

October 31, 2018

Dear Avv. Gullo,

Thank you for your continued efforts in regard to our case at the Congregation for Clergy, from which we eagerly await a positive outcome soon.

As you continue your communications with them, I thought it important to draw your attention to a few key points:

1. In his August 7th letter to me again denying my request for excardination, Bishop Zurek tells me that I “violated the dignity of the dead, exhuming an aborted baby fetus, in which you had already laid to rest.”
After two years of this controversy, the bishop still cannot get the facts straight. I had *not* laid the baby to rest, and I *did not* exhume the body.
The bishop’s continued adherence to statements that are completely false reveal either his incompetence to deal with cases like this, or his ongoing malice towards me, which compel him to invent accusations that are not true.
2. The bishop’s open-ended suspension of me from ministry continues to create confusion among the faithful and obstacles to our ministry. For example,
 - a) A pro-life activist who is trying to invite me to the Archdiocese of Seattle got a letter recently from that Archdiocese refusing such permission on the grounds that Priests for Life “is not a Catholic ministry.” This is a matter of ongoing confusion between no longer being *a canonical entity* (neither are the Knights of Columbus or EWTN) and *no longer being ‘Catholic.’* This is a serious error that hurts the reputation of our ministry in an ongoing way, and one that we will not hesitate to take any necessary steps to correct.
 - b) A pro-life group in the diocese of Venice, Florida is expressing confusion and dismay that Bishop Frank Dewane will not allow me to come to speak to a women’s breakfast because I am not in good standing with my own bishop.
 - c) I recently spoke at a large pro-life banquet in Michigan, sponsored by the state right to life group (which is independent of the Church). But a large parish there was unsure if they should send their several tables of people to participate, or advertise the event, because of ongoing questions about my status. The pastor ultimately decided to support the event because he knows and respects me and my work, and consulted with others in his diocese, but the ongoing confusion was a cause of concern among these good people.

d) The bishop of Tucson, Arizona recently told the woman who runs the Rachel's Vineyard retreat in that diocese that he no longer wanted that retreat to serve the post-abortion women in that locale as long as I was the Pastoral Director of Rachel's Vineyard worldwide – this, despite the fact that he was told clearly that my responsibilities for Rachel's Vineyard do not in any way involve any interaction by me with the retreats in his diocese. (Rather, the support of Priests for Life enables the whole mission to run worldwide.) The bishop told the woman privately that he had concerns about me, but would not tell her what those concerns are, and told her not to tell anyone else of the conversation. (Obviously, she told me anyway, because of her full support for me and Priests for Life.)

e) A woman who runs a march for life in Pennsylvania wants to start advertising my presence there for next Spring, but the Diocese of Allentown is asking for a letter of good standing for me, which we told her we cannot provide at this time. But she is fully supportive of us.

In all these cases, without exception, and in many that are similar to it, ***the people involved have nothing but praise and admiration for my work and that of Priests for Life, and find it extremely difficult to understand why my bishop will not support me.*** As they tell me repeatedly, this does not make them disappointed in me, but rather in “the Church.” It is not I who am causing scandal and division among the faithful here; it is Bishop Patrick Zurek.

3. The bishop has likely communicated to the Congregation more concerns about my “political advocacy.” Here he is seriously misguided about what I am doing and why I am doing it – and again, as with everything else, he is unwilling to have a rational conversation about it. I am well aware of the requirements and restrictions the Church places on priests in terms of political involvement. I am not running for public office, sending Church funds to political campaigns, or even joining any political parties (I am unaffiliated). At the same time, I know that in extraordinary circumstances, certain interventions can in fact be permitted. I therefore offer the following observations:

a) The freedom of the Church is under serious attack in the United States from the Democrat Party. Priests for Life, along with the Archdiocese of Washington, the Little Sisters of the Poor, Catholic University of America, and many other Catholic institutions had to defend our rights over the last six years all the way up to the Supreme Court, in fighting against an unjust mandate of the Democrat Obama Administration that violated our conscience and religious freedom. We only prevailed because President Trump won the election in 2016. But the position of the Democrat Party continues unchanged, diametrically opposed to the Church's ability to carry out her task.

b) Priests for Life and I are among those who are most intimately familiar with what the civil law in the United States permits Churches to say and do regarding politics. We have, in fact, been through an extensive audit by the

IRS and have come through it fully vindicated. There are serious debates and serious changes taking place now regarding the restrictions that the “Johnson Amendment” places upon Churches and groups like Priests for Life. [As this video indicated, President Trump has begun to lift these restrictions.](#) Many in the Church in America are unaware of these developments or do not adequately understand them.

- c) Cardinal Timothy Dolan recently wrote this column in a major United States newspaper, the Wall Street Journal: [The Democrats Abandon Catholics.](#) The Cardinal’s explicit criticism of the Democrat Party represents the increasing awareness among Catholics and other Americans that the differences between the Republican and Democratic parties have, in the current climate, gone far beyond “political differences” or disagreements about policy preferences – that is, the kind of disagreements about which clergy can rightfully be expected to stay neutral in their ministries. On the contrary, the Democrat Party is undermining the very freedom of the Church and the most fundamental rights of our citizens. In this regard, the Second Vatican Council made clear, **"At all times and in all places, the Church should have the true freedom to teach the faith, to proclaim its teaching about society, to carry out its task among men without hindrance, and to pass moral judgment even in matters relating to politics, whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it"** (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 76). It is in that spirit, and with that imperative, that I clearly and unapologetically defend the Church’s teachings against the positions of the Democrat Party and their leaders, and alert Catholics to the same.
- d) In these matters, bishops strongly disagree in their approach, with some coming out clearly (like Cardinal Dolan above) and others (like Bishop Zurek) never doing so. Because of Bishop Zurek’s animus towards me, and the complete breakdown of any relationship between us, I have been exercising my ministry for a long time feeling like I have no bishop of my own, and deprived of the opportunity that a relationship marked by trust and communication would provide to discuss the particulars of how I carry out my work, including in matters related to politics. On the other hand, I have discussed over many years with Bishop Michael Sheridan of Colorado Springs the matter of the Church’s relationship with the current political struggles in the United States. I am fully confident that he is someone with whom I can work on these matters, discussing them in detail and working in harmony with him and under his guidance. Moving forward, this is one of the many advantages that would result from my incardination into Colorado Springs.

Thank you again for all your assistance!

Sincerely,

Fr. Frank Pavone

