



October 28, 2010  
Feast of Sts. Simon and Jude

Dear Members of Christ's Faithful of St. Mary and St. Augustine Parishes:

I am in receipt of your October 8, 2010 letter and petition. I am grateful that you have approached me with your concern, and I certainly recognize and respect your right to do so (Code of Canon Law, c. 212, §§2-3). By means of this letter I am replying to what you requested, namely, the "immediate removal of the priests of the Society of Jesus Christ the Priest from St. Mary and St. Augustine parishes in Platteville." A number of you have written to the Apostolic Nuncio about this matter. He has forwarded the letters to me after having read them. He asked that I inform you that he has forwarded these letters to me for my pastoral consideration, since the responsibility for priestly assignments rests with the diocesan bishop.

The removal of a priest assigned to a parish is a very serious matter, and I as a Bishop may only do so, at my discretion, for certain serious causes (c. 1741). I have found that much of what has been said amounts to opinion, misunderstanding, and rumor rather than fact. Nonetheless, after carefully weighing all of your reasons for the proposed removal, I have decided to keep Rev. Lope Pascual, Rev. John Del Priore, and Rev. Miguel Galvez in their current priestly ministry at St. Mary and St. Augustine parishes in Platteville. Their charisms for Catholic education and vocations will serve the people of Platteville very well, and they have my full support. With regard to each of your concerns, see the attached Addendum.

While I am available to all of the faithful of the Diocese of Madison, it is always best to resolve concerns with one's Pastor(s) personally and locally. Not only does this give due respect to the priests, who have given their lives to serve you, but it is usually more efficient. I urge you to speak openly with these priests about your concerns; and I am confident that you will be treated with dignity and respect.

It grieves me to acknowledge that the reputation of three happy, holy, and hardworking priests has been seriously tarnished by rumor, gossip, and calumny (lying with the intent to damage another's good name) by some within the parish community. Such conduct is gravely sinful, since some parishioners have been driven by fear, anger, or both, to distance themselves from their priests and even the Sacraments. This situation must cease, and charity must prevail on the part of all.

**O F F I C E   O F   T H E   B I S H O P**

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Furthermore, activities such as protest-letter-writing seminars, leafleting of motor vehicles, door-to-door canvassing for signatures on a petition, etc (that is, exerting organized political pressure on people, where the end justifies any means) is an appropriate tactic in a political campaign, but not in the communion of faith which is the Catholic Church. Groups such as "Call to Action" and "Voice of the Faithful" regularly employ such tactics against legitimate authority in the Church. Because these groups dissent from basic tenets of Catholic Doctrine and Discipline, they are not recognized as Catholic in the Diocese of Madison, much less are they able to exercise legitimate authority. It is my hope that these clarifications will prove helpful.

Please give these priests time and open hearts. I assure you of their good will and pastoral concern for all of you, and I ask you to join me in praying for them in their sacred ministry.

With warm regards in Christ Jesus, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Robert C. Morlino". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Most Rev. Robert C. Morlino  
Bishop of Madison

Enclosure: Addendum

## ADDENDUM

Since it is obvious that much thought and care went into the formulation of the reasons for the petition of October 8, I want to provide a response to each point for the ongoing reflection of the Parish.

### A. Impact on Faith of Parishioners

1. **Allegation: Introduction of faith doctrine that is pre-Vatican II in format and content – Response:** First of all, it is necessary for us to appreciate the eloquent teaching of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI regarding the false dichotomy between the pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II Church. While the Council introduced much renewal, this dichotomy is not healthy in the Church. It is what the Holy Father described as the “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture.” We must rather adopt the “hermeneutic of reform,” which recognizes continuity in the Church’s life from before the Council to the present day. The hermeneutic of reform rejoices in the renewed presentation of the Church’s self-understanding without attempting to divorce itself from our rich Catholic heritage. The Holy Father taught this in his Christmas Greeting to the Roman Curia (December 22, 2005); I earnestly recommend that all the faithful prayerfully study this speech.
  - a. **Allegation: Reversion to obedience rather than acting as Body of Christ – Response:** It would not be correct to see obedience to Church authorities and the common priesthood of the faithful as in any way opposed to each other. The Council itself highlighted both of these as important components to the life of the Church (*Lumen gentium*, no. 37). Indeed, the example of Christ our Savior is the very epitome of these two elements, since he offered his priestly sacrifice to the Father by being obedient to the point of death on the Cross.
  - b. **Allegation: Treating not as true believers but as lost souls – Response:** It is not proven that any of the priests have called the parishioners “lost souls” in the paternalistic way implied in the petition. I would encourage parishioners not to infer that the priests currently assigned to St. Mary and St. Augustine Parishes are criticizing their predecessors simply on the basis of their own pastoral decisions. Every Pastor must prayerfully discern how to proceed in his ministry, and this not uncommonly takes a different course and expression than that of his predecessors. Likewise, I would urge parishioners not to infer that the priests are making personal judgments when they preach doctrines and disciplines of the Church which may have been less emphasized in the past or when they encourage or offer pious practices which may be a change in experience.
2. **Allegation: Introduction of faith practices that are pre-Vatican II in format and content – Response:** The petition did not include any evidence of when the indicated practices were mandated by the priests. It is my understanding that the priests have

made a kneeler available for those who *wish* to receive Holy Communion kneeling, without requiring it. The options of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand are both acceptable; and I know that the priests respect this.

In general, it is important for priests to verify that a person is properly disposed to receive Holy Communion (c. 843, §1), and this may include an assessment of whether a person's hands are too dirty to handle the sacred species. In one incident of this in Platteville, after the priest received more complete background information, the offended party immediately received the priest's apology, and the apology was accepted. As far as I am aware, this was an isolated incident and should not be characterized as a general trend.

3. **Allegation: Homilies transmit teachings inconsistent with the Vatican II Council – Response:** Regarding this concern, it is probable that the remarks at no. 1 above are applicable. I note also that Fr. Pascual publicly invited any concerned parishioners to review his homilies, which he has recorded, so that they could tell him where they think he diverges from the teaching of Vatican Council II. To date, no one has stepped forward, nor was any evidence of this included in the petition. If anyone has very clear examples, I would encourage you to bring your concerns, along with the helpful citations from the documents of the Second Vatican Council to Fr. Pascual.
4. **Allegation: Limiting altar service only to males so that young females aren't deemed worthy in the eyes of Christ – Response:** It is permissible in the Diocese of Madison for Pastors to reserve altar service at the Holy Mass to males. This is particularly beneficial for the promotion of priestly vocations, which is a particular charism of the Society of Jesus Christ the Priest. Once again, it is unfair and unreasonable to infer that the priests, by employing only males in this service, deem women to be unworthy in any way. Also, while it is a particular charism of the Society of Jesus Christ the Priest to foster vocations to the priesthood, that does not mean, nor will you find, that they ignore the vocations of young women to the consecrated life, nor of young men and women to holy marriages.
5. **Allegation: Reducing visits to homebound parishioners compared to Extraordinary Ministers – Response:** Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion have no "right" to administer Holy Communion at all—whether within the Holy Mass or outside of it. The administration of Holy Communion is proper to the clergy; and extraordinary ministers may only be used when there is a true necessity (Instruction *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, art. 8, §1). Therefore, the priests are obliged to administer Holy Communion to the homebound if they are able; they may only call on an extraordinary minister if they judge there to be a true necessity. To my knowledge, now that the priests are settled in Platteville, they are known to be consistent and diligent in this aspect of their priestly ministry.
6. **Allegation: Lack of support for families suffering loss of a loved one with inappropriate comments at a funeral – Response:** I have known the priests to be quite supportive and attentive to grieving families. As for the comments about hell

and purgatory, it is natural for the Last Things to be discussed at the time of a funeral. While it would be gravely wrong for a priest to declare that the deceased is in or deserves hell, there is no indication that this has ever been done by the priests of the Society. At the time of a loved one's death, it is very important for priests and deacons to remind the faithful to pray for the departed and to have Masses offered for them in order to help make satisfaction for the temporal punishment due them for their sins (purgatory). If a soul is in heaven it can do no harm. If the soul is in purgatory, it can do great good.

7. **Allegation: Insisting on an open flame candle at a nursing home that prohibits open flames – Response:** To my knowledge, this was an isolated incident, which was immediately resolved between Fr. Pascual and nursing home management, and in fact Mass is now regularly offered by the priests at the nursing homes.

## B. Change of Worship Environment

**Allegation: Worship environment has become unwelcoming and lacks joy – Response:** It is not proven that the celebrations in Platteville are lacking in due joyfulness, calling to mind also the characteristic sobriety of the Roman Rite. From other letters and communications it is also clear that what is reported in the petition is not the unanimous experience in Platteville. In fact, it is well known that the priests are reintroducing many images and practices that have never ceased to be an important part of the Church's spiritual heritage. As for decisions about the kinds of music to be used in the Sacred Liturgy, this is prescribed by the universal liturgical norms of the Church. Also, it is the responsibility of priests to implement these norms in their parishes. Finally, it is entirely permissible for the tabernacle to be placed in a prominent, dignified place in the sanctuary; and in fact I routinely insist on this for renovation projects in the Diocese.

On a personal and spiritual level, I would offer for consideration the reality that each of us is called constantly to seek real and lasting peace and serenity in our life of prayer – the very center of which, of course, is the Holy Mass. While I do not doubt that there have been some external changes at the parish nor that these changes – as change almost always does – may cause a certain unsettledness, the reality of Christ's real presence in the Holy Eucharist is the same. God, Himself, remains constant, unchanging from age to age. I encourage each of you – as I remind myself each day – seek the interior peace and serenity that only God can grant you. Sincerely approaching your liturgical prayer with this at heart, and allowing all things to point to God, I am confident that whatever unsettledness you might be feeling will fall away and be replaced with a renewed and lasting peace in our God, who desires passionately to speak to you in the silent depths.

## C. Parish Donations

**Allegation: Parish donations have decreased by 50% - Response:** Parish donations often decrease when changes occur at a parish. The exact level of change at the two parishes here is not yet clear. Regardless, it would be wrong to imply that the priests should carry out their ministry in a way that is pleasing to the faithful in order to generate income for the parish. On the one hand, the priests have the responsibility to proclaim the Gospel in season and out of season,

even if it is displeasing to those whom their preaching challenges. On the other hand, it is the obligation of the faithful to support the work of the Church as a good in and of itself, irrespective of the popularity of the clergy. Financial support is not to be treated as a vote of confidence but as a gift of love. This was emphasized by Vatican II in many places (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, nn. 20-21; *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 21; *Ad gentes*, no. 36).

#### D. Approval of Finance Council

**Allegation: Consultation with parishioners is next to non-existent; no approval of finance council – Response:** The duty of administration of the parish is entrusted to the Pastor and no other (c. 532); the Parochial Vicars participate in this according to the determinations of the Bishop and the Pastor. The Pastor never needs the approval of the finance council, pastoral council, or any other committee before making any decision (c. 536, §2, and c. 537). These councils and committees offer him insights, suggestions, and support; he can never allow them to bind him to make any specific decision, even by their unanimous vote (Instruction *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, art. 5, §§2-3).