

**Am-Pol Eagle**  
Thursday May 31, 2007  
Open Letter

Dear Bishop Kmiec:

When I was in Buffalo in March visiting family (where I was born and raised) and went to St. Adalbert's Church (of which I am now a parishioner), I noted the document that came from the Vatican in Rome in the side room on the wall. In a discussion with my brother, he mentioned that you were closing and merging churches, possibly even St. Adalbert's. Why would churches be closed if they are not a burden to the diocese, pay their bills, have parishioners and are self-sustaining?

I also had the opportunity of obtaining a copy of the Am-Pol Eagle issue for March 22, 2007 where the journalist, Alfred H. Karney wrote "St. Adalbert's in Buffalo apparently does not have such a document (naming it a basilica). Issued in 1907, the document in its museum does proclaim an affiliation with St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. It states that anybody who visits St. Adalbert's and who also visits St. Peter's or any other church within three miles of St. Peter's receives indulgences, privileges, and spiritual favors." According to Sister Regina's report, "affiliation with a basilica, however, does not grant the affiliate church basilica status."

The article goes on to say that Kevin Keenan, spokesperson for the Diocese of Buffalo said there is no evidence that St. Adalbert's has ever been officially designated as a basilica by the pope and acknowledged that the diocese does have a copy of the document granting it affiliation status.

This prompted me to take pictures of the document in the museum which I forwarded to a colleague with the Vatican Embassy here in Abuja who can read Latin. He made the following comments in an email:

"From what I can tell St. Adalbert's is affiliated/aggregated or joined with St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, which means *that a visit to St. Adalbert's receives all the same spiritual graces and benefits as a personal visit to St. Peter's Basilica. I think that this makes St. Adalbert's very special, better than being a minor basilica, because there are a great many spiritual benefits connected to a pilgrimage to St. Peter's, one of only four major basilicas in the world and all located in Rome (St. Peter, St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Mary Major), and those same benefits are available to anyone who visits St. Adalbert's. In fact, St. Adalbert's may be unique in the U.S. in this regard. Those spiritual benefits are not available to people who visit a minor basilica. St. Adalbert's is not an official basilica in its own right, but a basilica by extension.*"

I also asked my colleague regarding the closing of churches and what is the proper procedure as it did not seem correct to just close or merge a church because a bishop wanted to.

He explained the procedure and options. He used St. Adalbert's as an example, but explained it can apply to any parish community.

1. Merger: St. Adalbert's parish community can be merged with another parish community and the parish community can be given a different name, but St. Adalbert's church can stay open. It will always remain St Adalbert's church (the church building) - it keeps the same name. It does not take the name of the new parish created from the merger. What you will end up with is "St. Adalbert's Church" of "Blessed Sacrament Parish." The people and assets are merged together and belong to the new parish, but the church buildings keep their original names, because that is the name they were given when they were built.

2. Suppression of parish, but the church is kept open. The bishop can suppress the parish. If the parish is suppressed, the church and the parish assets revert

to the diocese. The bishop can then give the church to another already existing parish.

Is St. Adalbert's to be merged with another parish or is it to be suppressed? There is a difference. Has the Priests' Council met on the matter the required three times by Canon Law? Parishioners should be kept informed of what is going on in your proceedings and the information should be readily available to them.

Also, has St. Adalbert's Church been consecrated or merely blessed? This is information that the diocese should have readily available and that should be readily available to all who ask.

*I feel very strongly* that parishes should not be touched (merged or suppressed) as long as there is a viable worshipping community, the church building and other parish properties do not have major maintenance issues, and the parish is self-supporting financially, which St. Adalbert's is (and probably a number of other churches as well).

If it is a question of having a priest, priests can be found. If a priest cannot be found, it is possible to do what they do in other countries, where parishes stay open and churches stay open and are run/administered by lay people.

I believe St. Adalbert's is growing, even though a little, and that is a good sign. Right now, in some places in the U.S., the church seems to be shrinking, but we never know when things will turn around. Closing a parishioner's church can be very devastating to the congregation. Once something is lost, it is very difficult - even impossible - to get it back. St. Adalbert's is a very beautiful church - a little piece of heaven on earth - and it would really be a pity if it were lost.

Sincerely,  
**Diana Kniazuk,**  
Dulles, VA

## Letters

**Dear Editor:**

After reading Mr. Karney's numerous articles on the "basilica" status of St. Adalbert's Basilica, I felt I needed to address some of the issues that he brings up. I indeed called Mr. Karney too after reading the first of his "opinions." I have researched "basilicas" on all the internet sites that I could. After reading those sites and the history sites of St. Adalbert's, I cannot believe that anyone could give any credibility to Mr. Karney or Sister Regina who also agrees that it is not a basilica.

A call to her office only brought me the statement that, "Sister Regina says it is not a basilica"....and I guess one is to believe that God has spoken. And dare not question anything, well that is not the type of person that I am.

As I told Mr. Karney, it is very interesting how this article and questions arise right now, during the discussion of church closings and the fact that one cannot close a basilica. But, I guess if it is not a basilica, it could well indeed be up for closure. He calls it a coincidence; I call it a conspiracy.

One article on the history of the basilica explains it like this... the year 1907 was marked with a very distinctive event. Acquiescing to the petition by Bishop Colton, His Holiness Pope Pius X, by an authenticated document, had adjoined the Church of Saint Adalbert to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, thereby granting the "in perpetuo" the privilege of enjoying all the indulgences and spiritual favors which the Vatican basilica enjoys.

Major/Minor who really is to question what the religious hierarchy, right to the top position of Pope Pius, what the status is now, some one hundred years later. I will not second guess those people and I don't think anyone else should. I rest my case.

**Barb Brader,**  
Cheektowaga