

Official Statement from Fr. Frank Pavone

For the past several years, my Ordinary, the Most Reverend Patrick Zurek, Bishop of Amarillo, has given me permission to do the full-time pro-life work that I have done since 1993. In 2005, I made a public promise in a Church ceremony in Amarillo, presided over by a Vatican Cardinal, that this full-time pro-life work would be a lifetime commitment. That's a commitment I promise to fulfill without wavering.

This past week, however, I received a letter from the Bishop insisting that I report to the Diocese this Tuesday, September 13 and, for the time being, remain only there.

I am very perplexed by this demand. Despite that, because I am a priest of the diocese of Amarillo, I will be obedient and report there on the appointed date, putting the other commitments that are on my calendar on hold until I get more clarity as to what the bishop wants and for how long. Meanwhile, I continue to retain all my priestly faculties and continue to be a priest in "good standing" in the Church. The bishop does not dispute this fact. Rather, he has said that he thinks I am giving too much priority to my pro-life work, and that this makes me disobedient to him. He also has claimed that I haven't given him enough financial information.

Now, although Bishop Zurek is my Ordinary, he is not the bishop of Priests for Life. Each of our staff priests has his own Ordinary, and the organization has an entire Board of Bishops. We keep them all informed of our activities, and of our financial audits.

I want to say very clearly that Priests for Life is above reproach in its financial management and the stewardship of the monies it receives from dedicated pro-lifers, raised primarily through direct mail at the grassroots level. To this end, Priests for Life has consistently provided every financial document requested by Bishop Zurek, including annual financial audits, quarterly reports, management documents—even entire check registers! Priests for Life has been *completely transparent* with Bishop Zurek and any other bishops who have requested information regarding our management and finances. Indeed, we have 21 bishops and cardinals who sit on our Advisory Board, and they are kept fully informed about our finances.

Therefore, in the interest of preserving my good reputation as well as protecting the valuable work done by the Priests for Life organization, *I have begun a process of appeal to the Vatican*. This process aims to correct any mistaken decisions of the bishop in my regard and to protect my commitment to full-time pro-life activity for my whole life. We are very confident that the Vatican will resolve this matter in a just and equitable fashion. Because of this confidence, we are not currently making any changes in any positions at Priests for Life, or in any of our projects and plans.

I also want to point out that, according to the canon law of the Catholic Church, because I have begun this process of appeal to Rome, the Bishop's order that I return to Amarillo has been effectively suspended. Nevertheless, because of my great respect for this Bishop and my commitment to be fully obedient at all times, I am reporting to Amarillo this

Tuesday, in hopes that I can sort this problem out with the Bishop in a mutually agreeable and amicable way.

I would like to note that, unlike other organizations, which have sometimes been critical of the Church hierarchy or other institutions within the Church, Priests for Life has always remained 100% supportive of the Bishops, never criticizing any Church official, and always acting as a megaphone for the Bishops' pro-life statements. Moreover, we serve dioceses and their priests and laity without asking for any speakers' fees, and distribute millions of pieces of pro-life literature to dioceses completely free of charge. We do not seek parish collections, and we work to reinforce in each diocese the local pastoral plan which the bishop wants to implement for pro-life activities.

We are committed to going forward with that same spirit, regardless of the recent action taken by Bishop Zurek.

In the interest of full transparency, I would like to make it known that I do not receive any salary or financial remuneration from either the Diocese of Amarillo or from Priests for Life. Priests for Life, as a Private Association of the Christian Faithful, does provide for my residence and the expenses associated with the ministry, but these expenses are very small. Though, as a diocesan priest, I have never taken a vow of poverty, I have basically chosen to live in that fashion in solidarity with the pre-born children we are trying to protect—who are the poorest of the poor.

I want to be clear that I do not harbor any ill will towards the Bishop of Amarillo, nor do I foster suspicions about his motives. I am merely confused by his actions. It is impossible for me to believe that there is no place in the Church for priests to exercise full-time ministry in the service of the unborn. We do it for the sick, the poor, the hungry, and the imprisoned. But where in the Church is the place where a priest can exercise the same kind of full-time ministry for the children in the womb? That is the question that is at the heart of my own calling.

I am confident that we will be able to resolve this difficulty soon, without any harm to either my own reputation and without any slowdown of the valuable pro-life work we do at Priests for Life.