



“Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

JOHN 20:23

Not in full communion with the teaching of the Church?

If you have become aware that you are **not in full communion with the teaching of the Church**—for example, by knowingly and obstinately rejecting a defined doctrine or moral teaching—you are already taking the first step: *recognition* of a rupture in communion. The Church teaches that the **Eucharist presupposes communion**; you may not receive Holy Communion while you remain outside that visible bond. Consequently, the Church asks those in this situation to seek **re-conversion** and **re-entry** into the communion of the Body of Christ.

Practical Steps Toward Restoration

Step	What to Do	Why it Matters (Teaching / Canon Law)
1. Examine Your Conscience in Prayer	Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any errors of belief or practice. Use a Examen or a simple “Lord, show me where I have strayed.”	A well-formed conscience is the foundation for authentic conversion.
2. Seek Reliable Catholic Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church (especially §§ 208–210 on the Church’s teaching authority).• Study the relevant papal documents (e.g., <i>Ecclesia de Eucharistia</i>, <i>Mysterium Fidei</i>).	The Church supplies the “visible dimension” of communion—faith, sacraments, and hierarchical order.

Step	What to Do	Why it Matters (Teaching / Canon Law)
3. Talk with a Priest or Spiritual Director	Arrange a confidential meeting. Explain the specific points of tension you perceive. The priest can clarify doctrine, recommend reading, and discern any canonical penalty that may apply.	A pastor's guidance is part of the "hierarchical communion" that makes sacramental life possible.
4. Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation	Confess the sins attached to the rupture (e.g., obstinate denial of doctrine). The priest, acting in the person of Christ, will absolve you and <i>lift any latae sententiae excommunication</i> (e.g., for schism or heresy).	Canon 1331 § 1 prohibits an excommunicated person from receiving the sacraments; confession removes that impediment.
5. Make a Profession of Faith (if required)	If you have formally separated (e.g., publicly declared schism), the Church may ask you to re-profess the faith before being readmitted to full communion.	Public defectors incur <i>latae sententiae</i> excommunication (Canon 1364 § 1) that is removed only through a sacramental act of reconciliation and a renewed profession of faith .
6. Return to Full Participation in the Life of the Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Mass — but abstain from receiving Holy Communion until you are certain you are in communion again. Join a catechetical program or a small-group study to deepen your understanding. Live out the Church's moral teachings in daily life. 	Full communion requires faith, sacraments, and obedience to Church authority (Lumen Gentium § 11) and is the "source and summit" of the Christian life.
7. Remain Vigilant	Continue regular prayer, examination of conscience, and ongoing formation to avoid slipping again.	The Church calls the faithful to "continuous conversion" and "growth in holiness".

Canonical Consequences to Know

- **Loss of Office / Excommunication** – Canon 194 § 1 removes a person from ecclesiastical office if they "publicly defect from the communion of the Church."

- **Excommunication for Schism/Heresy** – Canon 1364 § 1 declares a **latae sententiae** (automatic) excommunication for schism, heresy, or apostasy.
- **Removal of Penalties** – These censures are lifted **only through the sacrament of confession** (or, when appropriate, a formal act of repentance before the competent authority).

Thus, if you have incurred any of these penalties, **confession and a sincere act of repentance** are the ordinary means of reconciliation.

A Short Prayer for the Journey

Lord Jesus, you are the source of all communion. Help me to recognize where I have strayed, grant me humility to accept your Church's teaching, and guide me to the priest who will lead me back into full communion. Through your Holy Spirit, restore in me the desire for unity with you and with all your faithful. Amen.

Summary

1. **Acknowledge** the rupture and pray for honest self-examination.
2. **Learn** the Church's teaching through the Catechism and magisterial documents.
3. **Consult** a priest for clarification and sacramental help.
4. **Receive** the Sacrament of Reconciliation (which lifts any excommunication).
5. **Re-profess** the faith if required, then **re-enter** the liturgical life, abstaining from Communion until you are sure of full communion.
6. **Stay formed** in faith and moral practice to sustain the restored communion.

By following these steps, you act in accordance with the Church's call to **conversion, communion, and holiness**—the very heart of Catholic life.