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To: The Parishioners of the West Middlesex Catholic Family of Parishes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has come to my attention that divisions have arisen among some families and parishioners because some are attending religious services at a church under the direction of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). Others are asking if it is permissible for Catholics to attend religious services at this church. Is it legitimate to go to Mass there? May they receive Holy Communion at those Masses? In short, the answer to these two questions is 'no'.

The SSPX is a group which broke away from the Catholic Church in 1988, when Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre illicitly ordained four men as bishops without approval of the Holy Father at the time, St. John Paul II. The schism, essentially doctrinal in nature, was over questions mostly about the legitimacy of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and its directives. In 2009, Pope Emeritus Benedict stated that the Society has “no canonical status in the Church and its ministers cannot legitimately exercise any ministry.” Pope Francis, while allowing permission for the faithful to approach a priest of the SSPX for confession during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, continues in the direction of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

While the SSPX has much in common with Catholic teaching, the SSPX itself is not in communion with the Holy Father or the local Catholic bishops and, therefore, is not part of the Catholic Church. A conscientious Catholic should not attend a Mass or partake of any sacraments celebrated by a priest of the SSPX since the priest is not in good standing with the Church.

My prayer for you is that the faithful will not be led astray, but will remain close to Christ and his one Church, and to your pastor, celebrating “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”, as St. Paul begged of us in his *Letter to the Ephesians*:

“I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (4:1-6).

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, CSB
Bishop of London