



**STATEMENT BY THE MOST REVEREND RICHARD G. LENNON, BISHOP OF CLEVELAND:
BACKGROUND ON THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF THE REVEREND ROBERT J. MARRONE**

After numerous unsuccessful attempts requesting his reconciliation with the Catholic Church, it is with sadness that in accordance with Canon (church) law I publicly declare that The Reverend Robert J. Marrone has elected to disassociate himself from the Church. By violating the terms of his leave of absence and by taking a leadership role with a group that has removed itself from the governance of the Bishop of Cleveland, he has incurred the penalty of excommunication for the delict (canonical crime) of schism.

It is important to emphasize that a person who is excommunicated is still a member of the Church. Excommunication is meant to be the Church's way of informing a person that he or she is doing something that harms the Church and also harms his or her relationship with God. The desired effect of excommunication is not to ban someone from the Church permanently. Rather, it is a temporary status meant to be medicinal and to encourage the person to reconcile with the Church.

I pray that this action may be perceived by the faithful as an initiative to bring unity and peace to the Body of Christ. Accordingly, I wish to share the following background in order to foster understanding and avoid further confusion among the faithful.

Father Marrone's recent actions have been in direct defiance of the Church's teachings and authority.

As part of a comprehensive reconfiguration plan for the Diocese of Cleveland, I announced in March 2009 my decision to close St. Peter Parish in Cleveland, where Father Marrone was pastor. Subsequent to that announcement, some members of St. Peter Parish filed articles of incorporation with the State of Ohio to form a not-for-profit entity known as the Community of St. Peter.

In April 2010, four days after he celebrated the final Mass at St. Peter Parish, Father Marrone requested a one-year leave of absence from active priestly ministry. In granting that request, I made clear to him that the conditions of the leave of absence included the prohibition of public celebration of the sacraments. Father Marrone acknowledged his understanding of and acceptance of these conditions.

Notwithstanding that acknowledgment, however, Father Marrone has knowingly and repeatedly celebrated the sacraments as "pastor-administrator" of the Community of St. Peter.

In July 2010, after I became aware that the Community of St. Peter was making plans to hold Mass in rented space in Cleveland, I met with Father Marrone in another effort to reconcile him with the Church. However, he would not engage in conversation. Further efforts that summer to arrange meetings with Father Marrone and the board of trustees of the Community of St. Peter were unsuccessful.

In January 2011, I met with Father Marrone and gave him a formal document containing a canonical warning that he needed to resign from leadership of the Community of St. Peter. Two days later I received a letter in which Father Marrone stated, "It is my decision to remain in my present relationship with the Community of St. Peter."

After the Congregation for the Clergy ruled in the spring of 2012 that St. Peter Parish must be reopened, I attempted without success to engage Father Marrone in conversation in hopes that a reconciliation with him could be brought about. In May of that year I met with Father Marrone and informed him that he had lost his office as pastor of St. Peter Parish under Canon law and again invited him to reconcile with the Church. Six days later I received a letter in which he expressed his refusal to comply with my directive to leave the Community of St. Peter.

Later that month I met with representatives of St. Peter Parish and of the Community of St. Peter to plan for the reopening of St. Peter Parish. In July 2012 I met again with representatives of both groups to discuss the finances of the soon-to-be-reopened St. Peter Parish and with an eye toward encouraging the people of the Community of St. Peter to return to the parish. Father Robert Kropac, the newly appointed pastor of St. Peter Parish, also was present at the second meeting.

The opening Mass of St. Peter Parish was held on September 9, 2012. In late September I invited Father Marrone once more to meet to discuss reconciliation, but he refused. Approximately one month later I initiated an administrative penal process as prescribed in Canon law. Father Marrone was invited to mandate an advocate to represent him in the process, but he refused to do so. Therefore, I appointed *ex officio* a canon lawyer from the Diocese of Youngstown to represent his interests. Father Marrone has chosen not to communicate with the advocate.

I have attempted to notify Father Marrone of this public declaration and am open to meeting with the leadership of the Community of St. Peter to discuss this serious matter with me.

It remains my fervent hope that Catholics everywhere can once again be united by prayer and charity. I pray that we may come together with God's help and strive to strengthen our diocesan Catholic community of Cleveland.

Cleveland, Ohio
4 March, 2013