

Dogmatic Ban on Religious Communion with Heretics

by RJMI

It is an infallible dogma of the Catholic Church that Catholics are forbidden to be in any kind of religious communion with all heretics and all schismatics. Hence Catholics are dogmatically forbidden to pray with heretics, to receive any sacrament from heretics, to administer any sacrament to heretics, to attend the sermons or religious meetings or conferences of heretics, to read the religious works of heretics without a dispensation, and to participate in the Mass or other religious services of heretics in their non-Catholic churches or anywhere else.

Popes' infallible teachings on the dogma

Several popes have infallibly defined the dogma that Catholics are banned from any kind of religious communion with heretics. And some of these decrees also contain the good and necessary disciplinary laws that ban Catholics from temporal communion with heretics and the necessary punishments against them:

Apostolic Canons (1st century)

Apostolic Canons, 1st century: "Canon 54. If any clergyman or layman shall enter into a synagogue of Jews or heretics to pray, let the former be deposed and let the latter be excommunicated."

Council of Carthage (257 AD)

Council of Carthage, 257 AD: "One must neither pray nor sing psalms with heretics, and whosoever shall communicate with those who are cut off from the communion of the Church, whether clergy or layman, let him be excommunicated."

Council of Laodicea (390 AD)

Council of Laodicea, 390 AD: "Canon 33. No one shall pray in common with heretics and schismatics.

...Canon 6. It is not permitted to heretics to enter the house of God while they continue in heresy."

Third Council of Constantinople (680-681 AD)

Third Council of Constantinople, 680-681 AD: "If any ecclesiastic or layman shall go into the synagogue of the Jews or the meeting-houses of the heretics to join in prayer with them, let them be deposed and deprived of communion. If any bishop or priest or deacon shall join in prayer with heretics, let him be suspended from communion."

Second Lateran Council (1139 AD)

Second Lateran Council, 1139 AD: "23. Those who, simulating a kind of religiosity, condemn the sacrament of the Lord's body and blood, the baptism of children, the priesthood and other ecclesiastical orders, and legitimate marriages, we expel from the church of God and condemn as heretics, and prescribe that they be constrained by the temporal powers. We also bind up their defenders in the fetter of the same condemnation."

Third Lateran Council (1179 AD)

Third Lateran Council, 1179 AD: "Chapter 27, Heresies to be avoided: ... Since in Gascony and the regions of Albi and Toulouse and in other places the loathsome heresy of those whom some call the Cathars, others the Patarenes, others the Publicani, and others by different names, has grown so strong that they no longer practise their wickedness in secret, as others do, but proclaim their error publicly and draw the simple and weak to join them, we declare that they and their defenders and those who receive them are under anathema, and we forbid under pain of anathema that anyone should keep or support them in their houses or lands or should trade with them. If anyone dies in this sin, then neither under cover of our privileges granted to anyone, nor for any other reason, is Mass to be offered for them or are they to receive burial among Christians. With regard to the Brabanters, Aragonese, Navarrese, Basques, Coterelli and Triaverdini, who practise such cruelty upon Christians that they respect neither churches nor monasteries, and spare neither widows, orphans, old or young nor any age or sex, but like pagans destroy and lay everything waste, we likewise decree that those who hire, keep or support them, in the districts where they rage around, should be denounced publicly on Sundays and other solemn days in the churches, that they should be subject in every way to the same sentence and penalty as the

above-mentioned heretics and that they should not be received into the communion of the church, unless they abjure their pernicious society and heresy. As long as such people persist in their wickedness, let all who are bound to them by any pact know that they are free from all obligations of loyalty, homage or any obedience. On these and on all the faithful we enjoin, for the remission of sins, that they oppose this scourge with all their might and by arms protect the Christian people against them. Their goods are to be confiscated and princes free to subject them to slavery.”

Fourth Lateran Council (1215 AD)

Fourth Lateran Council, 1215 AD: “3. On Heretics - We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy raising itself up against this holy, orthodox and catholic faith which we have expounded above. We condemn all heretics, whatever names they may go under. They have different faces indeed but their tails are tied together inasmuch as they are alike in their pride. Let those condemned be handed over to the secular authorities present, or to their bailiffs, for due punishment. Clerics are first to be degraded from their orders. The goods of the condemned are to be confiscated, if they are lay persons, and if clerics they are to be applied to the churches from which they received their stipends. ... Catholics who take the cross and gird themselves up for the expulsion of heretics shall enjoy the same indulgence, and be strengthened by the same holy privilege, as is granted to those who go to the aid of the Holy Land. Moreover, we determine to subject to excommunication believers who receive, defend or support heretics.”

Council of Vienne (1311-1312 AD)

Council of Vienne, 1311-1312 AD: “In regard to the custody of prisons for heretics, commonly called walls in certain regions... We decree that any such prison or wall, which we wish for the future to be for the joint use of bishop and inquisitor, shall have two principal guards, discreet, diligent and trustworthy, one to be appointed and provided for by the bishop, the other by the inquisitor.”

Council of Constance (1414-1418 AD)

Council of Constance, 1414-1418 AD: “Those who stubbornly assert the opposite of the aforesaid are to be confined as heretics and severely punished by the local bishops or their officials or the inquisitors of heresy in the kingdoms or provinces in which anything is attempted or presumed against this

decree, according to the canonical and legitimate sanctions that have been wisely established in favour of the Catholic Faith against heretics and their supporters... This holy synod also decrees and declares, regarding this matter, that instructions are to be sent to the most reverend fathers and lords in Christ, patriarchs, primates, archbishops, bishops, and their vicars in spirituals, wherever they may be, in which they are to be commissioned and ordered on the authority of this sacred council and under pain of excommunication, to punish effectively those who err against this decree. ... They are to repress heretics... by means of the Church’s censures and even if necessary by calling in the help of the secular arm, those of them whose hearts have become hardened and who are unwilling to return to penance.”

Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517 AD)

Fifth Lateran Council, 1512-1517 AD: “Session 8: And since truth cannot contradict truth, we define that every statement contrary to the enlightened truth of the faith is totally false and we strictly forbid teaching otherwise to be permitted. We decree that all those who cling to erroneous statements of this kind, thus sowing heresies which are wholly condemned, should be avoided in every way and punished as detestable and odious heretics and infidels who are undermining the Catholic faith. ... All false Christians and those with evil sentiments towards the faith, of whatever race or nation they may be, as well as heretics and those stained with some taint of heresy, or Judaizers, are to be totally excluded from the company of Christ’s faithful and expelled from any position, especially from the Roman curia, and punished with an appropriate penalty...”

(For an in-depth teaching, see RJMI book *Faith before the Mass and Sacraments: The Dogmatic Ban on Religious Communion with Heretics.*)

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