

What is the relationship between Sister Louise Lears, S.C. and the Archdiocese of St. Louis?

Sister Louise Lears, a Sister of Charity, is a member of the Pastoral Team at St. Cronan's Catholic Church in South St. Louis, and a Coordinator of Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis.

Why is the Archbishop concerned about her actions?

The Archbishop was made aware that Sister Louise Lears actively participated in the attempted female ordinations in St. Louis in November 2007 (see background on www.archstl.org in the News section). In the apostolic letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, Pope John Paul II reaffirmed that the Catholic Church has no authority to confer priestly ordination on women. This teaching is to be held definitively by all the faithful as belonging to the deposit of faith.

What is the most recent development?

In January, the Archbishop privately issued to Sister Louise Lears a summons and canonical admonition. According to the teachings of the Church and Canon Law, a canonical admonition is a warning communicated by the Archbishop that informs someone that he/she is suspected of having committed a grave violation against Church teachings or law. It also informs the person who receives the letter that he/she should stop violating the law, and make amends to repair any harm done as a result. It is considered the most earnest request imaginable to warn the faithful that he/she is in grave spiritual danger.

The Archbishop met with Sister Louise Lears to inform her of his concerns. These concerns included her repeated public advocacy of the attempted ordination of women, and the harmful spiritual impact her actions were having on others while serving as an employee of a parish of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Because Sister Lears has not acknowledged that her public actions are contrary to definitive Catholic teaching, which Canon law requires her to do, the Archbishop is obliged to issue the penalty of interdict. This means that Sister Louise Lears cannot have any ministerial part in the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Eucharist or in any other ceremonies of public worship, or receive any Sacrament until she repents. The penalty of interdict is aimed at calling the persons away from their sin and to reconciliation with Christ and His Church.

What happens to her position at St. Cronan's Catholic Church and with the Archdiocese of St. Louis?

She is relieved of her positions as a member of the Pastoral Team at St. Cronan's Catholic Church and Coordinator of Religious Education anywhere in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Why does the Archdiocese of St. Louis have to make this public?

Because the person who has committed the offense has continually and publicly rejected a teaching of the Catholic Faith while serving as a member of the Pastoral Team of a parish in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

The penalty of interdict seems harsh and divisive.

An interdict is really an urgent call to reform one's conduct in the future. It's 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 interdict demonstrates that certain actions are gravely wrong in themselves and cause deep harm both to their perpetrators and to others. The hope of this interdict, and all interdicts, is that the parties will be awakened to their offenses and seek to return to full Communion in the Church.

What if I support female ordination? Does that mean I will be placed under interdict?

What a person holds privately is a matter of conscience, and conscience must be formed according to the truth as it is enunciated in the Church's teaching. The penalty of interdict would only be imposed upon someone who, by a serious and external action, denied the truth that the Church cannot ordain a woman to the Sacred Priesthood. What is more, the penalty would only be imposed after a careful canonical process, in which the person accused is given ample opportunity to respond to the accusation and defend him/herself. When a person in a leadership position in the Church or a member of a religious order publicly writes and acts in a manner contrary to the Church's teaching, it causes serious confusion about what the Church teaches and leads people into error about the same. In such a situation, the Archbishop must intervene to make clear the Church's teaching and to repair the harm caused.

For more information about the Church's teaching on female ordination, log onto www.archstl.org.