

Update for August 29, 2015 (Day 1,489 of the Closure, 4 years, 29 days and counting)

Re: Father Kevin's Cluttered Desk of August 23, 2015

I have read the above "Cluttered Desk" a number of times and I confess that I am baffled and shake my head in disbelief and wonder. Let me attempt to address my thoughts to our Pastor, Father Kevin:

Dear Father Kevin,

In your "Cluttered Desk" of August 23rd, you mused, "One must wonder at times, what does a priest do?" Let me reassure Father Kevin that we are well aware of the onerous nature of a Pastor's job and of the variety and number of your work projects. In fact, there are those of us who have more than a sneaking suspicion that you are a workaholic and would do well to take more breaks from your labours in the Lord's vineyard. Perhaps our worthy Bishop, in the seclusion of his ivory tower, is less aware than us of how heavily burdened you are. Else, why would he have asked you to review the 426 Procurator Mandate forms that I submitted to him?

Let me state at the outset that the Bishop (or his delegate, in this case, you) is perfectly entitled to check every single form for validity. With due respect, however, I would suggest that it is a waste of time, an exercise in futility and one that could possibly have some harmful outcomes. I personally have no doubt that all 426 forms I submitted were completed in good faith by the good people who nominated me as their Procurator. But, as I do not have access to Parish records, it would be impossible for me to verify the validity of every single form.

I would suggest that you too will find that you have been set an impossible task by the Bishop. Individuals can qualify under any one of six criteria as you mentioned in your "Cluttered Desk". Your list, however, creates the impression that persons have to satisfy all six criteria which is certainly not the case. Also, If I can clarify #4 in your list, if a person qualifies to complete a form, his or her spouse would automatically qualify even if he or she is not a Catholic. Note that #5 also needs clarification as former parishioners of Our Lady of the Assumption Church, St. Basil Church or St. Patrick's Church would be eligible even if they no longer live within the boundaries of All Saints Parish. As to persons being former parishioners or donating to the needs of the parish, anyone who has tried to use the records of the three parishes for any purpose such as working on a church directory would be aware of how incomplete and unreliable those records are. You could reduce the size of the task by not bothering with the forms of those people that you know are eligible. That would still leave a fair number that you would need to investigate. I think that it is only fair to mention to you that if you disqualify even one form, I shall ask you on what ground(s) it was disqualified. I shall challenge any attempt to invalidate a form as that would imply dishonesty on the part of the nominator.

Let me ask you some straight questions, Father Kevin, that go beyond the validity of the forms.

- Why is the review being carried out? Does the Bishop really think that I would knowingly submit forms completed by ineligible persons? Have we come to that state in our church that we suspect persons of deliberate misrepresentation?
- Even if there were a few forms that were faulty or where persons were honestly mistaken about their eligibility, what difference does it make? After your "Cluttered Desk" appeared, I have been called by several people asking if it is too late to submit a form. How many more forms would you like to review, Father Kevin? 50? 100? I may not be as busy as you, Father Kevin, but believe me I have many more pleasant things I would like to do with my time - and I am sure that you do too. Wouldn't the time you spend on reviewing the forms be better spent on (to use your words) evangelizing and reaching out "to those who have fallen away or lost their way"? Are you aware of the number of parishioners our parish has lost since 2005 because of the church issue?
- I am uncertain what the purpose of the review is. Is it an attempt to prevent us from taking our concerns to the Congregation for the Clergy in the Vatican? As there has been an impasse for the last 5 years and more in our parish, isn't referring the matter to the Vatican a responsible way of resolving the issue? Shouldn't the Bishop and you be assisting us in asking the Vatican for a ruling instead of putting obstacles in our way? How does carrying out a review of the mandate forms serve any positive or useful purpose?
- It may not have occurred to the Bishop that this review puts you in an awkward position? It creates an "Us" vs. "Them" situation that will further alienate a large number of parishioners from you and the Church. There is an element of intimidation in the process that you are embarking on. It appears as if Big Brother is watching us to see if we step out of line, checking on which parishioners have dared to sign the mandate forms. What does the review have to do with justice, doing the right thing? This kind of action compounds the mistakes that were made in the past. When you first came to Lethbridge, Father Kevin, you talked of "building church". Is that no longer important to you? In your quest to "build a church", are you now prepared to use all means to achieve that end? If that is the case, I feel truly sorry for you and your priestly ministry. "Life is messy; we need to give it all to God," you stated in your "Cluttered Desk". Do you really feel that God is asking you to carry out a review of mandate forms? Is that how "you bloom where you're planted"? Can you not see how counter-productive this exercise will prove to be?

I wish you well, Father Kevin. I know how important your priestly ministry is to you. Building a new church is a worthwhile objective. But at what cost? And, are building a church and building Church really

incompatible? I believe that building Church and building a church are possible but not in the way that it was done in the last ten years - and certainly not at the cost of losing our three churches.

May St. Basil, St. Patrick and Our Blessed Lady of the Assumption bless you and guide you in your priestly ministry.

Respectfully,

Francis