

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EXCOMMUNICATION
OF THE REVEREND ROBERT J. MARRONE**

EXCOMMUNICATION

1 What is excommunication?

Excommunication is a medicinal penalty that results from knowingly and willingly committing an act, the gravity of which causes a rupture in the communion with the Catholic Church. When a bishop declares an excommunication, the 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. The excommunicated person cannot participate in the sacramental life of the Church until the excommunication is absolved.

2 What is schism?

Schism occurs when a baptized Catholic withdraws from unity with the pope or the local bishop and the faithful under him.

3 Why doesn't the bishop look the other way?

The bishop, as the chief shepherd of the Church in the Diocese of Cleveland, has the responsibility to make sure that people are not misled by false teachings. He is to protect the people and make sure that scandal does not lead them astray. He also has to uphold the true teachings and practices of the Catholic Faith.

4 Was Father Marrone warned that he could be excommunicated?

Father Marrone received several formal warnings to desist actions that were in violation of Canon (church) law. On October 29, 2012, Bishop Lennon initiated an administrative penal process as described in Canon law.

5 Why does the Diocese of Cleveland have to make this public?

Father Marrone has committed the canonical crime of schism. Multiple times, he was formally called to withdraw from that schism. The Church is obliged to make public the fact of his status, lest the faithful be confused and even led into the error of joining him in schism.

6 Was the action taken at this time because of the papal vacancy?

This is a local matter under the authority of the Bishop of Cleveland. The administrative penal process as prescribed in Canon law began nearly five months ago and does not relate in any way to the unforeseeable decision by the Holy Father.

7 How often are people excommunicated by the Church?

While formal declarations are not frequent, over the past decade there have been well-publicized excommunications elsewhere in the United States involving a mission-order priest as well as a priest and two laypersons. It is a rare occurrence and one that is taken only when the unity of the Church is threatened.

8 Has anyone ever been excommunicated in the Diocese of Cleveland?

The most recent formal declaration of excommunication was in 2002.

- 9 **Isn't excommunication more divisive than uniting?**
Excommunication is more than a penalty for past actions; it's really an urgent call to reform one's conduct in the future. Excommunication is classified as a "medicinal penalty" by the Church precisely because its main purpose is to bring about reform in the individual. Having certain actions punished by excommunication demonstrates that certain actions are gravely wrong in themselves and cause deep harm both to their perpetrators and to others. The hope of this excommunication, and all excommunications, is that the parties will be awakened to their offenses and seek to return to full communion in the Church.
- 10 **If one is excommunicated, does that mean the person is going to hell?**
We believe that is a question for God.

FATHER MARRONE

- 11 **Can Father Marrone appeal the excommunication?**
Canon (church) law allows for a decree of excommunication to be appealed to the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome.
- 12 **What if the decree is reversed?**
It would be inappropriate to speculate on such an occurrence.
- 13 **Why wasn't Bishop Lennon more patient with Father Marrone?**
Bishop Lennon has repeatedly attempted to engage in meaningful dialogue with Father Marrone. His efforts at reconciliation with the Church have been consistently rejected or ignored by Father Marrone.
- 14 **Why wasn't Father Marrone allowed to return as pastor of St. Peter Parish after it reopened?**
By publicly celebrating the sacraments and taking a leadership role with a group that removed itself from the governance of the Bishop of Cleveland, Father Marrone violated the terms of his leave of absence and incurred the penalty of excommunication for the delict (canonical crime) of schism.
- 15 **Do you really think Father Marrone will change?**
That is something that is between Father Marrone and God.
- 16 **Has Father Marrone been receiving a salary from the Diocese?**
Father Marrone has not been receiving a salary from the Diocese since April 9, 2010, when he began his leave of absence.
- 17 **Will Father Marrone receive a pension from the Diocese?**
Father Marrone's eligibility to receive the prescribed benefits is protected by civil law.

THE COMMUNITY OF SAINT PETER

- 18 **Is it all right for me to go to Sunday Mass at the Community of St. Peter?**
One does not fulfill the Sunday obligation to attend Mass at the Community of St. Peter or any other schismatic parish.
- 19 **Can I go to confession to Father Marrone, or can he officiate at my wedding?**
No. Father Marrone does not have permission to celebrate the sacraments.