



DIOCESE OF AMARILLO

Office of the Bishop

September 9, 2011

Your Eminences and your Excellencies:

I have decided to suspend Father Frank A. Pavone from public ministry outside of the Diocese of Amarillo to take effect on September 13, 2011. For an indefinite period, I am withdrawing my permission to him to minister outside our Diocese and am calling him back to spend time in prayer and reflection. My decision is the result of deep concerns regarding his stewardship of the finances of the Priests for Life (PFL) organization. The PFL has become a business that is quite lucrative which provides Father Pavone with financial independence from all legitimate ecclesiastical oversight. There have been persistent questions and concerns by clergy and laity regarding the transactions of millions of dollars of donations to the PFL from whom the donors have a rightful expectation that the monies are being used prudently. These financial questions and concerns have persisted with no clear and adequate answers since the time when Father Pavone was under two previous bishop ordinaries. Since he has consistently refused to subject the PFL to a transparent and complete auditing of all expenditures, I have reasons to be alarmed at the potential financial scandal that might arise if it were the result of my failure to correct Father Pavone's incorrigible defiance to my legitimate authority as his Bishop. Additionally, the PFL financial resources have afforded Father Pavone with a formidable civil and canonical counsel which he utilized to rebuff my every attempt at calling for financial transparency. Thus, my decision to intervene and to call him to accountability is meant to express the dire need to safeguard his priestly ministry to which I am obligated as his father and to help the Church avoid any scandal due to the national scope of the PFL's work. At a certain point, for me to hold all this knowledge about the PFL and to turn a blind eye would increase my culpability and quite possibly amount to material cooperation.

In his relationship to his bishop ordinaries, Father Pavone has gradually lost his need to show appropriate obedience to his Bishop. It seems that his fame has caused him to see priestly obedience as an inconvenience to his unique status and an obstacle to the possible international scope of his ministry. I would venture to say that the supreme importance that he attributed to his PFL ministry and the reductionist attitude toward the diocesan priesthood has inflated his ego with a sense of self-importance and self-determination. This attitude has strained his relationship with me and has given me the impression that I cannot invoke obedience with him because he is famous. It is my desire to help him readjust his priestly bearing through spiritual and theological renewal in order to recapture that essential priestly hallmark of respect and obedience. It is also my desire to strengthen Father Pavone's sense of *communio sacramentalis* with me so that he may be fortified with a healthy zeal to live in an authentic way his sacramental gift and mystery as a priest of Jesus Christ.

If you judged it to be prudent, I would like to ask that you would inform the Christian faithful under your care to consider withholding donations to the PFL until the issues and concerns are settled. Taking this opportunity to express my esteem and to ask for your prayers, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Patrick J. Zurek
+Most Rev. Patrick J. Zurek, STL, DD
Bishop of Amarillo



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