

PASTOR'S RESPONSE TO THE ANONYMOUS FORM LETTER

January 18, 2008

Due to a widely circulated anonymous form letter with malicious lies, I feel that it is necessary for me, as your pastor, to place before you the truth on a number of issues. You have read in last week's bulletin the response our diocese made concerning the false allegations that were leveled against me in my former Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall, Ontario, Canada. This week I have placed in the bulletin, along with this letter, a copy of recent correspondence between , a parishioner of Our Lady of Lourdes, and the current bishop of Alexandria-Cornwall, Bishop Paul Durocher.

The other issues are as follows:

1. **Father Richard Ryan:**

- **Father Ryan has been dealing with a number of non-life threatening health issues. His doctor advised him to take some time off and to reduce the amount of ministry he was doing.**
- **With the approval of the Vicar of Priests as well as the unanimous support of the members of our Finance Council, it was decided that Father Ryan would be given a one month health sabbatical in January of 2008. He would then return to ministry in our parish with diminished responsibilities, a four day work week and six weeks vacation until his official retirement in February of 2009.**
- **Throughout this time, he would maintain his full salary, full benefits, full housing allowance and full food allowance.**
- **As pastor, I tried to find a way with the Diocese to address his legitimate health concerns in a way that he could remain in our parish but with a ministry plan that would address his health needs.**

2. **Deacon Tom Henn:**

- **On December 14, 2007, at the monthly parish deacons' meeting, Deacon Tom Henn offered twice to resign immediately and hand over all the annulment files in his possession. It was my plan to have all the deacons alternate assisting at Mass in the way Fr. Ryan and I alternate between churches and various Mass times. Deacon Henn insisted on serving only at the 9:00 AM Mass at Prince of Peace.**
- **I believe this demand was unreasonable and not in the best interest of our parish. With the full support of the Director of the Office of the Diaconate, I met with Deacon Tom and accepted his resignation.**
- **Deacon Larry Grey, Deacon Jerry Reicks, Deacon Lee Hanson, Deacon George Koch, Deacon Jack Cummings and Communications Director Peggy Colf were all present at the deacons' meeting on December 14, 2007 when Deacon Tom Henn twice offered his resignation.**

- 3. Deacon Jack Cummings:**
- During the weekend of November 24th and 25th 2007, Deacon Jack Cummings gave several homilies at Our Lady of Lourdes Church which upset many people with its implied partisan political message. Fr. Richard Ryan, Mr. Michael McGraw, along with many others informed me that he clearly crossed the line we are forbidden by Federal Law to cross if we wish to keep our status as a recognized charitable corporation.
 - I decided, with the full support of the appropriate diocesan authority, who also met with Deacon Jack, that I would not have Deacon Jack preach in the election year of 2008.
 - On December 14, 2007, I received a letter from Deacon Jack requesting to preach in 2008 under certain conditions. Then he proceeded in his letter to say that anyone who disagreed with his November homily must be pro-abortion. I felt that for the good of the parish, due to Deacon Jack's unwillingness to acknowledge any wrong-doing, that with the support of the diocese, I would have the unfortunate necessity to remove him from diaconal ministry in our parish.
 - I did not remove him from the choir as I was accused of doing. He sang beautifully at Christmas Mass.
- 4. Retired Priests:**
- Retired priests are not assigned to any particular parish. They are free to work in any parish with the necessary pastor's approval.
 - I have always insisted that any clergy working in our parish must not preach partisan politics, must not preach openly against the teachings of the Church, and would accept the monetary compensation based on diocesan policies.
- 5. Former Employees:**
- It is completely inappropriate for any employer to speak of an employees' departure in any detailed manner.
 - It is my policy to acknowledge the departure of an employee in the bulletin without any reference as to whether he or she retired, resigned, was laid off, or dismissed.
 - I will always consult with Human Resources at the Diocese and my Personnel Committee when dealing with a serious personnel problem.
- 6. Personal Attacks:**
- I am and have been a "recovering alcoholic" with God's grace for over 16 years. In the anonymous form letter, I was called an alcoholic, which is very different in meaning.
 - I have never been diagnosed as neurotic, which was erroneously mentioned in the anonymous form letter.

I pray that this information will help all parishioners understand the truth about certain situations in our parish. It is my hope that our Eucharistic Lord will bring us together in his loving unity of peace and charity.

Yours in Christ,



Father David M. Ostler, Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish