

REVEREND DAVID L. DEIBEL, JD, JCL
CANONICAL CONSULTING ASSOCIATES

November 9, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I write in regard to Pro-life Leader Frank Pavone and his organization Priests for Life, to indicate that it is perfectly legitimate for a Catholic to support him and his pro-life work. I have assisted Frank and his organization on canonical matters for decades. I have come to know him, his team, and their activities very well through these years of work and interaction.

Frank Pavone continues his wholehearted dedication to living the *Gospel of Life* as a faithful son of the Catholic Church. Though he could on numerous occasions have used his situation as an excuse to leave the Church or engage in public rebellion against the hierarchy, he has not done so. Instead, while sharing his story openly and honestly, he has expressed his union with and respect for Church authority, and has made clear his request that the Holy Father reconsider the action by which, in November of 2022, he dismissed him from the clerical state, and readmit him to priestly ministry. Such a decision is exclusively in the hands of the Pope and his successor.

Frank and many others consider his dismissal from the priesthood to be unjust. Nonetheless, he has abided by the restrictions placed upon him, including refraining from any public celebration of the sacraments or presenting himself as a priest. He was obedient even when Church authorities told him he could not celebrate the funeral Mass of his own Dad, who passed away just 11 days after Frank was informed of his dismissal from priestly ministry.

In the meantime, it is important to remember that Frank Pavone's dismissal from the clerical state in no way alters the ontological change an individual undergoes at ordination. As countless people have told him, "You are a priest forever." Frank Pavone still received the sacrament of Holy Orders, and under limited, extraordinary circumstances, would still have the right and duty to absolve someone's sins or administer the other sacraments (for instance, to a dying person in the absence of other priests).

Frank was not excommunicated. Nor was his membership in the People of God altered in any way. ***His ministry of Priests for Life was not condemned.*** Faithful Catholics may still support it.

As a member of the People of God, Frank Pavone enjoys the rights and responsibilities proper to the lay state, including that of proclaiming the salvific message of Christ and the right to a good name while so doing. He does not need permission to fulfill the obligations and exercise the rights of the lay state.

Though he is under certain restrictions, he has not forgotten all that he has learned from 30 years of fulltime pro-life ministry, preaching on abortion in every state, leading the world's largest ministry for healing after abortion, and articulating the pro-life message before legislators, clergy and the public. He has not lost his ability or passion to teach, encourage and inspire the pro-life movement, nor has he lost the deep compassion that has enabled him to lead even prominent abortionists to the

mercy of Christ.

It is not at all appropriate or necessary to shun or exclude him or his organization from the work of the pro-life movement, or to keep people away from the educational materials he and his team produce, or to refrain from contributing to his organization in any way. His work is to give voice to the unborn, not to denigrate the Catholic Church.

We are called to be one Body in Christ, and to encourage one another to exercise the gifts we have been given, through baptism and confirmation, for the building up of that body.

This is why the board of directors and pastoral team of Priests for Life, as well as countless supporters of this work – including clergy – continue to give Frank Pavone their wholehearted support and endorsement as he continues leading this organization and its related entities. There are other priests on his team who carry out the sacramental work which they are fully authorized to do.

I therefore offer this letter of endorsement of Frank Pavone as he strives, like the rest of us, for holiness as a member of the lay faithful, placing his gifts at the service of the unborn and their inclusion in the life of the Church, society and indeed, in life itself.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David L. Deibel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. David L. Deibel, JD, JCL