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'Priests for Life needs a massive infusion of contributions...'

by Tom Gallagher

NCR Today

Jerry Horn, senior vice president of Priests for Life (PFL), sent a new desperate plea for money in a letter to donors dated Nov. 4, 2011. According to the letter, many supporters have withdrawn their support of PFL because of the controversy surrounding it. Nonetheless, Horn wants to give "Father" a Thanksgiving Day gift by raising \$676,618 for PFL. He asks that the donors rush their gift to him today.

Fr. Frank Pavone, the embattled national director of PFL, was called back to the Amarillo, Texas, diocese by Bishop Patrick Zurek for a period of prayer and reflection. Zurek suspended Pavone from active ministry outside the diocese. Pavone failed to show up for a mid-October meeting with Zurek and is seeking a mediator.

Horn's letter is at least the third urgent fundraising letter in the past eight weeks. The first two letters (dated Sept. 22 and Oct. 14, 2011) were written by Pavone.

Horn, who serves as the organization's spokesperson, writes to the donors instead of Pavone. Horn writes that he needs to say things to the donors that Pavone won't because of Pavone's "deep respect for the Church, and especially the office of the bishop."

While PFL needs a "massive infusion of contributions," Horn tries to assure the donors that the organization is "NOT about to shut down."

"All of our projects are moving forward. All of our programs are in full swing," Horn writes. "Our Pastoral Team is on the road as much as ever. No one on the staff has been let go. If anything, everyone here at Priests for Life is more committed to winning the battle than ever; if that's even possible."

The letter also serves as an encomium to Pavone. Horn writes about how hard Pavone continues to work as a prolific writer who makes himself available to other pro-lifers, despite the restriction on travel outside the diocese.

Horn repeats claims already publicly made by Pavone, such as the allegedly inaccurate reporting in the media of the circumstances surrounding Pavone being called back to the Amarillo.

Horn writes, "Almost everything you have read or heard about Father and his bishop is not true. Believe me, I know? It's shocking to read the flat out lies and total fabrications being reported by many in the mainstream media."

Unlike recent Pavone letters, Horn writes that it is "friends" of PFL who are sowing confusion with donors.

"What has been far more disheartening and painful to me, however, are all the things being written about Father from those we all considered our friends and comrades in the pro-life movement," Horn writes. "I have no idea what is motivating these individuals to repeat the half-truths coming out of Amarillo."

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The Amarillo Globe News, which has been covering this story, permitted Horn to write an opinion piece in the paper. Horn's Oct. 26 essay is enclosed in the donor letter. Horn insists that the donor read his essay because the donors "deserve to have as much information as possible about what's going on. ? If you have any questions, call me and we can discuss them."

NCR has made a number of requests of PFL and Horn for an on-the-record interview and to specifically address any errors in the reporting of the saga. These requests have been repeatedly turned down.

Read the letter.

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