

Pope Francis Excommunicates Pro-Gay Marriage Priest for 'Heresy'

Last week, Pope Francis encouraged Christians to stop “obsessing” over moral issues like homosexuality and abortion and called for a greater study of the role of women in the church. However, this week, Fr. Greg Reynolds of Melbourne, Australia, told the *National Catholic Reporter* he believes Pope Francis recently excommunicated him for his vocal support of the gay community and women’s ordination.

Excommunication is the harshest penalty the Catholic Church can dole out. It means an individual is no longer allowed to participate in the sacraments or worship ceremonies and can never officiate Mass again.

Reynolds says Pope Francis sent him a letter dated May 31 and written in Latin—a letter that gave no official explanation for the excommunication but that accused Reynolds of heresy and claimed he had violated the sacrament of the Eucharist.

✖ Because Reynolds doesn’t know the Latin language, Melbourne archdiocese canon lawyer Fr. John Salvano translated the letter for him. The news came as a huge shock to Reynolds. “The Vatican never contacted me and it gives no explanation,” Reynolds told the *National Catholic Reporter*. “My excommunication is in the best traditions of the Inquisition. I am very surprised that this order has come under his [Pope Francis’s] watch; it seems so inconsistent with everything else he has said and done.

“In times past, excommunication was a huge thing, but today the hierarchy has lost such trust and respect. I’ve come to this position because I’ve followed by conscience on women’s ordination and gay marriage.”

The *Catholic Reporter* says the order came directly from the Vatican and not from Melbourne Archbishop Denis Hart, Reynolds' former superior. Hart told the newspaper that Reynolds was excommunicated because "after his priestly faculties were withdrawn, he continued to celebrate the Eucharist publicly and preach contrary to the teachings of the church."

The letter stated that the decree is "a final and unappealable decision and subject to no recourse" and that the decree was "to be imposed on said priest for the good of the Church." The document was signed by Archbishop Gerhard Muller, prefect for the congregation, and his secretary, Jesuit Archbishop Luis Ladaria.

Reynolds told the *Catholic Reporter* that he has attended rallies advocating same-sex marriages in Melbourne during the past two years. He also has officiated Mass weddings of gay couples that were "unofficial, of course," he says.

In 2011, Reynolds resigned as a parish priest and in 2012 founded Inclusive Catholics, an organization that supports women's ordination and gay marriage.

Although Pope Francis has called for increased compassion for women and gays, he still does not condone homosexuality or women's ordination. The Catholic Church continues its stance against both.

According to the *National Catholic Reporter*, Reynolds became the second Australian Catholic to be excommunicated, following that of Sister Mary MacKillop in 2010. She was excommunicated by her local bishop but was reinstated.

Reynolds says that despite his excommunication, he will continue to push for reform in the Catholic Church.

"My motivation is trying to encourage reform and clear need for renewal in the church," he told *The Standard* newspaper. "I

still love the church and am committed to it. I'm just trying to bring about in my own little way to help highlight some of the failings and limitations."