

December 9, 2017 (Day 2,291 of the Closure, 6 years and 132 days)

Dear SOCA members and friends,

MEETING WITH H.E. BISHOP McGRATTAN

On December 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 2017, Bishop William McGrattan paid a Pastoral Visit to Lethbridge. He met with several church groups during his busy and packed schedule. While some of the groups such as the Youth Group, The Altar Servers, the CWL and the Knights of Columbus were expected to be included on the schedule, perhaps the biggest surprise was the inclusion of the Save Our Churches Association (SOCA). We are grateful that we had the opportunity to meet with our Bishop and tell him how and why SOCA came about.

Ten members of the SOCA Board of Directors attended the meeting. Father Kevin and Father Lucas were present. Bishop McGrattan and his Deacon greeted each person warmly as we entered the room. I acted as the spokesman for the group and gave a factual and, I hope, objective account of the events of the last ten years in what is now All Saints Parish. After my presentation, the Bishop invited any other Board members who wished to speak to do so. Seven did, raising points from their personal perspectives. Throughout the presentations, the Bishop listened attentively, occasionally acknowledging the speaker with a nod of understanding. His manner was cordial and gracious. At the end, he pointed out that he could not change the past but he noted the pain and the rift in our parish community the process had caused. He recalled his own pain when the church he was baptised in, received his sacraments and was ordained as a priest was demolished to make way for a larger church. He was aware that SOCA had made recourse to the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the highest Court of Appeal in the Vatican so the right thing to do was to wait for the decision of the Tribunal.

This was, of course, the only response he could give in the present circumstances and none of us expected any different. All ten members of the Board came away from the meeting feeling that we had met with a good Shepherd who cared for his flock and was concerned about those who had become alienated and dropped out of the church. We wished all members of SOCA could have been present to experience the healing effect of Bishop McGrattan.

THE APPEAL TO THE SUPREME TRIBUNAL

As you know, we sent our documents to the Supreme Tribunal on July 13, 2017. So far we have not had even an acknowledgment of receipt. We understand that there is a two-step process with the Tribunal. The Tribunal has a committee called the Congress who study the documents submitted and rule whether there are grounds for the appeal to be heard by the Tribunal. Even if they arrive at a negative decision, SOCA still has the right to ask that the matter be adjudicated by the Tribunal.

SAD NEWS

In a previous Update, I had informed you that we would be represented by a Latin lawyer when the issue came up before the Supreme Tribunal. Our Canon Law adviser, Mr. Philip Gray, President of the St. Joseph Foundation of Hopedale, Ohio, had secured the services of Avv. Michel Meconcelli, a Latin lawyer who has worked with Mr. Gray on most of his cases that have been referred to the Supreme Tribunal, Sadly, Mr. Gray received news that Avv. Meconcelli died suddenly on November 2, 2017.

"I have never had this happen," said Mr. Gray in his letter to us, "not even had a situation with an advocate dropping a case, so I am a bit off-balance on how to address the situation. Nonetheless, my office will work proactively to help you find another competent and hard-working advocate." SOCA is not affected financially as no retainer fee had been paid to Mr. Meconcelli. We feel deeply for Mr. Meconcelli's family and for Mr. Gray who had developed trust, confidence and personal friendship with Avv. Meconcelli over the years.

(Please accept our condolences, Mr. Gray, and convey them to Avv. Meconcelli's family. Thank you.)

PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

I am no stranger to Pastoral Councils, having served on the St. Patrick's PAC for several years under different Pastors. With respect to Father Kevin, I must confess that the format of present Pastoral Council meetings often leaves me longing for the old format. Typically, the present format starts off with a prayer read by the Chairman, followed by a 20-30 minute report by the Pastor. Truthfully, I would prefer that most, if not all, of the Pastor's report be included as an insert in the Sunday Bulletin where it can be read by hundreds of parishioners rather than heard by just the 40 to 50 parishioners who turn up for every P.C. meeting. The acoustics in Assumption Hall are not the greatest and I know that at least some of those who attend are like me, suffering from hearing loss to a lesser or greater extent. I would much rather read the report than struggle to hear what is being said.

The second part of P.C. meetings is devoted to community-building activities usually in groups. At the November P.C. meeting, the groups were asked to consider the problem of over-crowding at the 11:00 a.m. Mass at St. Basil's and come up with solutions. I was sad that in that group of 45-50 people, not one person pointed out that the problem of overcrowding (and the related problem of parking), did not exist until St. Patrick's Church was shuttered in 2011. When solutions were suggested, again not one person stated that the problem could be solved by reopening St. Patrick's. I asked myself what is the purpose of such group discussions if participants are not prepared to be open-minded? It is apparent that "St. Patrick's" is almost a taboo subject with the group that turns up at P.C. meetings. I thought of raising the possibility myself but knew that it was a kite that wouldn't fly in P.C.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS