

SAVE OUR CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

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Update for October 28, 2022

Day 4,107 of the Closure of St. Pat's (11 years, 2 months, 26 days)

Excerpt From "The Emperor's New Clothes"

by Hans Christian Andersen

"... So off went the Emperor in procession under his splendid canopy. Everyone in the streets and the windows said, 'Oh, how fine are the Emperor's new clothes! Don't they fit him to perfection? And see his long train!' Nobody would confess that he couldn't see anything, for that would prove him either unfit for his position, or a fool. No costume the Emperor had worn before was ever such a complete success.



"But he hasn't got anything on," a little child said.

"Did you ever hear such innocent prattle?" said its father. And one person whispered to another what the child had said, "He hasn't anything on. A child says he hasn't anything on."

"But he hasn't got anything on!" the whole town cried out at last.

The Emperor shivered, for he suspected they were right. But he thought, "This procession has got to go on." So he walked more proudly than ever, as his noblemen held high the train that wasn't there at all."

The End!

I am sure that all readers are familiar with Hans Christian Andersen's literary folk tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes." Delightful though the story is, there is a dark side to it. Life imitates art and we are often confronted with situations where the bounds of our credulity are stretched.

The Very Reverend Kevin Tumback took over as Pastor of All Saints Parish on August 1, 2012. He stated that he was here **to build Church** – which was welcome news as our parish had become fragmented by Bishop Henry's unilateral decision to sell the three existing churches and build a new \$20 million church. Sadly, it soon became apparent that Fr. Kevin had been sent to Lethbridge **to build a church** and that was precisely what he set out to do in obedience to the Bishop.

(This folksy tale continues on p. 2)

FAKE NEWS, FABRICATION, MISINFORMATION OR OUTRIGHT LIES?

All Saints Parish Pastoral Advisory Council (PAC) meetings are predictable in format. After the opening prayer, the minutes of the previous meeting are read. The first (and, sometimes, only) item on the Agenda is the Pastor's report which invariably lasts up to half an hour. Rarely is there any discussion of any issue. Rarely do any of the 25 or so persons who attend speak a word as that would interrupt the flow of information from on high. Soon after the Pastor's report, the meeting adjourns. Occasionally, the Pastor organizes a community building exercise following the coffee break.

- *Question: If the information is that important, should it not be included in the Parish bulletin so that **all** parishioners can read it? Why is it conveyed to only those present at PAC meetings? Is this not the kind of clericalism that our Holy Father has warned the universal church about?*

510 parishioners nominated me (Francis) as Procurator to present our challenge to Bishop Henry's Decree of October 1, 2016 closing St. Patrick's Church and reducing it to profane but not sordid use. I chose Avv. Andrea Errera of Rome to present our case to the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Tribunal, the highest Court in the Roman Catholic world. He and his Associate, Avv. Federica Boldrini proved sincere advocates of our cause. After a thorough examination of the issue, **the Signatura ruled on March 12, 2021 that Bishop Henry's Decree was invalid and that St. Patrick's Church should be reopened.** This decision was conveyed to Bishop McGrattan **18 months ago.**

- *Question: Why has it taken 18 months for news of the Signatura's decision to travel the distance between Calgary and Lethbridge? Shouldn't the Pastor and the parishioners of All Saints Parish have been informed immediately? Is it not their right to know the full details of the Signatura's ruling in our favour in our ten-year dispute with the diocese?*

Fr. Kevin told the 21 attendees at the PAC meeting of October 19, 2022 that he, the Pastor of the parish, has not seen the document from the Signatura.

- *Question: Is Father Kevin telling us that the Bishop has had the document for 18 months and not yet sent a copy to the Pastor of the parish?*

Yes. Fr. Kevin stated that he had not seen it and even if he received the document, he would not be able to read it as it is in Latin. Is Father Kevin, who is fond of testing our knowledge during his homilies, really not aware that he can get an English translation of the document?

- *Question: What has been happening in the last 18 months?*

Fr. Kevin stated that the bishop's lawyers have been pursuing the matter hoping that a lower court in the Vatican will overturn the decision on the grounds that the Bishop has no money to repair and refurbish St. Pat's. Fr. Kevin said that he had been questioned about the \$2.2 million in the Central Fund that had been transferred arbitrarily by Bishop Henry to the New Church building fund. Since Fr. Kevin raised the point at the PAC meeting, Let us examine this issue more closely. The fact is that all three churches used to contribute to the Central Fund. As this was long before a new church was even proposed, we would grateful for an audited statement of accounts from the Diocese of the relevant amounts contributed by the parishes. We would also appreciate the rationale for transferring the funds to the New Church Building Fund without consultation with and without the consent of the three parishes.

Fr. Kevin also stated that if any of the money in the Central Fund was used for repairs to St. Patrick's Church, the "people from the north and south east would rise up in arms against him." Why should they? If the accounts showed that a portion of the \$2.2 million had been contributed by parishioners of St. Patrick's, would it not be right that St. Patrick's Church has a prior right to these funds? It is possible that the accounts would show that St. Pat's had no balance in the Central Fund (though I doubt it). But then, Fr. Kevin regularly regales us with stories of the deplorable state of St. Basil Church and Our Lady of the Assumption Church. Should those churches not have prior claim to their own funds than a church that was not even proposed at the time that the contributions to the Central Fund were made?

Question: Isn't the Diocese responsible for the proper maintenance of churches?

Fr. Kevin stated that the pastor of each parish is responsible for the maintenance of its ecclesiastical properties. True, but, according to Can. 519, "The parish priest is the proper pastor of the parish ... entrusted to him under *the authority of the diocesan Bishop*." Also, in Alberta, the Bishop is the legal owner of all ecclesiastical properties. Does it not follow that the Bishop is ultimately responsible for the proper care and maintenance of our churches? According to Bishop McGrattan's own estimates submitted to the Signatura, it will cost \$3.5 million to \$4.5 million to repair and refurbish St. Patrick's Church. I have no idea what the cost would be to bring St. Basil Church and Assumption up to snuff. If I neglected my house for 22 years, who would pay for repairing it? Why 22 years? We know that from 1998 onwards, Bishop Henry directed the pastors of the three parishes to carry out only the most urgent and necessary repairs. Building Committee recommendations were ignored or cut drastically. After all, if the declared intention was to sell the three churches sooner or later, why waste money putting in a proper heating system? Just do the minimum to keep the old one going.

The decision to instal an elevator at St. Patrick's Church was made in 1996 by the then Pastor, Fr. Eulogio Estaris, in consultation with the Bishop and the contractor, Mr. Art Dorigatti. The Building Committee and the parishioners had no say in the choice of the elevator. St. Patrick's Knights of Columbus volunteered to raise the funds needed and I can assure Fr. Kevin that every cent that was needed for the project was raised. I know because I was the Grand Knight that year and chaired the fund-raising committee. It may have taken more time to raise funds for a more expensive elevator but I am sure that we could have done it – but that was not our decision to make.

Both the elevator and the grand piano were projects carried out long before Fr. Kevin became Pastor of All Saints Parish so wherever or from whomever he got his information about the elevator and the piano, he was misinformed. Both the elevator and the piano were fully paid for. Fr. Kevin owes Elisabeth Martin Jong, who raised the money for the piano, an apology for suggesting otherwise at the PAC meeting.

Question: Enough of the past. What needs to be done now that the Signatura has ruled that St. Patrick's Church should be reopened?

Obviously it would be utterly irresponsible to reopen St. Patrick's as is. It has been closed for eleven years, mould formed in some areas for three years before it was treated, and there are several other problems that need fixing. Although then pastor, Fr. Tim Boyle assured us the church would be looked after inside and out, a building cannot be closed for eleven years without deteriorating, especially if it was poorly maintained in the first place. Things like plumbing, electrical fittings, heating, the front steps, the elevator need to be repaired if not replaced. By Bishop McGrattan's (or is it Father Kevin's?) own estimates, the cost is likely to be between \$3.5 to \$4.5 million. I am not an engineer so I won't

dispute the figure. All I'll say here is that the diocese is responsible for the shabby state our three churches are in and it is high time that the Diocese did the right thing for the people of Lethbridge. I have nothing against a new church but a Bishop who gives his blessing to a 900-seat church at a cost of \$20 million which with inflation could easily soar to \$30 million or more may well find that repairing and maintaining our present churches is a safer financial proposition in these economic times where many are jobless. I wonder how much the lawyers' fees for pleading at the Vatican that the Bishop cannot afford to repair St. Patrick's will cost the Diocese. Would that money not be better spent on repairing our churches?

Enough on the PAC meeting. From various reliable sources, I'm given to understand that Fr. Kevin believes that the Save Our Churches Association (SOCA) is a spent force. Let me reassure Fr. Kevin: that SOCA will still be around when the time comes round for him to say goodbye to Lethbridge. Yes, over the last eleven years, we have had many of our stalwarts leave our ranks and go to their heavenly reward, like Past President Don Demers and his wife Pat. More recently, we said a fond *au revoir* to dear George and Maria Siegl. Maria used to print 8 copies of my Updates and distribute them to her friends in her condo building who did not have computers. We miss the dearly departed greatly but most of all regret that they didn't live to see the doors of St. Patrick's open again. Many of them who had lifelong sacramental ties with St. Patrick's Church would have liked to have been buried from their beloved St. Patrick's Church but the closure of the church by a bishop prevented that blessing.

In honour of those who have gone before us, SOCA's Board of Directors pledges that as long as there is one of us left, you will find SOCA fighting for what is right in our parish and Diocese. Bishop Henry once famously said, "Only a vocal few are opposed to my plans for Lethbridge!" He did not expect us to win our case in Rome but we did. He may now well wish that he had employed a more consultative process instead of riding roughshod over the people of Lethbridge. Is his successor following in his footsteps and preferring to spend oodles of money in lawyers' fees in appealing to Rome that he has no money to repair St. Patrick's? I do not know but I have asked Bishop McGrattan twice this year to meet with SOCA's Board of Directors. He has not bothered even to acknowledge my letters. With humility and respect, I ask Bishop McGrattan whether his attitude and behavior to the Directors of SOCA and its members is in accordance with Can. 383 et seq., the relationship of a Bishop to his flock.

In closing, I apologize if I have made any factual errors in my arguments above. I am a lay person not versed in Church matters - and parish and diocesan documents are not always easy to find or obtain. I note that there are at present several vacancies on Pastoral Advisory Council. Perhaps we need some 10-year old kids on PAC to snap us out of our apathy and make us realize that all we hear from the Emperor is not always Gospel truth...

St. Patrick, pray for us. May God bless all of us.

Francis

cc: H.E. Bishop William McGrattan; Very Rev. Kevin Tumback, Pastor; Rev. Derek Remus, Associate Pastor; Avv Andrea Errera; Avv. Federica Boldrini; Mr. Philip Gray