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## Priests for Life founder: Group 'is in jeopardy'

by Tom Gallagher

Fr. Frank Pavone, the high-profile pro-life priest whose bishop has restricted his ministry because of questions about the finances of the group he runs, told his benefactors in a letter that the organization's existence is in serious doubt.

Pavone, head of Priests For Life, sent a fundraising letter to supporters in early December to tell them that "all of our work at Priests for Life, indeed the very existence of Priests for Life, is in jeopardy."

"Contributions are not nearly where they need to be in order to sustain all that Priests for Life is doing," Pavone writes. "But no matter how much you choose to give, whether a one-time gift of \$160 today or a monthly Pledge of at least \$27, *it is absolutely vital that you respond TODAY*" (emphasis included).

Pavone blames "many in the news media -- and sadly even some whom we thought were our friends in the pro-life movement -- to destroy Priests for Life and silence our voice ..."

The fundraising letter cites retired auxiliary Bishop Roger William Greis' request for donations, which Pavone describes as an "impassioned plea." Gries, in an October letter, included this statement: "Please continue to support Priests for Life."

Pavone's latest urgent request for money comes on new letterhead that includes a list of more than 20 names and titles of those associated with Priests for Life.

Among his Advisory Board of Bishops listed are Cardinal Christoph Schonborn of Vienna; retired Cardinal Renato Martino of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; Archbishop Charles Chaput, Philadelphia archdiocese; Bishop Michael Burbidge, Raleigh, N.C., diocese; Bishop Michael Sheridan, Colorado Springs, Colo., diocese; and retired Auxiliary Bishop Roger Gries, Cleveland archdiocese.

Pavone specifically highlights the "21 bishops and Cardinals on our Episcopal Advisory Board."

"Look at those names!" he writes. "To a man they have remained steadfast in their support of our work."

Advisory boards have no legal or fiduciary authority over the not-for-profit organizations with which they are affiliated. Priests for Life's episcopal advisory board does not have civil, legal or canonical authority over the group.

Despite the financial troubles of the organization, Pavone writes that all of PFL's projects and programs are moving forward and no one on the staff has been let go. Pavone also provides a financial report, a multicolored, single sheet of paper with photos and captions, including pictures of Pavone shaking hands with Pope Benedict XVI and with Blessed Mother Teresa.

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The financial report consists of a single pie chart breaking down by percentage how donations are spent:

- Newsletters to priests and pro-life literature: 10 percent
- TV and radio: 4 percent
- Special projects: freedom rides, etc.: 9 percent
- Administrations: 9 percent
- Website, email, project communication: 7 percent
- Direct support of other pro-life groups: 7 percent
- Fundraising: 16 percent
- Parish talks/local outreach: 18 percent
- Affiliate organizations, including Rachel's Vineyard, Gospel of Life, and African-American, Hispanic and international outreach: 20 percent

This flier states that PFL is a "Private Association of the Faithful and is not supported by an direct contributions from the Church or large foundations" and that PFL "also provides administration assistance and guidance to numerous pro-life organizations across the country." It also states that PFL "is constantly working to maximize its fundraising and administration dollars by keeping its overhead and fundraising costs to a minimum."

Pavone writes that PFL is an open book and that "anyone can come to our offices any time and look at anything and everything they want. "We have nothing to hide."

PFL has turned down *NCR*'s repeated requests over a number of months for an interview.

To read Pavone's most recent fundraising letter, click here.

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