

The Diocese of Venice in Florida
Pastors and Priests

January 17, 2014

Your Excellency Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganó
The Apostolic Nunciature to United States of America
3339 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC, USA 20008

Dear Archbishop,

May our Lord grant you ever deeper peace and joy as we work together to spread the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ at home and throughout the world.

We are pastors and priests in the Diocese of Venice in Florida who place ourselves into your hands and earnestly request that this letter remain confidential with regard to the following grave concerns.

Since the appointment of Bishop Frank J. Dewane and his subsequent installation here in the Diocese of Venice on January 19, 2007, the behaviors described below have increasingly demoralized both the clergy and the laity in the wake of his administration. Aware of many letters of concern which have been sent to both the Apostolic Nunciature and the Congregation for Bishops in Rome, we come before you now as a united group to say our situation worsens with time and has become intolerable.

- 1) The Diocesan finance council as mandated in Can. 492 is not being used by the bishop as the law envisions. There is no financial transparency in the bishop's office. Of particular concern, for example, is the acquisition of properties which are reported in news journals but are kept secret from clergy and the laity of the diocese. There are many examples of excessive and apparently impulsive spending of diocesan funds which appear unmonitored by the customary controls.
- 2) The bishop does not allow legitimate oversight as Canon Law intends. All of the bishop's decisions are made independently and without the use of due diligence.
 - i. One of the first acts as the Bishop of the Diocese of Venice was the dismissal of the Diocesan Pastoral Council mandated in canon law (Can. 511). As a result there is no group to investigate, consider, and propose practical conclusions pertinent to pastoral works in the diocese.

- ii. The bishop has a presbyteral council in name only. Can. 495 intends a presbyteral council represent the presbyterium; be like a senate of the bishop; and assist the bishop in the governance of the diocese for the pastoral good of the people of God. While Can. 500 defines the leadership role of the bishop to convoke, preside and determine the questions to be treated when in session; the law clearly states the bishop is to receive proposals from the membership of the presbyteral council. The bishop does not allow this to take place.
 - iii. The Clergy Personnel Board has been abandoned. The bishop independently assigns priests and deacons without pastoral consideration. There is no forethought for their personal needs or the needs of the parish. The bishop does not provide ongoing pastoral care for the clergy, especially the sick and elderly.
- 3) Bishop Dewane has repeatedly ruled those under his authority with intimidation, the use of fear, shaming, bullying, and other non-Christian behaviors. Outbursts of rage, use of blasphemous language, despotic demands based not on reason or logic, have repeatedly scandalized clergy and laity alike. His absolute authoritarianism and mean-spirited demeanor with clergy make him impossible to work with.

In summary, Your Excellency, we have lost confidence in Bishop Dewane whose behavior is the opposite of what Pope Francis urges his priests and bishops to be. The clergy, in particular, are suffering and have lost respect for the bishop. We, the undersigned, know that we represent only a fraction of the presbyterate and laity who no longer can respect Bishop Dewane as leader and shepherd. We fear retaliation from the bishop should this letter and the signers below be made known to him. We present this letter to you after much prayer and discernment risking all for the sake of the people of the Diocese of Venice.

Any number of us will be happy to meet with you in your office in Washington, D.C., at your convenience, in order to discuss in further detail this grave crisis in the Diocese of Venice. We have collected factual data supporting our grave concerns. What further action might we take to rectify the disgraceful situation here? We await your reply and further direction.

We are encouraged by the example and teaching of His Holiness, Pope Francis, to whom we pledge our fidelity and whose office you represent. Thank you for your attention to our plight.

Enclosure: Signature Pages

Sincerely your in Christ,