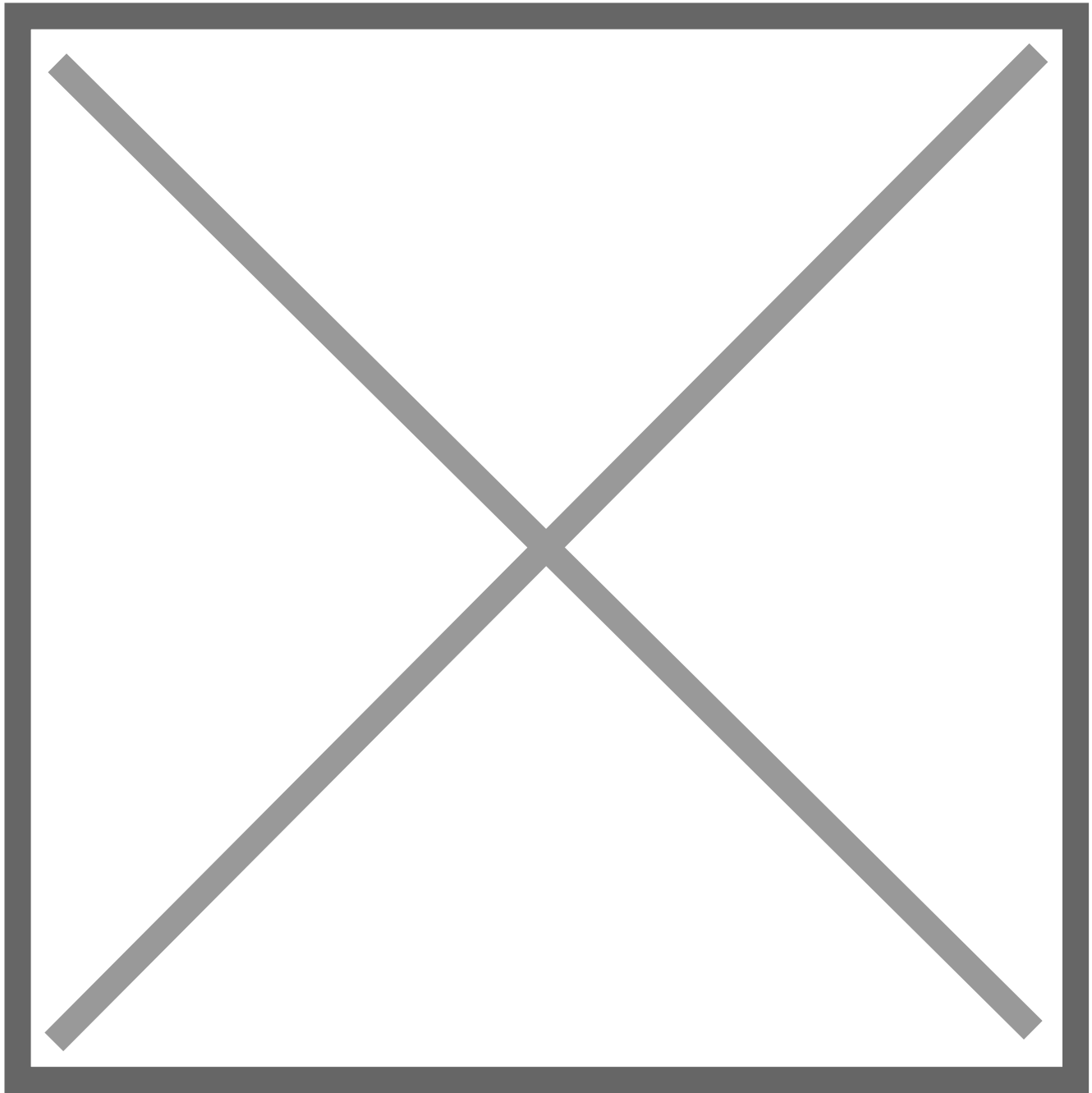


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U.S. Fr. Michael Goldade bows with the Gospels on his shoulders as Bishop Alfonso de Galarreta lays his hands on his head during an episcopal ordination without papal approval for the Society of St. Pius X in Écône, Switzerland, July 1, 2026. The schismatic act of conferring episcopal consecration upon four priests without pontifical mandate and against the will of the pope incurred automatic excommunication for the prelates directly involved. (CNS/Courtesy of the Society of St. Pius X)

Frederick Nzwili

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NAIROBI, Kenya — July 14, 2026

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As African bishops continue to back Pope Leo XIV over the excommunication of the Society of St. Pius X, known as SSPX, the traditionalist group in Kenya rejected the schismatic tag as it moved to assure followers of its Roman Catholic identity.

Fr. Pierre Champroux, the priest in charge of the SSPX's Holy Cross Parish in Nairobi, claimed in a July 12 release the main mission of the society was to provide the people with "sound doctrine" and "all the sacraments received from Our Lord Jesus Christ."

The society, also known as Lefebvrists after their founder, French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, operates in Kenya running an international school, a congregation of women religious and has some local priests operating out of Nairobi.

On July 2, the Vatican declared SSPX to be "in schism" after the traditionalist group consecrated four bishops without the papal mandate, marking the most serious rupture in the Church since Archbishop Lefebvre's unauthorized episcopal consecrations in 1988. In a bombshell move, the Vatican also declared sacraments of penance and marriage invalid if they proceeded within the society.

"We are not a parallel church. We remain fully Catholic and attached to the See of Peter and to his successor, Pope Leo XIV," Champroux said in his statement.

"The society of Saint Pius X is a Catholic priestly society ... for the preservation and transmission of the traditional Faith, the Catholic priesthood and the immemorial Roman Rite of the Holy Mass," he said.

The priest was responding to the July 9 pastoral letter of Archbishop Philip Anyolo of Nairobi, which urged Kenyan Catholics to remain in communion with the pope and shun the SSPX and its activities. The archbishop also banned priests from celebrating Mass with SSPX clergy or inviting them to minister in the archdiocese's parishes and institutions.

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"It must be clearly stated, however, that the love for the sacred liturgy, reverence for tradition or attachment to the Latin Mass is not in itself schismatic," said Anyolo, terming the SSPX subject an important matter touching on the unity of the church, the integrity of Catholic communion and the spiritual welfare of the faithful.

"The grave problem arises where there is refusal of full communion with the Roman Pontiff and the bishops in communion with him, rejection in practice of the authority of the Pope, and the establishment of a parallel ecclesial life outside the canonical communion of the Catholic church," said the archbishop.

The SSPX has an established presence in Nairobi's Lovington area and is publicly known as Holy Cross Catholic Church or Holy Cross Church and Priory.

"The faithful must therefore be properly informed so that they are not misled by the use of the name Catholic or by external forms of Catholic worship," said Anyolo.

SSPX adheres to the pre-Vatican II traditions, including the exclusive celebration of Latin Mass. The 1962-1965 council introduced changes in liturgy, including the use of vernacular languages instead of Latin and allowed priests to face the congregation. It also allowed ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, which the group opposes.

On July 1, 1988, Lefebvre was excommunicated after he consecrated bishops without the Vatican's authority. In 2026, 38 years later, in what was seen as history repeating itself, the society consecrated four new bishops without the papal mandate, including one from the United States, despite appeals from Pope Leo XIV

to keep communion with the pope and Catholic Church.

On July 2, the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, in a decree announced the excommunication of the bishops directly involved in the consecrations. The decree further stated that the ministers of the society were in schism and were subject to excommunication. Lay Catholics who would continue to adhere to the society will be considered excommunicated.

"The canonical consequences are grave. Excommunication wounds communion with the Church and excludes the person from full participation in the sacramental and ecclesial life of the Church until reconciliation is obtained according to the norms of the Church," said Anyolo.

At the same time, he urged priests who may want to change from SSPX to report to the archbishop for re-integration and Christians to report to their parish priests if they want to re-integrate with the Catholic Church.

But Champroux said the society held and maintained that "these penalties were objectively unjust and invalid."

"They do not correspond to the true state of necessity in which the Church finds herself today, nor do they invalidate the sacraments we administer according to the traditional rites," said the priest, adding the consecrations of July 1 were performed out of "grave duty" for the "continuation of the traditional priesthood amid the ongoing crisis."

"We do not accept the label of schism. We do not have any spirit of bitterness or rebellion," the SSPX priest said, adding the society desired to "remain faithful to Our Lord Jesus Christ and his only Church, to His Blessed Mother, to the perennial Magisterium and to the Faith of all time."

"We have not separated ourselves from the Roman Catholic Church," claimed Champroux.

The archbishop of Nairobi asked priests, catechists and leaders of Church movements "to help the faithful understand this matter calmly and accurately."