



Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Office of the Bishop

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For the last couple of years, a liturgy in Latin has been offered at the Grimaldi Building in Miramar Beach, Florida sponsored by the Society of St. Pius X. The sign in front of the building states "Saint Anthony Mary Claret – Roman Catholic Chapel – Traditional Latin Mass." With this statement I wish to clarify the status of the Society of St. Pius X.

The Society of St. Pius X was founded in 1970 by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre officially breaking communion with the Catholic Church. Consequently, members of this Society are validly ordained, but have received the sacramental illicitly. Therefore, they have been forbidden by the Holy Father from exercising their ministry due to doctrinal differences with the Roman Catholic Church. Because of these doctrinal differences they are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

In a letter from Pope Benedict XVI in March of 2009, the Holy Father said: "Once again, until the doctrinal questions are clarified, the Society has no canonical status in the Church, and its ministers ---even though they have been freed of the ecclesiastical penalty -- do not legitimately exercise any ministry in the Church." Unfortunately, although many attempts have been made to reconcile the Society with the Church, this reconciliation has yet to be achieved. Recently, our Holy Father Pope Francis has shown great mercy in allowing Catholics to receive the Sacraments of Marriage and Reconciliation with SSPX priests under certain circumstances. At the same time, a Catholic may not receive or celebrate the Sacrament of the Eucharist in a SSPX church under ordinary circumstances. Only in cases of emergency or when it is not possible for a Catholic to celebrate Mass in a Catholic Church (*i.e., one that is recognized as such by the Ordinary/Bishop of the diocese*) may they do so with the SSPX. As there are several Catholic parishes in the same area as the chapel this last condition would not apply.

According to Canon 844 paragraph 1 of the Code of Canon Law, "Catholic ministers administer the sacraments licitly to Catholic members of the Christian faithful alone, who likewise receive them licitly from Catholic ministers alone..." Because the Society of St. Pius X and its members do not enjoy any canonical status or recognition in the Church, then no conscientious Roman Catholic should receive Holy Communion at a Mass celebrated by a member of the Society. Furthermore, attendance at it does not fulfill one's obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation.

At the present time there is a traditional Latin Mass offered every Sunday in Pensacola at 10:30am at St. Stephen Catholic Church/Our Lady of Fatima Diocesan Shrine. There are additional opportunities to participate in a Latin Mass at St. Thomas More Parish in Pensacola and at St. Louis Catholic Church in Tallahassee. You will find more information on our Diocesan website.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend William A. Wack, CSC
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee