

Wednesday January 18, 2017 (Day 1,997 of the closure, 5 years and 6 months)

Dear SOCA members and friends.

I hope that the year has begun well for you. There is a nasty bug going around that lays people low for weeks. If you get it (as I did), do as the doctor tells you. Get lots of rest as well till you have completely recovered.

As we began the New Year, we knew that Bishop Henry's Decree was effective January 1, 2017. Here is a report that will tell you the latest position as I know it:

Report submitted by me for the Pastoral Advisory Council meeting on January 18, 2017:

As parishioners are aware, Bishop Henry issued a Decree on October 1, 2016, relegating St. Patrick's Church to secular but not unbecoming use. In my role as Procurator, I appealed against the Decree within the ten days allowed, refuting the reasons Bishop Henry had given for the relegation. Bishop Henry rejected my appeal. I then appealed to the Congregation for the Clergy on October 31, 2016.

I did not hear from the Vatican for some time. Then, in a letter dated 19 December 2016, Beniamino Card. Stella, Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy replied as follows:

"This Congregation has received your letter, dated 31 October last, with which you present hierarchical recourse, in your own name and as duly mandated Procurator (cf. c. 1481 §1) for 509 other parishioners of All Saints Parish, Lethbridge, against the Decree issued on 01 October 2016 by the Most Rev. Frederick Henry, Bishop of Calgary, whereby the church of St. Patrick, Lethbridge, is reduced to secular but not unbecoming use (cf. cc. 1734-1737; 1222).

In accordance with art 137 §1 of the *General Regulation of the Roman Curia*, this Dicastery **hereby accepts the aforementioned recourse for examination***, and establishes that the object of the recourse is: **whether the decree reducing of the church of St. Patrick to secular but not unbecoming use is contrary to the norm of law (cf. c. 1222)."***

* My bolding. F.N.

Cardinal Stella did not mention any date by which the Congregation would announce its decision. We would, of course welcome an early decision but are aware that our appeal against the closure of St. Patrick's Church took over ten months and the decision that was to be announced on October 28, 2016 was preempted by Bishop Henry issuing his Decree. We in Lethbridge have no control over the process and will have to exercise patience while the Congregation examines the validity of the Decree.

Francis Noronha, Secretary

January 15, 2017

ROASTS AND TOASTS, Lethbridge Herald

It appears that some of those who support building a new church are upset that the media has given coverage to Bishop Frederick Henry's Decree relegating St. Patrick's Church to secular but not unbecoming use and have decided that sending items to the Roasts and Toasts page in the Lethbridge Herald on Mondays will redress the balance. We are all entitled to our own opinions and free to express them. If proponents of the new church gain some satisfaction from writing to Roasts and Toasts or it gives them a chance to vent, so be it. I do hope that no members of SOCA will feel that they have to retaliate. Personally, I don't have a high regard for Roasts and Toasts as writers can write the most outrageous things under the shield of anonymity and without the burden of proof or supporting evidence. I am more likely to take persons' opinions seriously if they have enough courage of their convictions to give their names. Whatever SOCA does, it does openly. I always send a copy of these updates to our Pastor and Associate Pastor and anyone is welcome to ask to be put on the mailing list. I will not resort to Roasts and Toasts as a forum for airing my views.

Some people do not seem to be aware that St. Patrick's Church is a prominent building of historical interest in the heart of our city right across from City Hall. The Bishop's Decree is a grave threat to its continued existence and Father Kevin has stated his intention on more than one occasion that when the building is sold, he will use the stained glass windows and the altar from St. Patrick's Church in the new church. The media are not in the habit of covering items that are not newsworthy. "Whoa! Enough discussion on St. Patrick's Church in the Herald, " cries one anonymous writer. "The Herald portrays a picture that all parishioners are opposed to the construction of one new church to serve the ever-increasing needs of the parish that cannot be handled by the existing buildings." I have not seen the Herald express any such opinion at any time. In fact, I commend the media on presenting a very balanced picture of events. Also, I have noted that each time the Herald or any other media interview representatives of SOCA, they always contact Father Kevin or the Bishop to get the full story. I thank the media for their interest and have no hesitation in providing the media with how SOCA feels about any issue. If that constitutes "constant stabbing and twisting" to some, too bad.

So what's the beef? Are members of SOCA not allowed to express their opinions freely? Are we back to the strictly controlled meetings where only speakers nominated by Pastoral Advisory Council were permitted to speak? "This constant stabbing and twisting of critical remarks is only hurting and exhausting everyone," says the anonymous writer but he or she fails to give one example to substantiate the allegation. "Those who support the (new) building don't want to "fight it out" in the public arena". Fight? Well, that's your choice of words, my friend, and perhaps you do not need to "fight it out" because you are in the "in" group. You have no idea what it has been like to be excluded right from the start when Bishop Henry categorically stated "The status quo is unacceptable." It was a done deal from the start and no discussion was ever permitted on whether the parish community wanted to retain its neighbourhood churches or not. I'll say this much, Father Kevin also has his orders but, to his credit, he has not sought to muzzle us. He accepts that, as parishioners, we too have the right to express our views freely.

In the normal way things are done, a parish community that is planning for future growth, would start a "Church Building Fund" and start raising funds for a new church. As the time drew nearer and the sum collected approached the 50% required by Diocesan regulations before ground can be broken, ongoing discussions and planning would take place to determine what changes would be needed in the parish to accommodate the new church. It is fundamentally wrong when one person, be he a bishop or pastor, - or one segment of the parish community - unilaterally decides right at the start that three much-loved churches will be sold to make way for a 1,200 seat church and the majority of the parish has no say in the decision-making process. To add injury to insult, those who opposed the sale of the three churches were often pejoratively referred to as "the dissident few". Few? SOCA alone drew more than 700 paid up members within three months- and there were many others who shared our views. SOCA continues to receive financial and other support from its members and many others. Is it any surprise that the parish community is seriously divided when hundreds of parishioners are ignored and their views not taken into consideration?

One of these anonymous writers sanctimoniously states that those who support the building of the new church "have continued to work behind the scenes to see this new building become a reality." One questions, why "behind the scenes"? Was there a need for secrecy? Conspirators may need to work behind the scenes. Building a new church is a praiseworthy objective that should have the support of the parish and be done openly. It is not something that should be pushed through by a cliché without the approval of the parish at large. The whole parish needs to be engaged in the decision-making process at all stages, not just those who are working "behind the scenes". You do not alienate the majority of the parish and then compound the problem with vague allegations of "stabbing and twisting." Self-righteous attitudes will not help erase the wrongs of the past or heal the wounds that are causing division.

SOCA has never opposed the building of a new church. What we have consistently maintained is that it should not be at the expense of the three neighbourhood churches without consultation with the people who built and maintained these churches. The Bishop does not own these churches, he holds them in trust

for the diocese. I have no doubt that one way or the other, a new church will be built in the not too distant future. Whether parishioners will feel ownership and commitment to the new church depends on the circumstances under which it will be built. When only \$3 million of the likely full cost of \$21 million plus has been contributed directly by parishioners, it certainly should give one pause.

Yes, like one of the writers, the members of SOCA sincerely wish Bishop Henry a happy retirement and we welcome Bishop William wholeheartedly. Anonymous contributions to Roasts and Toasts are hardly likely to create a congenial pastoral working climate for our new Bishop. An open and cooperative approach would be a start towards creating a more harmonious relationship in our presently very fractured parish community, one where all parishioners feel that they have a part to play in building the parish. Father Kevin often reminded us often in his first year that he was here to build Church, not a church. As the parish comes nearer to achieving the latter, we need to remember that a spanking new gleaming 1,200 seat church will not necessarily build Church.

God bless!

Francis, Secretary of SOCA

cc Very Rev. Kevin Tumback, Pastor; Rev. Lukas Drapal, Associate Pastor; Mr. Philip Gray JCL, President, St. Joseph Foundation