



DICASTERIUM
DE LEGUM TEXTIBUS

*Circa la corretta interpretazione del concetto di causa giusta,
ragionevole e grave nel contesto dei cann. 1125 e 1147*

Prot. N. 18822/2026

Vatican City, January 26th, 2026

Rev. Fr.,

I am writing in response to your letter of 8 December, in which you requested the opinion of this Dicastery regarding the correct interpretation of the concepts of just and reasonable cause and of grave cause in the context of canons 1125 and 1147. While this does not constitute a *dubium iuris*, we would like to offer some general considerations, grounded in canonical doctrine, which may assist in guiding pastoral discernment in this specific case.

A just and reasonable cause is understood as a factual assumption sufficiently well-founded to justify a measure that departs from a general norm or from the assumptions underlying a legal act. Such a deviation, while existing in the abstract, is legitimate by virtue of the requirements of justice, provided that a criterion of proportionality is respected, in order to maintain the action *secundum ius*. The just cause should therefore meet the requirements of objectivity (verifiable circumstances), proportionality (adequacy in relation to the end pursued) and exceptionality (non-ordinary nature of the situation). 'Reasonableness' also requires that the reasons given be explainable and appreciable by third parties. In this matter, particularly in the context of the above-mentioned canon, it is not possible to establish *a priori* rules or illustrative lists, since the discretion to assess what is just and reasonable is left to the Ordinary.

A grave cause is understood as a factual assumption or circumstance that justifies a deviation, even if it is contrary to a provision with special binding force. It shares the same requirements as a just cause, but requires a *quid pluris*, i.e., a qualified relevance of the good to be protected (in the indicated canon, attributable to the rights of *christifideles*).

Since the boundary between just cause and grave cause may not be clearly determinable, a prudent assessment by the Ordinary is necessary, based on an accurate analysis of the facts and clear reasoning, so that it remains understandable and verifiable even by third parties. However, one must bear in mind that personal and contextual

circumstances may affect the qualification of the cause, in accordance with the prudent judgement of the competent authority. In this area too, it is not appropriate to establish binding criteria or lists of “grave causes” in advance, as each case must be addressed individually, according to the discernment of the pastor called upon to make a decision.

In the hope of having provided the requested assistance, I take this opportunity to extend my warmest regards.

dev.mo in Domino,

+ Juan Ignacio Arrieta

✠ JUAN IGNACIO ARRIETA

Secretary

Marco Mellino

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Adjunct Secretary