

*Can I Admonish a Priest?*

It is well within the tradition of the saints for humble and honest Christians to admonish or evangelize priests, deacons and even bishops and the pope. Ordination does not guarantee sinlessness or evangelization. The Holy Spirit has historically chosen the humble for a specific ministry of admonishment to others. Admonishment is a service, not a put-down.

Here are a few considerations:

1. Always act in love. Never dishonor the special dignity that comes with the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The validity of his priestly ministry depends on the goodness of Jesus, not the priest's own righteousness.
2. Correct the actions, inactions, ideas, and teachings, etc. Never attack the person.
3. Avoid all coercion. Do not threaten. Never ever boycott, withhold tithe or use other pressure tactics. Allow him complete freedom in his response. Coercion is never the Christian way with anyone.
4. Research. Know the facts, not just the gossip. Be sure you are right before you take action. Be familiar with Church law and teaching on the subject.
5. Do not be afraid when it is God who calls you to a ministry of correction. Do not be passive about wrongdoing of false teaching in the parish.
6. Admonish privately; never through public media.
7. Sometimes you may need to keep coming back gently but persistently.
8. Avoid venting personal anger. Act in God's peace. Do not get yourself upset.
9. Pray before you act. Be instruments of the Holy Spirit and not of a rebellious spirit.
10. Keep in mind the Catholic Church belongs to Jesus. He gives His people an important role under the guidance of His clergy but it is not a democracy.
11. Be sure your motives are good. Do not act from pride, hurt feelings, or selfishness.
12. Get discernment and confirmation from other Catholics without being a source of disunity. Avoid being the hero of a group of dissenters. Be careful not to be a rabble rouser. Never feed church gossip.
13. Don't insist on nor expect immediate response. Be patient.
14. In serious cases of wrongdoing there may be a time to inform the bishop or other appropriate authorities; almost always church authorities before you go to public authorities.