

# The Catholic Church's Teaching on Excommunication

David L. Gray, ThM

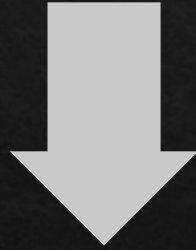
# What is Ex-Communication

- ◆ Excommunication, Lat. Excommunicare meaning, ex (out of) – community / put out of the community / to expel from communion. Excommunication wounds our communion with God and neighbor/Christ and His Church.
- ◆ Those who are not excommunicated (i.e., those in communion with Christ and His Church) are eligible to receive Holy Communion.
- ◆ There are various means for reconciliation for the excommunicated.
- ◆ Unique terms, *latae sententiae* for self-imposed wounds of communion (e.g., belonging to a sect of Freemasonry), but not inclusive of all self-imposed, and *ferendae sententiae* for Church-imposed (e.g., the formal act of an ecclesiastical censure).

# Two Avenues of Ex-Communicated

## Self-Imposed

- Not in Full Communion (not automatic)
- Grave Sin (automatic)
- Latae sententiae (ipso facto/already passed)



## Imposed by Ecclesial Authorities

- **Three Types of Censures**
  1. Interdict
  2. Just Penalty
  3. Formal Excommunication
- Medicinally purposed

# Self-Imposed Ex-Communication

## Self-Imposed

- Not in Full Communion (not automatic)

*Not in Full Communion due to Profession*, includes those who have not been Baptized and Professed the Catholic Faith (e.g., Protestants), and in the West (Latin), includes those who have been Baptized but not admitted to First Communion. Unique to the West ever since the Sacraments of Initiation were separated due to historical accidents; since then, we have effectively ex-communicated children until the non-Sacrament of First Communion was able to be administered on them. Practice is foreign outside of the Latin West.

Reconciliation, the Sacraments of Initiation / First Communion

# Self-Imposed Ex-Communication

## Self-Imposed

- Grave Sin  
(automatic)

*Not in Communion due to Sin*, which is an offense against God. It wounds the nature of man and injures our communion (solidarity) with each other. Mortal sin (grave matter, full knowledge with deliberate consent) turns man away from God (wounds/not permanent breaks our communion with God). Grave matter is specified by the Decalogue. (Cf. CCC. 1849 – 1864).

Not adhering to the obligatory five moral precepts of the Church also wounds communion. Cf. CCC 2041 - 2043

Reconciliation, requires Conversion, Penance, Reconciliation (Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation for Grave Sins)

# Self-Imposed Ex-Communication

## Self-Imposed

- **Latae  
sententiae**  
(ipso facto/already  
passed)

*Not in Communion due to Canonical Law.* The CIC (1364 ->) specifically delineates instances by which a person breaks communion with Christ and His Church ipso facto. For example,

- Can. 1367 A person who throws away the consecrated species or takes or retains them for a sacrilegious purpose incurs a latae sententiae excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; moreover, a cleric can be punished with another penalty, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state.
- Can. 1382 A bishop who consecrates some one a bishop without a pontifical mandate and the person who receives the consecration from him incur a latae sententiae excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See.
- Can. 1398 A person who procures a completed abortion incurs a latae sententiae excommunication.

Reconciliation, typically reserved to the Apostolic see or special permission given to lower clergy (e.g., jubilee year)

# Ex-Communication Ecclesiastically Imposed

## Imposed by Church

- Interdict – not always an imposition against communion, but always disciplinary

*Not in Communion due to Interdict Censure.* Cf – CIC 1332 – An interdict binds the person on whom it was imposed according to specified prescriptions. For example, 2022, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone issues an Interdict against US Representative Nancy Pelosi binding her to not being admitted to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist until after conversion, penance, and reconciliation (literally, not in communion under this Interdict). 1955, Archbishop Joseph Rummel placed an entire chapel under interdict for refusing a Black priest admittance. This interdict halted Masses and the dissemination of Holy Communion to the community for three years (literally, the entire chapel was not in communion under this Interdict). After my annulment was granted in 2009, not allowed to enter into the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony again until after I received counseling (only to the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony – no other sacrament).

Reconciliation – always specified and varies. Typically reserved to the Ordinary.

# Ex-Communication Ecclesiastically Imposed

## Imposed by Church

- Just Penalty

*Not in Communion due to a Just Penalty Censure.* Cf - CIC 1333 - 1338 - Just Penalties are strictly under the preview of the ecclesia office, and includes suspension of clerics only, Expiratory penalties (i.e., act of appeasing or making well-disposed).

- E.g., CIC 2335 “A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict.” - E.g., Benedict XIV
- E.g., 4/15/1996 Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz, restrict access to the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist for Catholics who belonged to Planned Parenthood, the Freemasons (and appendant/adopted/affiliated orders for children and women), the Hemlock Society, Catholics for a Free Choice, Call to Action, the Society of Saint Pius X (specially Saint Michael the Archangel Chapel)

Reconciliation - always specified and varies



# Ex-Communication Ecclesiastically Imposed

## Imposed by Church

- Excommunication

### *Not in Communion due to a Exommunication.*

- Can. 1318 – for grave transgressions
  - Formal, imposed (on file) or publicly declared, declaratory pronouncement from ecclesiastical authority
- Can. 1331 – forbidden from
  - Any ministerial participation in celebrating the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist or any other ceremonies of worship whatsoever
  - To celebrate the sacraments or sacramentals and to receive the sacraments
  - To exercise any ecclesiastic offices, ministries, or functions whatsoever or to place acts of governance.

Reconciliation, typically reserved to the ordinary or to the Apostolic See. For more on the complexity of penalties and relief (e.g., under the danger of death), see CIC. 1341 - 1363