

Long Island Voice of the Faithful Prayerful Vigil



Handout for March 7, 2010

For The Sake of the Pastoral Mission of the Church

*The following letter was sent to Bishop Murphy by the Board of Directors
of
Long Island Voice of the Faithful:*

February 25, 2010

Dear Bishop Murphy,

After prayerful consideration of your newly-announced diocesan reorganization plan with its heavy personnel reductions, the Board of Directors of LIVOTF believes that the people of our diocese deserve answers to some questions.

Why now? Why these people? Is this really the right time to push your older, loyal employees into the ranks of the unemployed? Employees willing to work for less than subsistence wages allowed the diocese to amass the huge reserves that are only now being dissipated because of the drop-off in Mass attendance and contributions---a loss of people and income coinciding with the revelations of sexual abuse within our church and diocese. Why are the people that worked tirelessly and loyally for substandard pay, because you told them that theirs was not a job but a ministry, paying for the sins of their bishops? In the February 3rd edition of the Long Island Catholic (LIC) you cite the "steady decrease in mass attendance over the past ten (10) years and the subsequent decrease in mass offertory contributions" as the chief cause of "our inability" to meet our obligations and the needs of the People of God. But you choose to totally ignore the fact that one of the chief causes for these declines was the conduct of you and your co-conspirator fellow bishops in orchestrating the cover-up of the sexual abuse scandal. (See the Massachusetts Attorney General's Report if you need a reminder of your involvement.) Instead of acknowledging that you and your conduct are responsible for the mess our church finds itself in, you scapegoat the very people upon whose selflessness the success of the DRVC is based.

It is evident from your comments in the LIC that the results of this initiative will be to wrest control of our parishes from our pastors and put it into the hands of your diocesan bureaucracy under the heading of a Shared Services Center. a so-called "Center of Excellence". Interestingly, while a substantial portion of the positions to be eliminated are at the parish and regional school level and therefore not funded by the diocese, the diocese itself must hire to create a centralized staff for the Center. Since a substantial portion of the resultant saving from your voluntary separation package will be at the parish level and a substantial increase in spending will occur at the diocesan level, we are left to conclude that you will look to the dwindling pool of parish offertory collections to fund your plan of diocesan centralization.

Before pursuing this course, it might be well to remember that you had to rename the annual "Bishops Appeal" as the "Catholic Ministries Appeal" due to the negative effect of the very word "bishop" had on contributions.

Bishop Murphy, explain why you state that one of your key money saving initiatives will be a "shared services arrangement whereby the diocese will assume responsibility under contract for many services currently provided by parishes," but neglect to mention that these contracts will require parishes to pay the diocese for provided services. Services they currently provide themselves. It is also curious that in the same LIC article, your spokesperson, Sean Dolan, states that "there are no plans to eliminate the jobs of Voluntary Separations Program eligible employees". If that be the case, what savings will result from the "shared services arrangements"? The untruthfulness of Mr. Dolan's statement is revealed in the documents distributed to your employees which state "the Voluntary Separation Program will enable the reduction of operating costs by downsizing the staff."

Finally, we ask how you justify these staff reductions with Catholic Social Teachings?

Bishop Murphy, your actions more closely mirror those of a Wall Street Trader than those of the Itinerant Carpenter upon whose life our faith is built.

Sincerely,

LIVOTF Board of Directors

Joan Hopkins

Co-chair

Please be advised that we will be releasing a copy of this letter to the public.