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July 3, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I regret that the leadership of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) has not responded to the plea of Pope Leo XIV for the preservation of unity within the Church and have 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. 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.

In the Diocese of Covington, the priests of the SSPX operate Our Lady of the Assumption Church & Priory, Assumption Academy, and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy, all in Walton, Kentucky. 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 the cleric offering the Sacrament commits the canonical and moral fault of disobedience in each instance. The Masses these priests celebrate are an abuse of the Eucharist, insofar as they 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.**

The Sacraments of Penance and Marriage carried out by these schismatic ministers are invalid. Sacraments are invalid when one or more essential elements are lacking, so that the attempted sacrament does not impart the associated grace and does not sanctify the Christian person.

Because Assumption Academy and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy are associated with the SSPX, Catholic parents should not enroll their children in these schools. To do so is to entrust the religious formation of children to those who participate in schism against the Roman Catholic Church. The Diocesan Catholic Schools Office will be happy to assist the parents of these students with appropriate placement in a local Catholic School.

I invite those in the Diocese of Covington 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 Roman Catholic 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.

Finally, I want to emphasize that **St. Pius X Parish in Edgewood is a Catholic parish of the Diocese of Covington** where the full sacramental life of the Church is authorized and respectfully celebrated. St. Pius X Parish in Edgewood is **not** associated with the SSPX.

I pledge to pray for the bishops and priests of the SSPX and for their faithful return to regular order in the Catholic Church. I also assure the lay faithful 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 and order in the Church and in our Diocese. 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.

Together with the priests of the Diocese, I invite all Catholics who have been attending the SSPX liturgy to practice their faith in one of the parishes, missions, or chapels of the Diocese. You will find the Catholic Mass and the sacramental life celebrated faithfully and respectfully throughout the Diocese of Covington. Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Park Hills, where the older usage is authorized and celebrated, may be of particular interest to Catholics who have been attached to the SSPX.

May Christ protect and restore the unity of his Church! Pope St. Pius X, pray for us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. John C. Iffert
Bishop of Covington

To read the Decree and Explanatory Note in English visit
Vatican News at vaticannews.va and search for "decree."
For related articles see pages 9, 10 and 11.

Parish Kitchen breaks ground on multipurpose space, prayer room, expanded facilities

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

On an overcast summer morning, June 25, employees and volunteers of Catholic Charities and its ministry, Parish Kitchen, gathered on the Parish Kitchen campus, Covington, to celebrate the groundbreaking for a new multipurpose building and prayer room to be built onto the Parish Kitchen campus.

The project, which includes space for Parish Kitchen's Mobile Food Pantry — a truck that brings necessary food items to the Diocese of Covington's six southernmost counties — will also feature a quiet prayer room, complete with a donated Stations of the Cross and additional space for storage. Also occupying the new space, in part, will be aspects of the Pickett's Corner ministry, dedicated to providing working bicycles to those in need of a reliable, affordable and healthy transportation option.

Construction on the space will begin officially on July 13, said Deacon Barry Henry, who was hired as Catholic Charities' Director of Community Ministries and Outreach ahead of the project.

"We're really excited about getting this project started," Deacon Henry said, looking forward to having more space for mobile food pantry and Pickett's Corner facilities, and especially the prayer room, which will serve as a quiet place for guests and volunteers to connect and reflect. "I think that it will be a very big blessing."

Chris Goddard, executive director, said that the idea for the project originated with Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys — who wanted to bring Parish Kitchen's mission past the three northern counties of the diocese. This began with the mobile food pantry — but as needs grew, so did the necessity for space and facilities to support the growing ministry.

The ministry serves as "not only a potential way to be the hands and feet of Christ," Mr. Goddard said, "but then also to minister to the spiritual needs of our volunteers."

Parish Kitchen, to bring the project to life, is working with their construction partner, Century Construction, as well as architect Craig Chamberlain — who additionally works at the Parish Kitchen as weekend staff, a chance opportunity which Mr. Goddard described as a "gift from God."

"The whole campus there is intended to live out the great commission of spreading the good news," said Mr. Goddard, with Parish Kitchen serving through actions, words and evangelization — these additions underway, especially the added prayer room, support this mission.



(above, left) Chris Goddard, executive director, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington, addresses those gathered for the June 25 groundbreaking ceremony of Parish Kitchen's new multipurpose building and prayer room.

(above, right) Bishop John Iffert, blessing the grounds, walks in front of the Catholic Charities Mobile Food Pantry, which continues Parish Kitchen's mission of feeding the hungry to six southern counties of the Diocese of Covington.

(left) Contributors to the Parish Kitchen construction project use shovels to "break ground" — officially marking the project's beginning.

FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky awards grants to six diocesan schools, funding inclusive education

Staff report

The FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky — a non-profit dedicated to Catholic education for children of all abilities — has announced the awarding of \$154,600 in grants to six Catholic schools throughout the Diocese of Covington, helping expand inclusive educational opportunities for students with diverse learning needs. The grants represent a significant investment in creating school environments where every child is welcomed, supported and empowered to succeed academically, socially and spiritually.

"This is truly a testament to the energy, effort, heart and soul that our schools and educators are putting into inclusive education," said Missy Hail, president of the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky. "We are inspired by their dedication and honored to partner with them in this important work. These grants help ensure that more students can experience the life-changing benefits of a Catholic education where they know they belong."

For the 2026-2027 school year, grant recipients through the FIRE Foundation include: St. Therese School, Southgate; St. Henry Catholic School, Erlanger; Mary, Queen of Heaven School, Erlanger; St. Joseph School,

Crescent Springs; St. Pius X School, Edgewood and St. Agnes School, Ft. Wright.

The funding provided will support a variety of inclusion-focused initiatives, including full-time special educators, paraprofessional staff, contracted speech and language therapy services, a reading specialist, special education classroom resources and supplies and seating and equipment, such as a chair lift, to further accessibility in the grant-receiving schools.

"These grants are helping schools build sustainable programs that directly impact students, teachers, and families," Mrs. Hail added. "Together, we are creating a culture of belonging in our Catholic schools where every student is valued and given the opportunity to thrive."

Through its grant-making efforts, the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky continues to champion inclusive Catholic education by providing funding, advocacy and resources that help schools welcome and educate students of all abilities. The Foundation's mission is rooted in the "belief that inclusive education benefits everyone. Students with disabilities receive meaningful educational



opportunities, while their peers develop empathy, leadership and a deeper appreciation for diversity. Schools become stronger, families feel supported and entire communities are enriched."

For more information about the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky or to support its mission of inclusive Catholic education, visit www.firefoundationnky.org.

Foundation Commission’s governance committee reflects on the value of a Diocesan Foundation ahead of final phase

Lindberg photos

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The Diocese of Covington’s new strategic planning process is well underway, as the commissions and their sub-committees continue to meet and discuss the future of the Diocese. Discerning together, with the Holy Spirit, how best to serve the needs of diocesan schools, the community of Catholic Charities and the future of charitable giving in the Diocese through 2030 and beyond. Soon, the committee chairs will meet with Bishop John Iffert to update him on progress made and discuss with him possible next steps for their respective commissions.

Each commission has at least three sub-committees with Catholic Charities and Schools Commission having four. The committees of each commission are unique and were formed to serve specific functions within the structure of that commission. However, each has a governance sub-committee whose role is to evaluate the systems and structures currently in place for their commissions organization and to determine the best system of governance moving forward.

John Garvey III, Governance sub-committee co-chair for the Foundation Commission, shared that the strategic planning process, for them, has been one of education and understanding, immersing themselves in the culture and language of charitable giving through a Diocesan Foundation.

“It’s been a big learning process,” he said. Specifically, on “the needs of the Diocese as a whole, and the opportunity to explore the concept of a foundation, and how that could be of great service to many aspects of diocesan life and parish life, and the schools.”

“It’s been very fun,” said Mr. Garvey, “to dream big and contemplate whether a foundation could bring value to serving God’s people.”

To help the sub-committee discern the potential value of a foundation, the Foundation Commission has met with Archbishop Shelton Fabre of Louisville, school principals from the Diocese of Cleveland, and the development staff of



John Garvey, who co-chairs the governance sub-committee, leads a meeting of the committee, where together they determine the potential structure of a Diocesan foundation and it would best serve the people of the Diocese of Covington.

Committee members take the time to meet and discuss the needs of the Diocese, and how a Foundation might satisfy those needs.

the Christ Hospital Foundation. Throughout these meetings, the governance sub-committee has explored the models of different foundations so that they can make an educated recommendation to Bishop Iffert.

“The question, or the common refrain is, ... ‘What does this really look like? How does it change lives? How does it improve parish life, improve education, improve charitable services, improve the functioning of the Curia.’ We’re looking for best practices and success stories,” said Mr. Garvey.

For Mr. Garvey, the possibility of a foundation surpasses the dollars and cents which could be raised, it exceeds the material goods which a foundation might steward. It is rather a foundation rooted in service to the Diocese and to the people, focused on the mission of the Diocese.

“Our Diocese, hands down, has everything it needs to get people into Heaven, that’s my belief in this foundation. My goal, my hope, is that collective wisdom to move forward with one (a foundation). I have an unshakable belief that a foundation in Covington would absolutely advance that goal.”



Bailey photo

Let freedom ring — 250 years and counting

In collaboration with the Kentucky Historical Society, Diocese of Covington churches were asked to ring their bells, July 8, at noon to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the first ring of the Liberty Bell. The bell outside of St. John Mission Church, Dividing Ridge, predates the construction of the church, and until it found its home in the original church steeple, it stayed safely in the home of one church founder. Construction of the church was financed and completed by eight immigrant families, and upon completion the bell was moved to the steeple so all could hear its ring. Upon concerns of structural integrity in the 1970s the bell was moved to its current location outside of the church. The bell was rung, July 8, in commemoration of the Liberty Bell and the principles for which it continues to stand.

Official Assignment

Effective July 14, 2026

Rev. Allan R. Frederick

To: Parochial Vicar, St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger

From: Retirement

Assigned by
the Most Rev. John C. Iffert
Bishop of Covington

Jamie N. Schroeder

Jamie N. Schroeder
Chancellor



**Bishop's
Schedule**

July 16–Aug. 5
AMECEA Conference, Nairobi
and Madagascar



Calling all Reds fans — join Bishop John Iffert and Archbishop Robert Casey in cheering on the Cincinnati Reds at Catholic Family Night, Sept. 5. Grab your discounted tickets early to participate in the pre-game field parade. To buy tickets scan the QR code.

Associates of the Congregation of Divine Providence celebrate golden jubilee and new members

Keener photos

Laura Keener
Editor

On the 50th anniversary of the Associates program of the Congregation of Divine Providence, Melbourne, Bishop John Iffert celebrated Mass, June 28, in the chapel at Holy Family Home.

The Mass was joyful and filled to near capacity with both Sisters of Divine Providence and many of the over 80 Associates. During Mass, two women, Jerri Abrams of Newport, Ky, and Rachel Alonzo of New Mexico, were received as new Associates.

In his homily, reflecting on the 50th anniversary of the Associates program, Bishop Iffert connected the milestone to the wider witness of consecrated life and God's abundant love. Consecrated life, he said, gives "witness to the universality of God's love" and to the way God "shares his love prodigiously."

Drawing on the image of a garden, Bishop Iffert noted that while people carefully place seed in prepared soil, "that's not the way God sows seed," adding that "the whole world is his garden."

"God shares his love prodigiously, right, with a fecundity and an amazement that just takes hold of the world," Bishop Iffert said.

For the associates marking this jubilee, Bishop Iffert described their commitment as a decision "to be associated with that" generous love and to share in it through their own vocations. He emphasized that this love reaches beyond family, community and national boundaries, calling believers "to love everyone in a crazy, prodigious way" and "to share that with the world" as fully as they are able.

Founded in 1776, the Associate program invites women and men, including priests, to grow deeper in their spiritual life as associate members of the Congregation of Divine Providence.

Two women shared their story of a call that came in very different ways but led to the same place — a deeper life with God, the sisters and one another.

Mary Helen Bertolini, an associate since the early years of the program, said her path began long before she made her commitment. She had once been in the convent with the Sisters of Divine Providence for 10 years. When she left, she said, the way things were then made the break feel final. "It was like, okay, you left, the doors closed," she recalled.

Then Divine Providence Sister Mary Catherine Hunt invited former members back for a reunion day. For Ms. Bertolini, it was a moment of grace.

"You could feel the healing in the air," she said. "The comfort, the welcome."

After that, she became more connected with the sisters again. When the associate program became part of her life, she said, "It was like kind of coming home."

For Jerri Abrams, who was received as an associate during the anniversary celebration, the call grew slowly. She had known the sisters as teachers, parish leaders and friends of the community.

"I've always found them to be women that were inspirational and fun," she said. "The seed was planted long ago and just had to wait for the right timing."

That timing came in a simple way. After Mrs. Abrams made a comment at church, another associate heard it and passed her name along. Soon she received a call.



(above, left) Marilyn Schleyer, ACDP formation coordinator, introduces new associates (from left) Rachel Alonzo and Jerri Abrams, June 28.

(above, right) Bishop John Iffert was celebrant and homilist at Mass celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Associates of the Congregation of Divine Providence, June 28, at Holy Family Home chapel, Melbourne.



(left) Divine Providence Sisters and Associates fill the chapel for Mass celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Associates of Congregation of Divine Providence and welcoming two new members.

"I was like, I didn't call this person, but this person called me," she said. "How did that happen?"

The story of the Sisters of Divine Providence begins in France in 1762 with Blessed Jean-Martin Moye, a parish priest who saw poor villages where children, especially girls, had little chance for school or faith formation. He sent women into those forgotten places to teach and to serve. They traveled with little security except trust in God. That trust became the heart of the Congregation of Divine Providence.

Today, sisters and associates try to live that same Providence charism. Their daily life is grounded in four fundamental virtues: poverty, simplicity, apostolic charity and abandonment to Divine Providence. For associates, those virtues do not take them away from daily life. They help them live it more deeply.

"You don't do anything different in the life that's yours," Ms. Bertolini said. "This helps you just go deeper." She said the associate life gives her a community for "walking the gospel path," with sisters who are "support and friends and prayer partners."

Mrs. Abrams said the virtue that speaks to her most right now is Abandonment to Divine Providence. As a mother and grandmother, she knows the pull to worry and hold on tight. The sisters' charism, she said, reminds her to "let God be the leader" and to follow.

"You have to kind of let go of something to get something new," she said. "You have to empty out to fill up with something refreshing."

Both women spoke of the sisters not as distant figures, but as real people whose lives show faith in action. Mrs. Abrams said she has come to see how much the sisters have done for "Church families, children," for people in need, and for justice. "They go beyond that," she said. "Social justice and fairness and rights of others."

What draws her most is their joy and closeness. Many have known one another since they were young sisters. After years of teaching, nursing, serving and praying, they now share daily life together. "They're truly a community of love," Mrs. Abrams said. "They just are so cool. I just love being around them."

For Ms. Bertolini, the associate life unfolds one day at a time. "Each day has its own call," she said. Each morning she asks God to help her "show Christ to others" and "walk the gospel path." At night, she said, she asks forgiveness for the times she did not, and asks her guardian angel to urge her back when she starts to turn away.

Prayer also keeps associates connected even when they are far apart. During the anniversary celebration, associates drew names and promised to pray for another associate for the year. Ms. Bertolini said that kind of prayer

(Continued on page 13)

The parable of the sower: An examination of conscience

The readings for the fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: Isaiah 55:10–11, Romans 8:18–23 and Matthew 13:1–23.

There is a temptation when we read or hear a passage from the Scriptures, especially the Gospel, to assume that we are not the ones being challenged, as if we are not the intended audience of the message that is being delivered. This can be true with our Gospel this weekend with the

parable of the sower (Matt 13:1–23).

It can be easy to view ourselves as being like the seed that is sown on rich soil (13:8, 23), where we “hear the word and understand it,” and “bear fruit and yield a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.” We can think, “Oh, I am already a Christian and a follower of Christ, so I am definitely this last seed. I don’t need to pay attention to the others.” However, if this is the immediate view of ourselves, we may end up

missing the point of the parable and the challenge that Christ is presenting to us to grow into deeper holiness.

In truth, this parable of the sower can actually be a great examination of conscience for us to see where we truly are within our own spiritual lives. I think if we are truly honest with ourselves, we will find that we can be like all four types of seed that Jesus is talking about here.

First there is the seed that “fell on the bath, and birds came and ate it up” (13:4), which, Jesus says, represents “the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart.” (13:19) The kind of person that Jesus is referring to here is someone who audibly hears the message of the Gospel spoken to him or her, but this person does not truly allow the message to take root in his or her heart.

This can be true for us particularly when it comes to the kind of sins that we commit. These sins indicate to us the aspects of the Gospel that we may struggle with. Even if intellectually we may understand what Christ has spoken to us, within our hearts we struggle with understanding how to live out the message of the Gospel. Because of this, we fall into sin, particularly habitual sins that we struggle with regularly. What are those aspects of the Gospel that we struggle with putting into practice in our own lives?

Then there is the “seed sown on rocky ground, where it had little soil” and “sprang up at once” but “withered for lack of roots” (13:5–6), which, Jesus says, represents “the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away.” (13:20–21)

For us, it can be easy to love the Lord when everything is going our way and we are on fire with love for him. However, the real challenge comes when we have to face life’s difficulties and bear its crosses. During these times, it can be easy to fall away and resent God for leading us to those crosses. When we face these difficult challenges, whatever those challenges may be, do we truly respond with the grace and submission that Christ does when he bears his cross?

Finally (at least before the good seed), there is the seed that “fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it” (13:7), which, Jesus says, represents “the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit.” (13:22) How often do we allow our day-to-day worries and anxieties take up our mind to the point that we lose all trust in God and instead try to trust in ourselves? Or how much do we become focused on the things of this world that they end up becoming our own gods and lead to us making sacrifices to our relationship with the one true God rather than the other way around?

We see here that, while we ought to strive to be like the seed sown on rich soil, oftentimes we can be like the other seeds. We have to keep in mind that what Christ is doing here is not merely condemning us for being like these

Social media might have a lot of negative stories, but if you are looking for something positive, they are out there too.

VIEWPOINT



Julie Feinauer

portation or as grand a gesture as gifting them a home where they can care for their aging parent or disabled child.

A recent favorite was about a child who had sent a treasured note of gratitude to a veteran. After a decade of keeping the note with him, she was located by nursing home staff. She is now in the National Guard, and they consider one another family (check out On the Road, with Steve Hartman if you want to cry some happy tears). These stories might not be happening to me, but I feel them deeply. They give me hope in the world, courage to be bold and examples of the best that people have to offer.

Recently, I started seeing videos of this amazing guy named King Randall, I. He is a mid-twenties Albany, Georgia native who has created a preparatory school for boys. Through his “The X for Boys” program his team teaches honor, discipline, commitment, courage, accountability and consistency to children in a community with high crime and in particular, violent crime. His hope is to keep them from becoming another statistic.

“The X” creates young men who are capable, educated in both academic and life skills, and able to flourish despite the challenges they may face in their environment. Visionaries like Randall understand that each of the interactions with these children is like skipping a stone across a pond. You truly never know where the ripple effect stops. What you might think is just a simple lesson, might be the stone that changes a child’s life, and from there, a ripple flows out that changes the world.

Every experience, whether we perceive it as good or bad, contributes to shaping who we are. Much like flowing water, we continually reshape our course. As water moves with the slightest touch, the subtlety of water’s movement is mirrored in our own character. We are affected by all

The ripple effect

the skipping stones — core life events for us or the ripples that come from the significant life events of others. None of us are the same person we were yesterday, nor will we be tomorrow. Even what may seem to be a meaningless interaction for one person, may have a profound impact on another.

The slight changes that occur may not be noticeable in the short term but over time change the “flow” of our lives, our identity.

Anyone who has ever experienced a tragedy knows that one moment can change who you are forever. In turn, those who have experienced true goodness, extreme care, or unexpected kindness know they, too, are permanently changed.

Foundationally, this idea is a cornerstone of our faith. The Bible encourages believers to consider the consequences of their actions, or in some cases inaction or reaction. We must strive to see even those tragedies as stones that we can use to create positive ripples in relationships, community and beyond.

In Acts 16:25–34, Paul and Silas, despite being held in prison, sing songs and fervently pray. Due to their unwavering faith a miracle occurs and they are freed. Rippling out from this miraculous event is the conversion of the jailer and his family. This demonstrates that our action or reaction to a situation, as in the case of Paul and Silas, can have a profound and lasting impact on others.

Another truly remarkable story about the ripple effect comes from the Old Testament. Abraham’s obedience to God set in motion a series of events that influenced generations, leading to the establishment of a nation, and ancestors that outnumber the stars. His faith has served as a model for all believers to come.

Of course, there are many other examples where we see this kind of “ripple out” thinking, but the pinnacle is one that is at the heart of Christianity: “We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) We are in real time experiencing the effect of Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice for us. His willingness to carry out the Father’s plan of death and resurrection is a stone that has sent waves, not ripples, throughout the world.

By embodying love through positive action and prayer, we can inspire others and contribute to a world full of empathy, positivity and compassion. Each choice we make has the potential to influence the lives of those around us, encouraging a cycle of goodness that can be transformative to anyone in its wake.

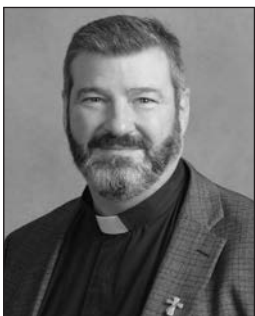
When we embrace this concept and truly focus on how we affect the lives of others, even without our knowledge, each act takes on a new importance. Even the smallest stone creates a ripple.

Julie Feinauer is director of the Safe Environment Office, Diocese of Covington, Ky

Jesus meets us where we are

In the Gospel of John, chapter 11, we encounter one of the most tender and human moments in the life of Jesus.

BELIEVE, TEACH, PRACTICE



Deacon Scott Foltz

could have prevented the tragedy. Yet he had not come when they called. In their sorrow, the sisters spoke openly

When news reached him that his friend Lazarus was gravely ill, Jesus did not rush to Bethany. By the time he arrived, Lazarus had already died and been laid in the tomb. Both Martha and Mary greeted Jesus with the same grief-laden words: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (John 11:21, 32)

Their statement was not a denial of Jesus’ power; it was an honest cry of love mixed with sincere disappointment. They knew he

to the Lord about their pain.

Though their words were identical, Martha and Mary approached Jesus with different hearts and different needs. Martha came in a spirit of confusion, seeking clarity and understanding. Jesus met her exactly where she was. He listened to her question, then gently led her into deeper truth. “Your brother will rise again,” he told her. When Martha spoke of the resurrection on the last day, Jesus revealed the heart of the Gospel: “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”

Then he asked her directly, “Do you believe this?” Martha answered with a profound profession of faith, “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.” This is what Martha needed; answers that strengthened her faith and opened her eyes to the truth of Jesus. He met her where she was.

Mary, saying the same words, came not with confusion but with a heavy heart crushed by grief. She needed consolation. Jesus met her exactly where she was as well.

(Continued on page 14)

seeds, though they can certainly lead towards it. Rather, he is challenging us to be better, to be holier, to be the person that the Father is calling us to be through him and in the Holy Spirit. Each day we ought to seek greater and deeper conversion within our lives. One of the ways we can do so is to examine our conscience using this parable

to see where we truly are in our relationship with the Lord and with one another.

Father Michael Elmlinger is a priest of the Diocese of Covington, Ky. Father Elmlinger is currently studying Canon Law at the University of St. Paul, Ottawa, Canada.

Youth Ministry interns host CONNECT Retreat for middle schoolers teaching them to do small things with great love

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The Diocese of Covington Office of Youth Ministry hosted the first of its bi-annual CONNECT middle school retreats. These retreats offer middle school students throughout the Diocese of Covington a chance to gather, connect and grow together in love of their faith.

The theme this year was “do small things with great love,” the well-known teaching of St. Terese of Lisieux. Twenty-seven middle schoolers came together in prayer, learning together how they can do small things with great love.

Leadership team members and current Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, students Dexter Bent, Eli Brown, Samuel Fisder and Adam Scott, recalled how the students interacted with the theme throughout the day, keeping it at the forefront of their prayer:

“It was really neat seeing them going up the front near the Eucharist and praying in front of it, kneeling on the hard ground ... it was a small thing, but it meant a lot for them to do that,” said Mr. Fisder.

Small group leader, Mr. Brown, said that it was the student’s engagement with the theme which moved him. “The answers that some of the kids gave were really insightful, on topic. It kind of gave a statement to their knowledge of the faith, and where they were at individually.”

The students were able to engage with the theme in practical, hands-on ways.

“The activities were even centered around it,” said Angie Poat, director of the Office of Youth Ministry. “The small groups built roses out of Legos, so it was very practical, hands on — all ways from the activities, the discussion, the prayer.”

At the conclusion of the day, the small groups had assembled a bouquet of Lego roses, which was laid at the foot of a large rosary.

“The idea is small things with great love, like each Lego piece builds up the bigger act,” said Mr. Bent, emcee for the event.

This is the first CONNECT retreat planned entirely by the Office of Youth Ministry interns, which is currently comprised of Thomas More University students.

“These interns were using their gifts to create something special and unique that was for that day, that time, that moment,” said Mrs. Poat. “Seeing it executed so beautifully is what discipleship is all about, so we were multiplying the ministry in the way that the Lord intended.”



(above) Youth Ministry summer interns, including Eli Brown, wave happily at the camera as they prepare for a day of faith filled connection, one they have been planning for months. Angie Poat, director of Youth Ministry, said this retreat “was the first one that...the interns planned from scratch, executed it and they grew in the process.”

(right) One of the speakers prepares for his address to the students in front of an image of St. Terese of Lisieux who inspired the theme “do small things with great love.”

Interns and retreat attendees alike kneel on the cold floor of the Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, in front of the Monstrance which displays the Eucharist. This moment was perhaps the most moving of the day, said leadership team member Samuel Fisder.

As they were planning the retreat, Mr. Bent said the interns had one goal in mind, “to spread youth ministry across the Diocese. My personal goal in any type of youth ministry ever is that the kids have fun, that they’re associated with the Church.”

“Helping the kids to understand that they can start practicing their faith now, is a huge, huge goal,” said Mr. Brown. “Even though they’re really young, the passion for the faith is still incredibly visible, it’s very vibrant, especially the young kids. It’s really cool to see not just the future of the Church, but also the Church starting to grow in the present,” he said.

Mr. Scott wants to remind students that it might be easy to forgo small retreats like these but encourages students to come.

“It’s very laid back, there’s not really any pressure. You just come, have fun and have that prayerful experience ... I think they can be very powerful,” he said.



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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays, 10 — 11 a.m. Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

Festivals, prayer services, etc. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations of the Diocese of Covington can now have their event featured on the Diocesan online calendar. Submit your event at <https://covdio.org/calendar/>.

Extraordinary Ministers are needed, especially on Sundays, at St. Elizabeth hospital in Edgewood. If you are a Eucharistic minister, or are interested in becoming one, contact the Pastoral Care office or the Volunteer office at St. Elizabeth for more information, (859) 301-2000.

The 139th annual St. Ann Novena will be held July 18–26 at St. Ann Church, Covington. Novena prayers begin at 7 p.m.; Mass at 7:15 p.m. The theme is major Marian apparitions: Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of the Miraculous Miracle Medal, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Champion, Our Lady of Vailankanni, Our Lady of Knock, Our Lady of La Sallette, Our Lady of Siluva and Our Lady of Lourdes, respectively. The Feast of Sts. Joachim and Ann is celebrated the final evening. Individual blessings with a relic of St. Ann and the sacrament of reconciliation will be offered following Mass. The novena will be livestreamed on Facebook St John Ann Covington.

There will be a Summer Marriage Encounter Weekend July 24–July 26 at Towneplace Suites by Marriott in Lexington-Keeneland. Sign up at <http://esharing.org> or <http://wwme.org>. You can also register by calling Andy and Melanie Reinersman at (859) 653-8464. Come join us for an experience that can change your marriage, and your life!

The Thomas More University Biology Field Station third annual “Raisin’ Hellbenders on the River: Concert for Conservation,” July 25, 3–9 p.m. Listen to live bluegrass music from local bands, enjoy a guided hike, explore laboratories, purchase raffle tickets for a brand-new kayak and paddle on the river. Visit tmuky.us/bfsconcert for more information; purchase at tmuky.us/concertsvp (case sensitive).

“The Power of ‘And’” — a webinar for survivors and those who care for them, July 27, 6:30–8 p.m. CDT. “And” is an important word. It allows space for the complexity of human experience. Everyone has both beauty and broken-



Aloha, Marylu! Safe Environment Database Coordinator retires A summery, beach themed luncheon at the diocesan Curia, Covington, celebrated the retirement of Marylu Steffen. Mrs. Steffen has served the diocese for the past 14 years as the Safe Environment Database Coordinator — responsible for organizing VIRTUS’s database. Also retiring is Lisa Taylor, formerly the administrative assistant for the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization. The Diocese of Covington thanks both of these women for their contributions to the diocese over the years.

Parish festivals

July 10–12 Immaculate Heart of Mary, Burlington Summerfest	Aug. 7 Blessed Sacrament, Ft. Mitchell Athletic Boosters corn roast	Sept. 11–12 St. Barbara, Erlanger Rocktoberfest
St. Pius X, Edgewood Summer festival	Aug. 7–8 St. Mary of the Assumption, Alexandria Parish festival	Sept. 11–13 St. Patrick, Maysville Parish festival
July 17–18 St. Thomas, Ft. Thomas Block party	Aug. 28–30 St. Augustine, Augusta Parish festival	Sept. 18–20 St. Timothy, Union Oktoberfest
July 24 and 26 St. James, Brooksville Fish Fry and Ice Cream Social	Aug. 28–29 Holy Cross District High School, Latonia School festival	Sept. 25–27 St. Anges, Ft. Wright Oktoberfest
July 25 Sts. Peter and Paul, California Parish festival	Sept. 5–6 St. Anthony, Taylor Mill Festival Latino	Sept. 27 St. Philip Parish, Melbourne Golf outing
July 31–Aug. 1 St. Joseph, Cold Spring Parish festival	Sept. 5–7 St. Cecilia, Independence Parish festival	
July 31–Aug. 2 St. Joseph, Crescent Springs Summer celebration		

ness. Every family has both goodness and dysfunction. A common symptom for trauma survivors is black-and-white thinking, which tells a distorted story about self or others. “And” tells a more truthful story and embraces more fully the paradox of human existence. Register at <https://www.archspm.org/events/>

Christmas in July celebration to launch the newly published book “The Jack Story,” July 30, 6–9 p.m., Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, undercroft. The family of Dr. Tom Huller has created this children’s book for the benefit of ALS Ohio. Light refreshments and book will be available for purchase.

The Newport Central Catholic Charlie Fredrick annual Golf Outing will be held Aug. 7, Hickory Sticks Golf Club, California. Morning and afternoon flights available and go fast. The day includes a sit-down lunch, beverages, a light snack at the turn, skins game, on-course games, split the pot, and raffles. Unable to golf? Consider being a hole sponsor. Proceeds benefit NCC athletics and extracurricular activities. Register at: <https://e.givesmart.com/events/Phq/>

New Beginnings, a support group for separated and divorced, begins Aug. 18. The 8-week program provides the opportunity to heal and move forward. Led by facilitators who have been through their own personal losses. The next session, held on consecutive Tuesdays, is Aug. 18 – Oct. 6, 7- 8:30 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Covington. Registration is required. Visit <https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/> or call (859) 392-1529.

Healing, prayer and adoration to conclude the Novena of Our Lady of Knock, Aug. 22, 7 p.m. at St. Patrick Parish and Shrine, Taylor Mill. The evening will include veneration of a relic of St. Faustina.

Catholic Charities of Northern Kentucky will be hosting a Mental Health First Aid certification class Aug. 25, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m., diocesan Curia, Covington. No cost to attend. Upon successful completion, participants will receive a Mental Health First Aid certification. Register via <https://form.jot-form.com/MHFACollaborative/catholic-charities-mhfa-8252026>.

Carmel Manor, Ft. Thomas, festival, Aug. 29, 3–10 p.m. The evening will include chicken dinners, raffles, kids’ games and live music by Ben Walz.

The FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky will be hosting a “FIRE in the Hole” golf outing, Sept. 12, at Devou Golf Course. Starting with registration at 8 a.m., the event will feature a 9 a.m. shotgun start and a 3–5 p.m. cocktail hour. Price is \$500 for a foursome (\$125 per golfer.) Includes breakfast, lunch, 2 drink tickets and hors d’oeuvres included. Win exciting prizes for longest drive, closest to the pin, live auction, raffles and split-the-pot. More information and registration online at <https://www.fire-foundationnky.org/golf>.

Bishop John Iffert will celebrate Vespers at Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, to honor couples celebrating significant wedding anniversaries. Married couples celebrating their 1st, 25th, 50th, or 60+ wedding anniversary in 2026 are invited to Vespers Sunday, Sept. 13, 2 pm. Anniversary couples RSVP by Aug. 13, 2026, at covdio.org/wedding-vespers/. Phone registrations are available after Aug. 6 through Isaak A. Isaak at 859-392-1529. Congratulatory anniversary certificates will be available upon request.

Empowering God’s Children 5th annual facilitators’ training, Sept. 15, Curia, Covington. All facilitators, priests, principals, DREs and CREs are welcome to attend, as well as anyone interested in learning more about the program. Dinner and networking begin at 3 p.m.; training ends at 5:30 p.m. Registration requested at <https://forms.gle/LmtrSBxFjDmh64L1A>

TEC (Teens Encounter) Christ is coming to the Diocese of Covington. TEC is church movement that evangelizes and accompanies older teens and young adults within an intergenerational community. Participants are invited into this community through a 3-day retreat. If you have attended a TEC weekend in another diocese and would like to serve on a TEC team or support TEC, contact Angie Poat, apoat@covdio.org. High school juniors and seniors, and college students, are invited to attend TECov #1, Nov. 21–23, 2026 or TECov #2, March 6–8, 2027.

World Youth Day 2027, Seoul, South Korea, July 30 to August 10, 2027. The Diocese of Covington is coordinating a pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2027 for young adults ages 18 to 35. Experience the universality of the Catholic Church in the presence of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, alongside millions of young adult Catholics from around the world. Bishop John Iffert hopes to join the pilgrims along with a few priests and deacons from the diocese. Estimated cost is \$5,500 per person and includes round-trip airfare, transportation, lodging, meals (from WYD) and tours. To reserve your spot, the initial payment of \$800 is now due. The full amount must be paid by Monday, March 15, 2027. For more information, go to covdio.org/register/

Catholic Charities USA's traveling museum 'celebrates power of Christian service'

Armando Machado

The Good Newsroom, OSV News

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York welcomed the mobile People of Hope Museum March 26, near Union Square in Manhattan. The tractor-trailer-sized traveling museum will tour under the sponsorship of Catholic Charities USA.

With its welcome in New York, "People of Hope: Faith-Filled Stories of Neighbors Helping Neighbors" began a three-year journey across the United States.

Produced by Catholic Charities USA, the People of Hope Museum will ultimately visit more than 150 communities to promote empathy and inspire visitors to find ways to serve those in need in their local areas. The initiative is made possible thanks to a 2024 grant of nearly \$5 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. through an invitational round of its National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life.

The museum is a nationwide storytelling initiative from CCUSA "highlighting the impact of neighbors helping neighbors, and celebrating the power of Christian service," organizers said.

"We're here to tell the stories of many, many employees of Catholic Charities throughout the country — hundreds of Catholic Charities (chapters), thousands of employees, who day in and day out, they take care of the people who need it the most," J. Antonio Fernandez, president and CEO of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, said during the opening ceremony. "Thank you for coming today as we celebrate this wonderful museum. Thank you, and God bless you."

Kerry Alys Robinson, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, was at the opening of the mobile museum, a venture she said "is a testament to mercy, service, hope, compassion and faith. And it is a special honor that we are here in New York City, and that it is co-hosted by Catholic Charities (of the) Archdiocese of New York, and Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens."

Father Patrick J. Keating, deputy CEO of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Brooklyn, offered a prayer of blessing for the museum, the people who enter it, and for "the human family."

Housed in a digitally outfitted semi-truck, the People of Hope Museum features 42



OSV News photo/Armando Machado, The Good Newsroom

People of Hope Museum Tour Stops Nearby

July 12-13

Columbus, Ohio

Location: Downtown Columbus, adjacent to St. Joseph Cathedral

Sponsor: Catholic Social Services Columbus

July 16-17

Cincinnati, Ohio

Location: The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

Sponsor: Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio

July 26-28

Owensboro, Kentucky

Location: Owensboro Convention Center

Sponsor: Catholic Charities Diocese of Owensboro

July 31-August 1

Lexington, Kentucky

Location: Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary Church

Sponsor: Catholic Charities Diocese of Lexington

For more information on the Catholic Charities People of Hope Museum visit <https://peopleofhope.us>.

A bicyclist passes Catholic Charities USA's People of Hope Museum March 26, 2026, just north of Union Square in Manhattan. The tractor-trailer-sized traveling museum will tour the country highlighting "the impact of neighbors helping neighbors, and celebrating the power of Christian service," organizers said.

original, authentic video stories told by Catholic Charities staff and volunteers from agencies around the country. In the brief videos, the storytellers share first-person accounts of what it means to serve someone in need in their darkest moment.

Beyond these stories, the museum contains an interactive poverty simulation of stepping into another person's life, making difficult choices and experiencing the realities of living on the margins.

Visitors can also peruse a learning library featuring curated 2- to 4-minute audio segments from prominent books on poverty, social isolation, bridgebuilding and community action, including by authors Matthew Desmond, Arthur Brooks and Robert Putnam.

National and state data illustrate the scope of need and the vital role of social services organizations across the country, and a recording room allows attendees to share their own stories of hope and service.

From New York, through December, the mobile museum will go through 21 states, from Texas to Ohio and from Maine to

Florida, mostly in the eastern half of the United States. It will tour the Western states in 2027. In the first half of 2028, the museum will visit communities that were missed or would like a repeat visit, CCUSA said in a news release.

CCUSA, which has its headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, is a network of local Catholic Charities agencies in dioceses across the U.S.

Thomas Galfo, 44, and his wife, Hazel Yaptangco, were among members of the public who entered the mobile museum on its opening morning to view and listen to what the museum had to offer. They are parishioners of St. Simon the Apostle Catholic Church in Green Pond, New Jersey, in the Paterson Diocese.

"We heard about this through social media, and we wanted to take the trip into the city to see it firsthand. It's absolutely amazing, from the second that you walk up to the trailer and walking through the trailer with all the details. They did an excellent job," Galfo said in an interview inside the museum with The Good Newsroom, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of New York.

Yaptangco said, "Wow, there are many real stories here, of people struggling every day. This really spells it out, what is going on in their lives. It's great to see an organization bringing awareness to that, and showing ways that you can take action."



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In decree, Vatican acknowledges schismatic act and excommunication of Society of St. Pius X

Dispute never really about the Latin Mass

Josephine Peterson
Catholic News Service

The Vatican declared July 2 that the six bishops involved in the Society of St. Pius X's unauthorized episcopal consecrations had incurred automatic excommunication and said its clergy "are in schism and therefore must be considered schismatics." The Vatican's action impacts Our Lady of the Assumption Church and its schools in Walton, Ky. (See letter from Bishop John Iffert on page 1.)

The decree from Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, marks the strongest Vatican action against the traditionalist society since its founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, consecrated four bishops without papal approval in 1988, leading to similar Vatican censure.

While the society claims it was compelled to ordain new bishops July 1 in Ecône, Switzerland, in order to guarantee to celebrate what they consider the true Mass, Vatican officials and scholars say the dispute that culminated in the excommunications has never primarily been about the traditional Latin Mass.

Founded in 1970 by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in opposition to reforms following the Second Vatican Council, the Society of St. Pius X grew into an international traditionalist movement with hundreds of priests, seminarians and schools around the world.

While best known for celebrating the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass, the society's disagreements with Rome extend far beyond liturgy and center on its rejection of key teachings of Vatican II, objecting to its declaration on religious liberty.

Speaking to reporters after the consecrations, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, said the Vatican's concern extended far beyond the unauthorized ordinations themselves.

"The fundamental issue, however, is the council — that is, whether or not the Second Vatican Council is accepted," he said. "The history of the Church continues and, as I said before, the Second Vatican Council is a milestone in the Church's history. It must be accepted and implemented in the proper way."

For decades, public discussion surrounding the Society of St. Pius X has focused on its attachment to the pre-Vatican II liturgy. But Massimo Introvigne, an Italian sociologist of religion who has studied the movement for decades and interviewed Archbishop Lefebvre personally, said that narrative misses the central issue.

"I keep reading in the media that the problem is the Latin Mass," he told Catholic News Service July 2. "Liturgy is an important point, but it's not the key point."

The dispute is not that the SSPX prefers the traditional Latin Mass, because many other groups in full communion with Rome celebrate it as well, Introvigne said, but that the fraternity rejects the post-conciliar liturgical reform in ways the Vatican says call into question its acceptance of the Church's authority.

Introvigne recalled the late archbishop telling him that even if the pope restored the pre-conciliar liturgy overnight, his principal objections would remain because his real concerns centered on Vatican II's teaching on religious liberty and the Church's relationship with other religions.

Those concerns remain at the center of the society's

position today.

"I believe a key point here is they want the pope to agree with them that the other religions are 'the work of the devil,'" Introvigne said, and that the public activity of non-Catholic believers "should be prohibited by the state."

There are two notable texts from Vatican II that focus on religious liberty, "Dignitatis Humanae," which recognizes a civil right to religious freedom, and "Nostra Aetate," which encourages dialogue with non-Christian religions while recognizing elements of truth and holiness within them.

The council's declaration on religious freedom, "Dignitatis humanae," is not about denying the truth of Jesus and the faith, Introvigne said, but is about the importance of every human's freedom to arrive at the truth with-



CNS photo/courtesy Society of St. Pius X

Standing from left to right wearing miters, Fathers Marc Hanappier and Michel Poinset de Sivry from France, Father Michael Goldade from the United States and Father Pascal Schreiber from Switzerland were consecrated bishops without papal approval for the Society of St. Pius X in Ecône, Switzerland, July 1, 2026, which led to their automatic excommunication and the two bishops who consecrated them.

out state interference or coercion.

The SSPX argues that because the council described its work as "pastoral" and issued no new dogmatic definitions, Catholics are not required to accept every conciliar teaching, particularly where the fraternity believes the council departed from previous doctrine.

The SSPX argues some teachings are difficult to reconcile with earlier magisterial statements.

The Vatican has consistently rejected that interpretation, saying the Church can evolve in its understanding of the truth and, therefore, its teachings, and the Vatican II texts belong to the Church's authentic and authoritative magisterium.

Although the July 2 decree represents the strongest Vatican action against the fraternity in decades, it also follows a familiar pattern. After Archbishop Lefebvre consecrated four bishops without papal approval in 1988, St. John Paul II declared the act schismatic but simultaneously established a commission to facilitate reconciliation with traditionalist Catholics. Pope Benedict XVI later lifted the bishops' excommunications to reopen dialogue, and Pope Francis granted SSPX priests faculties to validly hear confessions and provided for the recognition of marriages.

Vatican officials have repeatedly coupled canonical sanc-

tions with invitations to return to full communion, a pattern that many observers expect will continue under Pope Leo XIV despite the recent rupture.

Cardinal Fernández had proposed dialogue earlier this year focused on Vatican II and the minimum requirements for full communion, according to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Vatican conditioned those talks on the fraternity abandoning plans to consecrate new bishops.

Instead, the society proceeded.

Thousands gathered July 1 at the society's seminary in Ecône as Bishop Alfonso de Galarreta consecrated four new bishops despite repeated Vatican warnings that doing so would constitute a schismatic act.

A day earlier, Pope Leo made an extraordinary personal appeal.

"Please turn back!" he wrote in a brief message. He warned that proceeding would "tear the seamless garment of Christ" and described the planned consecrations as "a sin of extreme gravity."

The society nevertheless insists it has no intention of leaving the Catholic Church.

During the consecration Mass, Father Davide Pagliarini, superior general of the SSPX, rejected accusations that the fraternity was separating itself from Rome.

"We cannot choose between the faith and the Church," he said. "We belong to the Church because we have the same faith."

He argued that the fraternity was acting not against the Church but for her good, insisting that its bishops were preserving Catholic tradition during what the society calls an unprecedented crisis in the Church.

For Introvigne, however, the dispute ultimately concerns authority more than liturgy.

"Some of the questions the society asked were valid questions," he said. "The problem is when the society started not only asking questions, but substituting itself for the pope and also giving the answers."

That, he said, is where theological disagreement became schism.

"The pope has tried everything possible to reconcile them," Introvigne said. "But everything possible is not equal to everything."

The Church can continue dialogue, he said, "but it cannot allow people to replace the authority of the pope with their own."

The Vatican's July 2 decree declared that the six bishops had been automatically excommunicated upon the act of consecration without papal authority. It also stated that clergy belonging to the SSPX "are in schism and therefore must be considered schismatics."

Introvigne said that this level of excommunication was what he expected because "it's clear that generosity and kindness didn't work out," referring to the previously lifted excommunications by Pope Benedict XVI and restoration of some priestly faculties by Pope Francis.

Lay faithful who "formally adhere" to the fraternity likewise incur excommunication, although canonists say the decree leaves open questions about what constitutes formal adherence. Seeing as SSPX sees itself as a part of the Catholic Church, they do not retain membership data, Introvigne said. The society's website claims to have 600,000

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Vatican acknowledges schismatic act

(Continued from page 9)

members, but the theologian estimates the true number of lay people who attend Mass with the society regularly to be between 30,000 and 40,000.

Introvigne also believes the movement has already reached its high-water mark.

"Another personal opinion, which I'm sure the society would dispute, is that this movement is past its prime and this schismatic attitude is not a sign of strength but it's a sign of weakness," he said.

He argued that the fraternity was most successful when

it could portray itself as defending traditional Catholics from Pope Francis' restrictions on the celebration of the Latin Mass. With

Pope Leo widely viewed as a unifying figure, Introvigne said, much of that momentum has faded.

"In other words, many Catholics will gladly embrace a conservative position, but not a fundamentalist position," he said.

In the months leading up to the consecrations, Pope Leo devoted a series of Wednesday general audience talks to explaining the principal documents of Vatican II, signalling the same fidelity as his predecessors demonstrated to the council's teachings.

Introvigne believes the latest rupture represents less a new beginning than a return to a familiar place.

"It puts the clock back to 1988," he said, adding that, despite the excommunications, he expects dialogue to continue eventually.

Cardinal Parolin told journalists July 1 that he hopes "dialogue can resume and that we may truly find a solution here as well." Introvigne also said the cycle is unlikely to end with the latest excommunications.

"The dialogue, at least under the table, will continue," he said. "But to have a meaningful dialogue, some things should change," including, he suggested, changes in the fraternity's leadership.

Nine things to know about the SSPX excommunications

OSV News

On July 1, the Society of St. Pius X, widely known as the SSPX, illicitly consecrated new four bishops without authorization from the Holy See, leading Pope Leo XIV to declare its bishops, clergy and formally affiliated laity to be in schism with the Catholic Church. Here's a short primer on the SSPX, what happened and why it matters.

1. The SSPX formed in reaction to the Second Vatican Council. Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991), a Frenchman who as a bishop had been a key Church leader in French Africa, founded the society of priests in 1970 in Fribourg, Switzerland. Its priests celebrate the sacraments according to the 1962 Roman Missal, which was issued prior to the Second Vatican Council, but which was replaced by revised liturgical texts in 1969. The society has now twice been excommunicated for consecrating bishops without the permission of the Holy See.

The society is based in Menzingen, Switzerland, with an international seminary in Écône, Switzerland, where the July 1 consecrations took place. In the United States, about

100 SSPX priests live in 20 houses, or "prieories," and are active around 120 locations, called "missions" or "chapels," according to its website. Its U.S. headquarters are in Platte City, Missouri, about 30 miles north of Kansas City.

According to the SSPX, Archbishop Lefebvre chose St. Pius X, who had served as pope 1903-1914, as the society's patron because of that pope's commitment to the integrity of the priesthood.

2. Before the most recent schism, the SSPX had an irregular status with respect to the Catholic Church that first began decades ago. The society appears to have lost its ecclesiastical permission to exist by the competent ecclesiastical authority in 1975. A year later, Archbishop Lefebvre was suspended after ordaining priests against the express will of ecclesiastical authorities.

In 1988, St. John Paul II excommunicated Archbishop Lefebvre and four bishops he consecrated that year without papal mandate. Their episcopal ordinations were valid but illicit, or unauthorized.

All subsequent acts of orders by those bishops have

been affected. Acts of jurisdiction are invalid — such as the witnessing of marriages and absolution of sins. Other sacramental actions are considered valid, though illicit.

In its July 2 decree issuing the excommunication, the Holy See explicitly stated that sacraments of penance and marriage proceeded within the society are invalid.

3. The SSPX should not be confused with other "TLM" communities. Many Catholic communities in communion with the Holy See celebrate Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal, commonly called the traditional Latin Mass.

In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued "Summorum Pontificum," which expanded permission to priests to celebrate the preconciliar Mass. In 2021, Pope Francis issued "Traditionis Custodes," legislation that tightened use of the preconciliar form of the Mass. However, many bishops, including in the United States, have continued to make this form of the Mass available within the new parameters.

Priests who are members of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, for example, exclusively celebrate sacraments according to the 1962 missal and are in communion with the Holy See. (The society was formed in 1988 by priests who left the SSPX after Archbishop Lefebvre's illicit bishop consecrations that year.) FSSP priests are active internationally and minister in 39 U.S. dioceses.

Other examples of religious orders dedicated exclusively to celebrating liturgy and sacraments in the form of the Roman rite celebrated prior to Vatican II that have regular status within the Catholic Church are the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest and the Institute of the Good Shepherd.

4. SSPX leaders say the society is not in schism, and they believe all sacraments and acts of jurisdiction are valid. However, Archbishop Lefebvre's contentions with the Catholic Church included his refusal to adopt the post-conciliar reform of the order of the Mass, which the SSPX considers deficient or having "heretical elements."

Archbishop Lefebvre and his followers also questioned, and in some cases publicly rejected, the very orthodoxy of teachings of the Second Vatican Council, especially the Declaration on Religious Freedom, "Dignitatis Humanae." While some argued that this declaration amounted to a change in doctrine, the Church recognized it as a develop-

(Continued on page 11)



Keener photo

Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Walton, which is located in the Diocese of Covington, Ky., is affiliated with the Society of St. Pius X. The Vatican declared the Society of St. Pius X to be "in schism" on July 2 after the traditionalist group consecrated four bishops without papal approval July 1. On the same day, the Vatican also outlined steps for SSPX members to be reconciled with the Catholic Church.



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Vatican supplies Lefebvrite priests, lay faithful with procedure to return to Catholic communion

Vatican News, OSV News

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has established a procedure for both priests and lay faithful connected to the Society of St. Pius X to return to Catholic communion, following the society's schismatic act July 1.

The instructions are being transmitted through apostolic nunciatures, as previously announced in the Explanatory Note published by the dicastery on July 2.

The procedure set out by the DDF, beginning on July 1, 2026, provides that a priest who has decided to leave the Society of St. Pius X — and who is willing to accept the Second Vatican Council and the legitimacy of the new order of the Mass, while remaining attached to the ancient rite — must “find an Ordinary — a diocesan Bishop, a Major Superior of clerical religious institutes of pontifical right or of clerical societies of apostolic life of pontifical right, etc. — willing to receive him *ad experimentum*,” or temporarily, as his fit is tested.

The priest must then “write by hand a letter to the Holy Father in which he presents himself and asks for the remission of the censures incurred because of the ordination he received from an excommunicated or irregular Bishop, or because, having been validly and legitimately ordained, he subsequently became a member of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X,” also known as the Society of St. Pius X, or SSPX.

The priest must also attach his certificate of priestly ordination and enclose, signed and dated, “the *Professio fidei* and the *Formula adhaesionis*.”

This refers to the Profession of Faith, which summarizes the content of the Catholic faith, and the Formula of Adherence, by which the priest promises fidelity to the Pope and commits himself not to attack him or his magisterium publicly.

He must accept the teaching of No. 25 of the conciliar Dogmatic Constitution “*Lumen Gentium*” on adherence to the Church’s magisterium. He must also declare that he

considers the celebration of Mass according to the rites promulgated by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II to be valid, and that he adheres to the norms of the Code of Canon Law promulgated by Pope John Paul II.

The priest must have these documents — the letter with the certificate, the Profession and the Formula of Adherence — sent by the ordinary, “who will state in the accompanying letter his willingness to receive him *ad experimentum* in his Diocese or Institute.”

As soon as it receives the documents from the Ordinary, the DDF will draw up a rescript remitting the censures and authorizing the ordinary to receive the priest making the request “for a probationary period of at least one year and no more than three, at the end of which his incardination may proceed.”

The procedure, the dicastery explained, “concerns the question of imputability, or the degree of subjective responsibility, of lay faithful who have formally adhered to, or who attend, the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X and who ask to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church.”

It notes that the imposition of a penalty on lay people belonging to the SSPX, in fact, “cannot be presumed automatically, but must be assessed case by case.”

“Since imputability requires full awareness and deliberate consent,” the DDF document states, examples of proven imputability — or culpability — may include “lay people who belong to the Third Order of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X; lay people who habitually participate in celebrations of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X and formally share its doctrinal positions.”

The procedure to be followed for lay people belonging to the SSPX on whom a penalty has been imposed, and who ask to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church, “implies a formal act of full adherence to Catholic doctrine and obedience to the Catholic hierarchy, under the jurisdiction of the local Ordinary, who is the guarantor of the unity



OSV News photo/Yara Nardi, Reuters

Pope Leo celebrates Mass on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican June 29, 2026. The Vatican on July 2 declared the Society of St. Pius X to be “in schism” after the traditionalist group consecrated four bishops without a papal mandate July 1, despite Pope Leo's pleas the society not go ahead with the consecrations.

of the particular Church.”

Therefore, a lay member of the faithful who has decided to leave the SSPX must present to his or her bishop the “*Professio fidei*” and the “*Formula adhaesionis*,” dated and signed.

“Once the documentation has been obtained, the local Ordinary will see to welcoming the lay member of the faithful at the times and in the manner he deems most appropriate,” the document states.

The document specifies that the following “are not to be considered imputable: lay people who have attended the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X only for liturgical or spiritual reasons; lay people who, while aware of the tensions with the Holy See, do not reject the Magisterium or the authority of the Roman Pontiff.”

As regards these latter cases, it will be sufficient for them to approach “a priest in full communion, with the decision not to attend the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X in the future.”

(Continued from page 10)

ment of doctrine on the dignity of the human person.

In a statement that included a 28-page “Profession of Faith” published June 24, the SSPX said the Catholic Church is facing pressures from within and without “which push her in every possible direction, except — it seems to us — the right one.” Other Catholic teaching the SSPX dismissed in that statement included aspects of ecumenism, postconciliar liturgical reforms, synodality and religious freedom.

5. The Holy See has sought a path to full reconciliation. For decades, Vatican officials have sought ways to fully reintegrate SSPX members into the life of the Catholic Church. Talks between the Holy See and the society began under St. John Paul and continued during the pontificates of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. Pope Benedict lifted the excommunications of the four bishops in 2009, open-

ing the way for more regular talks. The Vatican made clear the society at that point was in an irregular canonical state, but not in schism.

During the 2015-2016 Year of Mercy, Pope Francis made special provisions to validate the absolution offered by SSPX priests through the sacrament of confession. After the Holy Year ended, he extended that provision “lest anyone ever be deprived of the sacramental sign of reconciliation through the Church’s pardon.”

In April 2017, the late pontiff continued pursuing initiatives aimed at a reconciliation with the SSPX by allowing their bishops to ensure the validity of marriages celebrated in their traditionalist communities.

St. John Paul’s 1988 apostolic letter “*Ecclesia Dei*,” issued in response to the illicit consecrations, established a pontifical commission by the same name with the “task of

collaborating with the bishops, with the departments of the Roman Curia and with the circles concerned, for the purpose of facilitating full ecclesial communion of priests, seminarians, religious communities or individuals” who were associated with SSPX and “who may wish to remain united to the Successor Peter in the Catholic Church.”

In 2019, Pope Francis suppressed the “*Ecclesia Dei*” commission and moved its responsibilities to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

6. The Holy See told SSPX leaders not to consecrate new bishops. In February, Father Davide Pagliarani, superior general of the SSPX, announced the society would proceed with the consecration of new bishops July 1, follow-

ing a breakdown in communication with the Vatican after requests for an audience with Pope 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. After the SSPX chose not to accept, Cardinal Fernandez said the consecration of bishops without a papal mandate would be considered “a schismatic act” and would incur excommunication.

The Church’s Code of Canon Law defines schism as “the refusal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him” (Canon 751).

7. Pope Leo publicly appealed for the SSPX not to proceed with the consecrations. Pope Leo issued a plea June 30 for the SSPX not to proceed with the consecrations. “I urge you to consider carefully the spiritual good of the faithful, because the schismatic act you are about to undertake would deprive them of the licit and, in some cases, even valid reception of the Sacraments, which they love and seek for their sanctification,” Pope Leo wrote. Father Pagliarani’s response indicated that the society planned to move ahead with the consecrations while insisting the group was “neither schismatic nor hostile to the Church.”

After the SSPX moved ahead with the illicit consecrations July 1, the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, or DDF, declared July 2 that the SSPX’s six bishops were excommunicated, and warned clergy and laypeople not to “adhere to the schism” and thereby also incur excommunication.

8. One of the four illicitly consecrated bishops July 1 is from the United States. A native of North Dakota, Bishop Michael Goldade grew up in St. Marys, Kansas, an enclave of the SSPX community. He is the rector of the SSPX St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Dillwyn, Virginia.

9. The DDF has issued procedures for those who decide to leave the SSPX to reestablish communion with the Catholic Church. The instructions provide specific actions that must be taken by a priest ordained in the SSPX community or affiliated with the SSPX after his licit ordination. Procedures for laypeople are more nuanced, as their steps to regain communion depend on their level of attachment to the SSPX community and ideas. (See related story above.)



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Congregation of Divine Providence

(Continued from page 4)



Keener photo

The new Associate members and Sister Barbara Rohe, provincial superior join the entire congregation as they joyfully sing "Halle, Halle" after the official signing of the letter of acceptance.

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Niki Lainhart – Covington Catholic HS, cafeteria@covcath.org

Jodi Millsap – Holy Cross Elementary & HS, cafeteria@hchscov.com

Amber Moore – Holy Trinity Elementary, htcafe@holyltrinity-school.org

Courtney Heath – Immaculate Heart of Mary Elementary, cafeteria@ihmkyschool.org

Danielle Hilsinger – Mary Queen of Heaven Elementary, cafeteria@mqhschool.com

Anita Green – Newport Central Catholic HS, cafeteria@ncchs.com

Jackie Ronca – Prince of Peace Elementary, cafeteria@popcov.com

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Kathy Lauer – Sts. Peter & Paul Elementary, cafeteria@stsp.com

Kara Daniel – St. Philip Elementary, cafeteria@stphilipky.org

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Jesus meets us where we are

(Continued from page 5)

Scripture tells us simply, "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) The Lord of life stood before the tomb of his friend and shared in the tears of those who mourned. He did not rebuke her feelings, offer quick theological answers, or minimize her loss. Instead, he entered her sorrow with compassion. He met her where she was.

These accounts reveal a reflective truth of our faith: Jesus meets us where we are, not where we wish we were or where we think we should be. He enters into the reality of our lives, our grief, our questions, our unmet expectations, and walks with us there, responding to each of us according to our particular need.

How often do we find ourselves like Martha and Mary in our own prayers? "Lord, if only you had been here ..." If only you had healed the illness before it took a loved one. If only you had protected the marriage. If only the job had not been lost. If only the child had not strayed. We bring these honest, sometimes aching, prayers to the Lord, just as Martha and Mary did. And Jesus meets us where we are — if we will only recognize him and listen.

In the Lazarus story, what the sisters wanted was an immediate prevention of suffering. What they received was

something far greater: a life-changing encounter with Jesus himself, the Lord of Love, the Light of the Universe. After calling Lazarus forth from the tomb, Jesus gave them back their brother, along with a deeper faith in the One who holds power even over death.

We see this pattern throughout the Gospels. Jesus consistently meets people in their weakness and need: the woman caught in adultery, the tax collector in the tree, the paralyzed man lowered through the roof, the disciples terrified in the storm, the two on the road to Emmaus. He does not wait for them to become strong or polished before offering his transforming love and his undivided presence.

The same Lord meets us today. He knows the daily struggles we face, the overwhelming responsibilities, the moments of impatience or resentment, the quiet griefs we carry, and the times when prayer feels dry. He is not shocked or deterred by our imperfections. Whether we come to him seeking answers like Martha or consolation like Mary, he weeps with us in our sorrow and gently invites us forward into faith and trust.

We are in the middle of the long stretch of Ordinary Time. The Easter season proclaimed this good news with special clarity: the tomb is never the final word. And the Christmas season foreshadows the expectant promise: Emmanuel — God is with us! Regardless of the season, the

same power that raised Lazarus is at work in our lives, turning moments of failure into opportunities for grace, ordinary days into acts of fidelity, and our pain into deeper union with Christ.

Wherever we may find ourselves today, whether in joy, exhaustion, faithfulness, or faltering, we can bring it to the Lord. And we must do it sincerely. Let us speak honestly our "if onlys." May we offer him our weariness and our small acts of love. Jesus is already present, ready to meet us right where we are. In that encounter, he offers his mercy, his companionship, and the strength to begin again.

And in doing so, it is not God who changes, it is us. As we repeatedly allow Jesus to meet us in our real, unpolished condition, he transforms us from within. Little by little, through his patient presence and grace, we become more and more like him — more compassionate, more trusting, more alive with resurrection hope. The One who is the same "yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8) steadily conforms us to his image, turning our "if onlys" into "even now" declarations of faith.

Come Lord Jesus; meet me here. And make me more like you.

Deacon Scott Folz is assigned to the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

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Step 3: Your account becomes active when your background check, VIRTUS session and Acceptance Form are posted on your

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The monthly e-mail reminder of a new bulletin posted will come from system@pub.virtus.org.

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Pope Leo accepts Liberty Medal

PHILADELPHIA — Religious liberty “holds sacred the inner sphere of the person where convictions are formed and where conscience can guide the decisions made in the intimacy of the human heart,” said Pope Leo XIV, as he accepted a major civic award for upholding freedom of belief on the eve of the nation’s 250th anniversary. The first U.S.-born pope shared his thoughts — which centered religious liberty within a vision of God-given human dignity, and which called the nation back to shared founding ideals — during a July 3 acceptance address for the Liberty Medal, bestowed by the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. Describing himself as “a son of this great country,” Pope Leo asked in his July 3 address for “God’s blessings upon America’s future” and prayed that the nation’s 250th anniversary would be “the occasion of a solemn recommitment to these ideals that have made America a country that values peace and prosperity, a country characterized by generosity and nobility of heart.” He noted “the moral greatness of a nation is manifested, above all, in its capacity to support, protect and cherish the lives of all, especially the most vulnerable and those whose worth is questioned.” He hoped that “the principles we

have reflected upon today — a shared human dignity, equality and the rights laid out in the Declaration of Independence — ever be a source of such unity and a guiding light for the present moment and for the years to come.”

Catholic priest killed in Central African Republic remembered

BANGUI, Central African Republic — Father Crepin Martial Monga, a Catholic priest known for promoting peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic, was killed by armed men on June 29 near his residence in the town of Zémio. The vicar of St. John the Baptist Parish was reportedly shot in the head, and Church leaders believe the attack may have been linked to his efforts to mediate among armed groups and local authorities. Bishop Aurelio Gazzera of Bangassou, the diocese where Zémio is located, praised Father Monga’s ministry, noting that he helped shelter thousands of refugees and led a local peace committee amid escalating violence. St. John the Baptist Parish is currently housing about 2,000 people displaced by recent clashes. At some points Father Monga and the parish “cared for more than 3,000 refugees at the mission,” the bishop said. “This work was very important.” Mervyn Thomas of Christian Solidarity Worldwide called for a full investigation

and urged authorities to continue supporting peacebuilding in the region. The priest’s death underscores the ongoing insecurity in the Central African Republic, where the Catholic Church remains a key force for reconciliation amid years of conflict and displacement.

Vatican unveils agenda for global family summit

ROME — The Vatican has released the framework for an Oct. 7-14 meeting with the heads of Eastern Catholic Churches and presidents of bishops’ conferences, marking the 10th anniversary of “Amoris Laetitia.” The gathering will focus on how the Church can better accompany families while recognizing them as active participants in evangelization, not simply recipients of pastoral care. Organizers say the meeting is part of an ongoing process of pastoral conversion rooted in listening, discernment and lived experience. Five daily themes will guide discussions: the realities facing families today; helping young people discover the vocation of marriage; supporting couples in the early years of married life; accompanying families through hardship; and strengthening families as missionary disciples. The program will feature listening sessions, expert dialogue and the sharing of pastoral experiences as participants discern how the Holy Spirit is calling the Church to proclaim the Gospel to families today. The pope made the announcement about the fall meeting on the feast of St. Joseph, saying that he was convening it “in light of the changes that continue to impact families.” “I entrust this journey to the intercession of St. Joseph, guardian of the Holy Family of Nazareth,” he added.

Planned Parenthood to receive Medicaid funds again

WASHINGTON — A provision of the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” that stopped Planned Parenthood from receiving Medicaid payments for a year expired July 4, allowing the nation’s largest abortion provider to regain access to hundreds of millions of dollars in Medicaid funding. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed by President Donald Trump on July 4, 2025, enacted key items from his legislative agenda on issues including taxes and immigration, and also included a provision eliminating Medicaid funds to health providers who also perform abortions, but only for one year. Although it was not named in the provision, Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest abortion provider, sued in response, arguing the parameters for ending these funds effectively singled it out. However, courts eventually allowed the provision to go into effect. Pro-life groups including Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America have pushed lawmakers to include a similar provision in an upcoming reconciliation bill. Kelsey Pritchard, SBA’s communications director, told OSV News that SBA has called on lawmakers to include a similar provision in a third reconciliation bill. Republicans are seeking to pass before the midterm elections. However, the prospects for that package are unclear, amid disagreements within the party about what should be included among several other issues.

Church awaits proof of Nicaraguan bishop’s safety

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Another Nicaraguan bishop has reportedly disappeared after being detained by police, intensifying concerns over the government’s treatment of the Catholic Church. Bishop Juan Abelardo Mata was apprehended June 29, one day after celebrating Mass in Estelí and asking the faithful to pray for the persecuted Church. Nicaragua’s interior ministry claimed in a July 4 statement the 80-year-old bishop “has returned to his home, where he remains in perfect condition.” But Church observers and exiled lawyer Martha Patricia Molina said no one close to him has seen him. “Until the dictatorship does not present the emeritus bishop Juan Abelardo Mata safe and sound at his home, any statement they issue is a lie,” Molina said in an X post. She and others also reported that Father Francisco Morales was detained and his whereabouts remain unknown. The U.S. State Department condemned what it called Bishop Mata’s arbitrary detention and renewed criticism of the Ortega-Murillo government for religious persecution. The case highlights years of pressure on Nicaragua’s Church, including arrests, exile, restrictions on ministry, and blocked ordinations. More than 300 priests, religious, and seminarians, along with four bishops, are now living in exile, according to Molina.



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