

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 22, 2011

From: Fr. Frank Pavone

To: Advisors

Re: Incident in Amarillo

Since I have been here at the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Diocese of Amarillo, and the Bishop's office in particular, have been sending me faxes and letters through the Sisters. These items are delivered to me by the Sisters according to a system that I explicitly discussed with Mother Lucy, the Superior, and the Sisters who handle mail and faxes. This system is that they will deliver these items to me in an envelope either by coming to the room where I am staying, or leaving them for me in the sacristy on the table next to the vesting table. They also have my cell phone number and the understanding is that in the case of urgent messages, they will call me to arrange for me to come and pick up the fax or letter.

All these methods have been utilized since I have been here, for the reception of the various letters and faxes that the bishop has sent. The sisters have always exercised great caution regarding the confidentiality of the letters and have explicitly expressed to me their care in not reading or letting others see the contents.

On Tuesday morning, October 11, I came to the chapel according to our arranged schedule, to participate in Morning Prayer and celebrate Mass for the Sisters. For prayer, I sit in the back of the chapel right next to the sacristy. When prayers were done, I went into the sacristy as usual to vest. I did not notice any envelopes or letters for me there in the sacristy, nor was I expecting any.

The Mass began, and as I came up the aisle during the opening hymn, I noticed that there was a white piece of paper sitting right in the middle of the altar, where the corporal would usually go. It was face up, and as I came closer I noticed on the paper the letterhead of the Diocese of Amarillo. I came around the back of the altar to reverence the altar, and saw that this was a letter from the bishop to me. There was no envelope; rather, it was a faxed letter, the text of which was fully visible to anyone who looked at the altar. After kissing the altar, I discreetly folded the letter in half, and placed it in the hymnal I was carrying. I said nothing, and carried it out at the conclusion of Mass and put it in my briefcase.

The letter contained confidential and sensitive information from the bishop to me regarding our relationship, my canonical standing, and his concerns about the current situation we are trying to resolve.

I informed our canonical advisor of this incident later that day.

On Thursday the 13th, when I was again at the chapel for confessions, I asked the Sister who serves as Sacristan if she knew why the letter had been placed on the altar. She said she did not know, and later that day she asked the Superior, Mother Lucy, about it.

That night, after the evening Conference which I gave to the Sisters, Mother Lucy approached me and brought up the issue of the letter on the altar. She said that she had placed it on the altar, but not because that was something she would have ever done on her own. Rather, she said, she "had been instructed" to do it. The next day, I asked her if she was willing to elaborate on that, and she said that after the fax came in, she got a phone call from Deacon Floyd Ashley at the bishop's office, and he gave her the instruction to place the letter on the altar.

We have dealt with Deacon Floyd for years. He assists the bishop directly, and on matters like this, only follows what the bishop asks him to do. We know him to be very sensitive and diligent regarding confidential communications. He is not someone who would improvise an unusual method of communication such as using the altar, particularly when, as in this case, that would leave the confidential substance of the letter open for anyone near the altar to see.

As a final point, it should be noted that the sisters professed in the community are not the only ones who have access to this chapel and altar during mass. There are also lay visitors (such as family members of the sisters) and guests from the local community who come at various times to the chapel and the mass, and the bishop is well aware of this.