

August 12, 2017 (Day 2072 of the Closure, 6 years and 12 days)

Dear SOCA members and friends,

THANK YOU!

Let me begin by thanking all the members and friends for your generous response to the appeal for donations to enable us to send our appeal to the highest court in the Vatican, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura. The goal was to raise \$20,000. As of today we are just \$200.00 short of our goal. Thanks to the generosity of 77 of our members and friends, we have raised \$19,800 in less than a month with donations ranging from \$20 to \$2,000. This is in addition to those 55 of you who made donations at our recent Annual General Meeting at the end of April this year. Thank you to those of you who donated at the A.G.M. and generously made a new donation at this time as well. Thank you also to those who took the time to write warm notes of encouragement and appreciation to SOCA's Board of Directors. Most of SOCA's Board have served several years, some from even before June 25, 2011 when SOCA was formed! Your support and prayers keep our spirits high.

CHURCHES UP FOR SALE

As Bishop Henry's Decree relegating St. Patrick's Church to profane but not sordid use became effective on January 1, 2017, it is more than likely that St. Patrick's Church is up for sale and our Pastor is already considering offers. It is devoutly to be hoped that the fate of our beloved church will not be decided until the decision on our appeal to the Supreme Tribunal is announced.

WHAT DID WE DO THAT HAS LED TO OUR 3 CHURCHES BEING SOLD OR LIKELY TO BE SOLD AGAINST OUR WISHES?

Nothing. We had nothing to do with it. When he was appointed Bishop of Calgary, Bishop Henry decided that the best way to deal with the shortage of Canadian priests was to close rural parishes and consolidate urban parishes. So, in 1998 he and his advisory councils in Calgary, decided that the best solution for Lethbridge was to sell the three existing churches and build a large church. The parishioners of Lethbridge were not consulted and were in fact blissfully unaware of what was in store for them. When Fr. Tim Boyle became Pastor in 2001, he merged Our Lady of the Assumption Church and St. Patrick's Church and later, in 2006, St. Basil's Church, as the new All Saints Parish. The initial reason given by Fr. Tim was administrative convenience and efficiency of operation. It wasn't long, however, before parishioners became aware that there was a hidden agenda all along.

Sure, once the decision was made by Fr. Tim and his hand-picked committees, all kinds of reasons were found for why we needed a new church: the present churches were old, they were expensive to maintain, the Catholic population of Lethbridge was growing, we needed to be under one roof, parking places were insufficient, yada, yada, yada. More recently we have been told that the buildings do not provide for changes in the liturgy, there are insufficient meeting rooms, there are no facilities for youth and, my personal favourite, there are no baptismal fonts with running water. They have been baptising people in the River Jordan from the time of Jesus. Perhaps we can carry out truly authentic baptisms on the banks of the Oldman River. Now there's an idea! Can we keep our churches please and save \$21 million or more?

BUT, ARE WE NOT EXPERIENCING THE SAME PRESSURES AS OUR AMERICAN COUSINS?

One of our Calgary members of SOCA sent me the link below to an article in the New York Times dated August 7, 2017, titled "18 Shuttered Catholic Churches May Soon Be Up For Sale." As you will note in the article (link below), the sad reality in the U.S.A. today is that many Roman Catholic churches are being sold. In almost every case it is because changing demographics have caused numbers of worshipping Catholics to dwindle in many urban parishes. As land is expensive in American cities, the sale of these churches brings in much-needed revenue to cash-strapped dioceses. Jurisdictions struggling to pay massive compensations to victims of molestations by clergy cannot afford to maintain under-subscribed churches and the revenue from selling them could not be more timely.

Our situation is radically different in East Lethbridge. Here we had three parishes with fully paid up viable churches. It is an indisputable fact that all three churches were thriving and the numbers of parishioners in all three churches were growing. As far as I know, the diocese is not in financial trouble because of litigation against clergy past or present though I hear that there were some. Moreover, land values, though constantly rising, are nowhere as high as in the Big Apple. The three churches are not expected to fetch more than \$2 million - not a significant amount when you are looking at a price tag of \$21 million (perhaps much more) for the proposed new church.

In fact, SOCA members believe That there was only one reason why there was a consistent strategy to sideline or sell St. Patrick's Church: as long as it was open, the three churches would be able to cope with the needs of the parishioners of Lethbridge. Take St. Patrick's out of the equation and the remaining two churches would be hard-pressed to cope with the increased numbers and the case for a new church would be strengthened.

From 2000 onwards, the parishioners of East Lethbridge have been subjected to a manipulative process. Those who opposed what was basically a "Made in Calgary" proposal were dismissed as a "small group of dissenters". Rather than recognize that there were genuine concerns that deserved to be considered, Bishop Henry chose to curtly inform the parishioners that "the status quo is unacceptable."

There is a festering wound in All Saints Parish and, as long as it is ignored, the division and animosity created by the proposed sale of our three churches will continue to taint our parish. Parishioners have stopped attending church altogether or have moved to other denominations. The sheep have strayed but the shepherds don't seem to care. Collateral damage does not matter as long as the new church gets built...

Enjoy the rest of summer. God Bless!

Francis, Secretary of SOCA, Procurator

CC The Very Rev. Kevin Tumback, Rev. Lukas Drapal, Mr. Philip Gray, JCL