

July 12, 2007

Dear Catholic Friends,

I am sending this to every Catholic I know to make you aware of a very disturbing development in our Diocese, concerning the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) and its ex-director, Monica Skrzypczak. Monica had been an employee of the Diocese for 11 years, most recently as Director of the Department of Religious Formation and the Coordinator of the Pastoral Studies Institute. There is universal agreement she has done an outstanding job in her various positions, and built the PSI into the valuable resource it currently is for the entire Diocese.

After prayerfully considering this, I feel this is important enough that I need to take a public stance.

Here is what I can report to you as **facts**:

- Monica sent an email to her PSI instructors (which includes myself) on May 30 stating that she had been asked to hold off scheduling any PSI classes for Fall 2007, because the Diocese was considering using some portion of the PSI budget to fund the new Liturgical Institute. Just a few weeks earlier she had written us asking us for proposals for classes for the Fall, so she felt she needed to inform us of this development.
- **Monica was fired from her job with the Diocese on June 5th.**

The following items I cannot report as facts, but I have heard the same things from multiple sources, so I believe these are generally accurate statements:

- There had been discussion about closing, downsizing, or phasing out the PSI due to budgetary concerns, with the thought that the new Liturgical Institute needs funding and might offer some of the same programs.
- Monica had not been told to not disclose these discussions, and so informed the instructors of this in her May 30 email.
- When fired on June 5th she was immediately escorted from the Chancery office premises.
- There has been no public announcement or explanation of Monica's firing, but there is no doubt the real reason was the email she had sent.
- On Friday June 1 the Bishop sent an email to the priests and deacons stating that the closing of the PSI was just a rumor that is not true, and the Fall term will happen as scheduled. Also, it said no action affecting PSI would be taken without the priests' and deacons' input.

The following are my thoughts on these events:

While the June 1 email to the clergy was being sent, the decision had obviously already been made to dismiss Monica. Firing the Director is clearly a very significant action, and was made with no input from the clergy of the Diocese, despite the statement in the email.

The PSI is an extremely valuable and successful resource for the Diocese. There is no reason for it to be closed. Probably for the short term the PSI is safe, to avoid any signs of linkage with Monica's dismissal (though some instructors will refuse to teach unless Monica is reinstated). But I do fear for its survival past this next year. I don't know much about the new Liturgical Institute, so will not comment on it. But I strongly feel it should not be funded at the expense of other successful Diocesan programs.

Monica Skrzypczak is another valuable and successful resource for the Diocese. Her firing was completely unjustified. The possible closing of the PSI is NOT some secret business decision. It directly impacts the spiritual development of Catholics throughout the Diocese – who fund the PSI (and all Diocesan programs) through DDF and other contributions. Monica did nothing wrong. If the Diocese had no plans to phase out the PSI, why was she asked to hold off forming Fall 2007 classes? The failure is in how the Diocese has handled this situation.

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What can we do?

For now, I encourage everyone to contact the Bishop and Chancellor and share with them your thoughts on these events.

In my letter, I personally will be asking the Bishop to:

1. Make a public commitment to continue and strengthen the Pastoral Studies Institute.
2. Immediately reinstate Monica Skrzypczak – if she is willing to return. She may very well refuse. But in either case an apology must be made.

For your convenience, the contact information for the Bishop and Chancellor is included below.

Several people have suggested that everyone send copies of their letters to Archbishop Beltran and the Presbyterial Council, many of whom did not know about. So please consider buying a few extra stamps and sending copies to the priests on the Council. I have also included below the names and addresses of the priests on the Council.

Thank you for the actions I know you will take, and most importantly please keep Monica, and the Bishop, in your prayers.

And finally, please share this note with as many other Catholics as you can.

Peace,
John Kennington

p.s. I will also add that I did talk with Monica to obtain her permission to make this information public, but did not get into the specifics of what I would say nor did I have her review this. This was done on my own initiative and not in any way directed or influenced by Monica.

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