



For decades, many traditional Catholics have prayed for full reconciliation between Rome and the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX). After years of excommunications, doctrinal discussions, gestures of goodwill, and pastoral rapprochement, it seemed that the abyss opened in 1988 could slowly be closing. However, the events of 2026 have once again placed both parties before an extremely delicate situation.

The SSPX's decision to move forward with new episcopal consecrations despite the Holy See's explicit request has awakened fears that many believed had been buried. This is not merely an administrative issue. We are facing a conflict that touches the very heart of the contemporary crisis in the Church: the relationship between Catholic Tradition and the reforms that followed the Second Vatican Council.

The Wound That Never Fully Healed

To understand what is happening today, it is necessary to remember that the problem was never merely disciplinary.

When Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre founded the SSPX in 1970, his intention was not to create a parallel Church. His goal was to preserve traditional priestly formation, traditional liturgy, and Catholic doctrine as it had been handed down for centuries.

Tensions arose because Lefebvre believed that certain interpretations of the Second Vatican Council introduced novelties incompatible with previous Magisterium, especially in matters such as:

- Religious liberty.
- Ecumenism.
- Episcopal collegiality.
- Relations between Church and State.
- The liturgical reform.

For years, he sought guarantees from Rome to ensure the continuity of Tradition. However, mutual distrust continued to grow until it culminated in the dramatic summer of 1988.

That decision to consecrate four bishops without papal mandate changed the history of modern Catholic traditionalism.

For some, it was an act of very grave disobedience.



For others, it was an extraordinary measure intended to preserve the priesthood and the traditional faith in what was considered an emergency situation.

Thirty-eight years later, the debate remains alive.

What Has Changed Since Then

It would be unfair to ignore that the current situation is very different from that of 1988.

Benedict XVI lifted the excommunications of the four surviving bishops and opened an unprecedented doctrinal dialogue.

Later, Pope Francis granted SSPX priests the faculty to hear confessions validly and facilitated the recognition of marriages celebrated by their priests.

These gestures were not insignificant.

They demonstrated that Rome recognized that the SSPX question could not be resolved simply through canonical sanctions.

There was an obvious pastoral reality: hundreds of thousands of faithful regularly attended their chapels, seminaries, and schools.

Moreover, the Church itself began to experience a growing doctrinal and disciplinary crisis that led many of Lefebvre's warnings to seem less exaggerated than they once appeared to many Catholics.

The crisis of vocations.

The secularization of the clergy.

The loss of the sense of the sacred.

Liturgical banalization.

Doctrinal confusion.

All of this has led many faithful to wonder whether some traditional criticisms contained more truth than many had been willing to admit for years.



Why Is the Holy See Opposing This Now?

From Rome's perspective, the issue is relatively clear.

The Church cannot accept a priestly community continuing to create its own episcopal structure without a stable canonical solution.

A bishop is not simply an administrator.

He represents the visible continuity of apostolic authority.

If the SSPX multiplies its bishops without an agreement with the Pope, it strengthens a parallel structure that could eventually function, in practice, as an independent jurisdiction.

And that raises a legitimate concern.

The visible unity of the Church is not a secondary element of Catholicism.

It is an essential mark of the Church founded by Christ.

Therefore, Rome interprets the Fraternity's refusal as a sign that its distrust of ecclesiastical authority remains profound.

Why Does the SSPX Insist on Moving Forward?

The traditional response is also understandable to many faithful.

The Fraternity sees a doctrinal crisis that, in its judgment, remains unresolved.

It believes that conciliar ambiguities continue to produce devastating effects in many places throughout the world.

Furthermore, many of its leaders recall that in 1988 Lefebvre acted precisely because he feared that Rome would indefinitely postpone any solution while the generation of traditional bishops disappeared.

From this perspective, the new consecrations are viewed as a measure of survival.

Not as a challenge to the papacy.



Not as a formal rupture.

But as a guarantee of continuity for future generations of priests and faithful.

The problem is that this interpretation is not shared by the Holy See.

And therein lies the collision.

The Real Problem Is Not the Bishops

Many observers make the mistake of thinking that the conflict revolves solely around the future consecrations.

The real issue is doctrinal.

It has been so for more than half a century.

If tomorrow Rome were to grant full recognition to the SSPX but require acceptance of certain interpretations of Vatican II considered incompatible with previous Magisterium, the conflict would still remain.

And if tomorrow the Fraternity suspended the consecrations but continued to reject those interpretations, there would still be no definitive solution.

The consecrations are merely the visible symptom of a much deeper question.

A question that affects the very understanding of Catholic Tradition.

What Should Concern Catholics

There is a real danger that many faithful will turn this situation into a war of factions.

That would be a mistake.

Because the problem will not be solved through insults directed at Rome.

Nor through demonization of the SSPX.

Traditional Catholics must remember that the Pope remains the Pope.



And those who defend Rome's position should remember that millions of faithful attached to Tradition are not enemies of the Church, but sons and daughters who deeply love the faith received from their forefathers.

The tragedy would be for both sides to drift even further apart.

History shows that schisms rarely begin with solemn declarations.

They are usually born from decades of mutual misunderstanding, accumulated suspicions, and missed opportunities.

A Time for Prudence and Prayer

If we are truly facing the most delicate moment since 1988, Catholics should respond in a manner very different from that proposed by the world.

Not with campaigns of hatred.

Not with partisan celebrations.

Not with triumphalism.

But with prayer, penance, and charity.

Traditional faithful have the right to love the Traditional Mass, to defend the Catholic doctrine of all time, and to respectfully express their concerns regarding the current crisis.

But they must also remember that the unity of the Church is not a negotiable value.

Likewise, those who occupy positions of authority in Rome should ask themselves whether the solution truly lies in increasing disciplinary pressure or in courageously addressing the doctrinal questions that have remained unresolved for decades.

Because the reality is evident.

The SSPX question will not disappear.

It did not disappear with the excommunications.

It did not disappear with the passing of years.



And it will probably not disappear through administrative decrees either.

The true solution will only arrive when the Church addresses with clarity, serenity, and fidelity to Tradition the questions that have remained open since the Second Vatican Council.

Until then, each new episode will remind us that the wound of 1988 never fully healed.