

Kolpack letter to her parishioners explaining her dismissal

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March 13, 2009

Dear Parishioner,

I have some bad news to share with you. This week, Bishop Morlino asked to meet with Fr. Steve and myself. We had that meeting Thursday, March 12th. As a result of the meeting, I have been fired, effective immediately.

Over the past three years, the Chancellor received several accusations against me. Fr. Steve met with the Bishop in January about this and has been working with the Chancellor since then with the hope of finding a positive resolution.

This week the emphasis has shifted to my Master's Thesis, which I wrote as the final assignment for my Master of Divinity degree, which was granted from St. Francis Seminary in 2003. I am extremely proud of this accomplishment and its contributions to Church discussion ? the thesis discusses the potential harm of non-inclusive language in the Mass. How we name God does affect men and women and humanity overall. When I met with Bishop Morlino yesterday, he concluded, based on my Master's Thesis, that my teachings about Jesus are off base. Yet, he also admitted that he had not read the document in its entirety, but only ?bits and pieces.?

Finally, Bishop Morlino announced that I would be required to denounce my Thesis, make a profession of faith and take an oath of loyalty in order to remain a Pastoral Associate at St. Thomas Parish. While I was willing to do the latter two, I could not agree to denounce my Thesis as it would be dishonest of me. I indeed believe in and stand behind the culmination of the six years I invested in this degree.

After Bishop Morlino's announcement, I was given no opportunity to discuss any points in my Thesis with which he disagreed nor any of the original accusations made against me. In fact, within 10 minutes from the beginning of the meeting, I was fired. Fr. Steve, the Vicar General and the Chancellor were all present to witness what happened. Fr. Steve has given me 100% of his support and I truly appreciate that.

My ministry is my life's work. I love my Catholic faith and I love helping people meet the Risen Christ in a life changing way. Through my nearly four decades of being actively involved in the Church, I have had the blessing of meeting many faith-filled people in ministry who have helped to shape who I am. In my position as Pastoral Associate, I am blessed to work with people of all ages ? from young families to the elderly, to assist the poor who come to our door and to work with organizations to change systems that keep people poor.

As I look over these past four decades, I recognize the Holy Spirit guiding me through the years to the place where I am in my faith at this time and I continue to depend on the Holy Spirit for daily guidance. The Scriptures are my foundation, showing me the presence of God in the lives of people. It is the life of Christ that drives me to work for justice.

The past two months have been difficult for me but also have given me an opportunity for much reflection. I feel confident in saying that my actions as an employee at St. Thomas have been consistently prudent and in good faith in relation to the teachings of the Church. I have never used my position to promote issues contrary to Church teaching.

Some of you know me better than others. If you'd like to express what your experience with me has been and what you know about how I express the teachings of Jesus through my ministry, I invite you to write your thoughts to any of the following people, particularly the Apostolic Nuncio, the Vatican's U.S. representative. Their addresses are as follows:

In the Spirit of Christ,

Ruth Kolpack

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