

An Update on my Laicization: Interview of Pro-life Leader Frank Pavone by Theresa Watson, Executive Manager, Priests for Life

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What happened?

I was treated so badly by certain bishops that any possibility of communication and trust broke down years ago... and you need both trust and communication to resolve problems.

It boils down to the fact that I committed my life and ministry to ending abortion, and some did not want me to do that. We don't want a priest sending this signal, because it seems we're sending this signal. He's not speaking for us! There's a division in the Church, and the way these disputes go depends on who is in power.

My message and mission have not changed; my request of the Church is simple: allow me to serve the Church by serving the unborn.

Why they keep changing from saying yes to no to maybe is something they will need to answer.

What are they punishing you for?

Well, I could rehearse 21 years of complaints, but as we shot down every one of them, they just kept inventing new ones.

It's political. Some don't like what I'm doing. I'm rocking the boat. I'm causing people to say, "Why isn't our bishop speaking like this or giving this level of importance to the abortion issue or calling out these pro-abortion politicians?"

It's not about taking the position that abortion is wrong. It's the level of priority and intensity. It's my call that we can't fight this as just an issue or one among many issues – but that we have to drop everything and respond to it as a monumental emergency.

What are the restrictions?

Cannot publicly present myself as a priest (change of wardrobe); can't administer the sacraments (unless in a life-death emergency).

What are people supposed to call you?

I am fine with whatever they choose.

Most people who have called me "Father" still call me Father, because first of all they realize that I'm still a priest according to Catholic doctrine (when they reinstate me, they won't have to re-ordain me), and second, because there's a relationship there. They've been blessed by my preaching, teaching, example, sacraments (deacon training), etc.

You don't erase 35 years of that with a piece of paper.

But also, throughout my life, I've been called "Frank" or "brother" or "pastor," because I've worked not just in Catholic circles but across the Body of Christ and beyond.

If you're not a priest, how can you be leading Priests for Life?

Well, first of all, because my board is convinced, unanimously, that I'm the best person to lead this ministry that I've led for 30 years and haven't forgotten how.

The thousands of priests who belong to Priests for Life are still priests, and we've acquired a lot of experience in how to serve and encourage and equip them to fight abortion. Why should we stop?

Think of it like this – some priests are assigned to be fulltime faculty members at a university. Most of what they do doesn't require priestly ordination. They can teach class just like their lay colleagues do, and if they are removed from the priesthood, that doesn't remove their ability to teach and to teach well.

Likewise, I teach, write, broadcast, convene meetings, strategize, etc.

If I were a chaplain whose fulltime job were hearing confessions and saying mass, that would be a problem.

But most of what I do does not require priestly functions.

Priests for Life serves *the priests out there* – it's not about me saying Mass for them... it's about them saying Mass and preaching about abortion. And we know how to teach them to do that.

So we're going to keep doing that.

For most priests, being dismissed from the priesthood means they've lost their job, their salary, their home, and their staff. None of that is true of me. We are financially and juridically independent from the bishops and the Vatican, although we remain thoroughly Catholic.

And nothing changes, therefore, about who gets your donations to Priests for Life – that support is accomplishing exactly what it was accomplishing before.

Some are conflicted because they believe in what you're doing but want to be obedient to the Pope.

Well the Pope told me that he believes in what I'm doing too.

He's not telling people not to support this work, and he's certainly not telling me I can't do what I'm doing now in the lay state.

What reason would he have for that?

So this is not a conflict.

Will you be reinstated?

I can be. More information is being sent to the Pope that he may not have been aware of when he signed off on this.

But it may also have to wait for a change of personnel, not only in the papacy but in the Congregation for Clergy as well. It was a personnel change that preceded their recommendation to do this. Previous personnel there supported our work.

Some have suggested that you could have avoided this.

Sure. By betraying my conscience and stopping my pro-life work, scandalizing the faithful and walking away from the burning building, I could have gotten them to stop punishing me.

Or, if I were choosing “the work I want to do” over my priesthood, I could have taken the easy way out and just left the priesthood as soon as I realized they wanted me out (about 13 years now).

Pres Trump could have avoided all the stuff happening to him by just going along with the Left’s policies and the globalist effort to sideline America.

But they had to resort to throwing me out, because I was doing everything possible to live my pro-life vocation as a priest.

And some have presumed to say it’s not a vocation. That’s insulting, as if they know better. I know what’s in my own heart and conscience. And it’s shown itself to all the world in these 30 years of uninterrupted work. (Watch my Daily Diary at www.PriestsForLife.org/Daily-Diary).

And it was affirmed by Cardinal O’Connor, by Bishop Yanta, by the Vatican Visitor, and by Bishop Sheridan and numerous others.

But most importantly, it has been affirmed by the People of God.

How are you taking this?

Well, you tell me. How do I seem?

Obviously, the priesthood means a lot to me – and this is very disappointing that the men who are supposed to nourish my vocation have instead chosen to oppose it.

But I am at peace, because I know I’ve done nothing wrong, *and I’ve done nothing different* than from the first day I asked Cardinal O’Connor’s permission... and I’m at peace because I will never violate my conscience, and I can continue doing my work.

Remember, I can be at peace because this is not something I did... it was done to me... and it doesn’t stop me from sounding the alarm and being the pro-life leader I know I’m called to be.

And I'm not leaving my priesthood on the ground. I'm knocking at the door, and will do so as long as it takes, to be reinstated.