

Am-Pol Eagle

Thursday June 28, 2007

An Open Letter to Polonia and the Diocese of Buffalo, NY

I have been closely following the "Journey in Faith and Grace" commentaries in the Am-Pol Eagle and am quite dismayed and shocked at the attitude of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, as represented by Sister Regina Murphy and the treatment meted out to the Polish parishes in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Dunkirk, and North Tonawanda, NY.

It is most shocking to me, especially that the diocese and Sr. Murphy are attempting to control the faith of many Polish parishes. I think that it has been forgotten that these parishes belong to the people because it is the people who support these church institutions. Why are you not listening to the desires and needs of the Polish communities — namely their churches, their culture, and their strong religious convictions?

The people of Poland were recently released from the communist yoke which for over 50 years subjected them to the whims of the godless communistic authorities. It appears to me now, that Polonia, and not only in Western New York, but throughout the United States is being subjected to a new form of communistic authority.

Sister Regina Murphy's comment about closing a Polish church in one area because it was not sufficiently lucrative is beneath contempt. Since when does money dictate where and how we should practice our Catholic faith? Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and to the people that which lives in their hearts.

I cannot understand why our dioceses in the United States must maintain seminaries where there is a very small enrollment. This is the place where consolidation with other dioceses would be most out that the diocese of Chicago finally made a commitment to close their preparatory seminary, realizing that it was a waste of resources. I also cannot understand why our bishops in the United States must live in such large and sumptuous palaces, whereas there is plenty of room in many rectories today, room that is going unused.

I think the bishops should do a self-study of how they are living on the hard earned money of the diocesan people. All these contributions going to maintain these structures could be put to use in supporting parishes which are in need.

I could go on and on and discuss further the many articles I have read in the last few weeks concerning this matter, but I think the above should suffice in expressing my overall feeling about the treatment of Polish parishes in the above-mentioned areas. This also applies to many other cities where there exist large Polish-American populations.

I sincerely hope that any and all of you who are reading this letter will wake up and take a strong stand and assert your rights in your churches and openly voice your opinion by writing letters to your bishop and not only asking WHY this treatment is taking place, but insisting that the authorities be fair and listen to the needs of the people. It is time for Polonia to be politely forceful with its demands for decent treatment of their churches, their schools, and their magnificent cultural inheritance lest it be lost forever.

I am a former resident of Lancaster, NY, now residing in Yardley, PA. I am very much involved in the Polish mosaic, not just in America, but in actively reaching out to the homeland of Poles everywhere. Presently, I am the first vice-president of the American Council of Polish Culture, a national organization working to keep our heritage alive.

May God bless you in your efforts to do all that's possible to preserve our Polish parishes, our culture, and our inheritance from the first immigrants from Poland who did such magnificent work in creating the treasures of our heritage in this new land.

**Sincerely yours,
S. Paul Bosse,
First vice-president,
American Council
of Polish Culture**

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I would like to respond to the letter writer who feels "ashamed of my Polish heritage as it has been presented in the Am-Pol Eagle lately." I am truly sorry that you feel that way.

I, on the other hand, could not be prouder of our heritage. Catholics across the diocese tried hard to work with the diocesan commission. But their ideas and suggestions were completely ignored. The same frustration, disenfranchisement and abandonment felt in Niagara Falls has also been expressed by people in Dunkirk, the Tonawandas and Buffalo.

When people see a process that is flawed they not only have a right, but an obligation to speak out. Too much is at stake to remain silent. When New Visions was inherited by Bishop Henry Mansell, he studied it, then promptly stopped the process. New Visions was not fully implemented. As I see it, the Journey in Faith and Grace and New Visions are one and the same.

Roger Puchalski and the recent letter writers have demonstrated courage and should be commended for their willingness to speak out against a course of action that has, in my opinion, endangered our religious heritage.

**Stephen Dojka,
Niagara Falls**

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Dear Editor:

This "Journey" that Bishop Kmiec has mandated is a one way street-HIS WAY! When it began, it was said that representatives from each parish would be involved. Did the representatives get to volunteer? NO! Did each parish get to elect the representatives? NO! The representatives for each parish were chosen by [Bishop] Kmiec's minions - the parish diocesan priests! Those chosen to participate appear to be sheep rather than parish leaders!

The one dissenting voice I have heard from pastors are those that are not diocesan priests who are not obliged to march to the journey of sorrow that is being mandated by [Bishop] Kmiec. I have been a loyal Catholic all my life and have worked hard for my parish as did my ancestors and relatives. Now all this work is to be cast aside? Although our parish priest persists in forcing us to recite that prayer for [Bishop] Kmiec's journey each Sunday I refuse to do so - as should others!

The point has been made by some that you do not need a priest to have a parish. They are right! Parishes that are financially solvent can exist with lay ministers with a visiting priest to say Mass as required.

The Polish community is at high risk from a bishop who falls upon his ethnic background. In Wyoming County we have one Polish parish. It was founded in the early 20th century because the existing Catholic church in town did not want the immigrants in their congregation. This church in Perry, NY is financially solvent. Why punish us?

There has been talk that the diocese might be returning money loaned to it by the parishes prior to this one way journey coming to its very sad close. If that occurs, the closed parishes will most probably

see their money transferred to the new parish that [Bishop] Kmiec and his blind followers have conceived. That money, should a parish be merged" - and fight this merger as best you can since once something is gone it cannot be replaced - make sure your parish money goes to your parish cemetery fund out of reverence to your ancestors.

A bishop of Polish ancestry is NO compensation for the loss of our ethnic parishes and the loss of the hard work of people over the last century who have fought for their parish identity. Do not let your parish identity be rebuked by this ill conceived, unempathetic journey on the Kmiec road!

**Gary E. Krolikowski, PhD
Castile, NY**

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OPEN LETTER

Most Reverend Bishop Kmiec,

The Parish Council of St. Adalbert's wishes to respond to your letter written to Rev. Thaddeus Bocianowski dated June 13, 2007 that was read to parishioners on the weekend of June 17. We found the letter of response totally unacceptable since once again the Diocese has chosen to ignore our reasonable request to contact the Vatican in Rome regarding our basilica status.

Your first response to our petition was to cite Sr. Regina Murphy's research of 1992 which basically stated that St. Adalbert's was not a basilica. Your second response included an article by the Rev. Robert McNamara entitled "Minor Basilicas in the United States". You noted that he is a well respected Church historian. The article indicated that in 1959 there existed 12 basilicas in the United States and a footnote which you highlighted in reference to St. Adalbert's stated:

"(7) At times the title basilica has been applied to other American churches in addition to the twelve we list. If they merit the title, the papal document conferring the rank has at least never been published in the A.S.S. (1865-1908) or in the A.A.S. (1909-). More likely the claim has been based on their obtaining indulgence-affiliation with one of the major basilicas. This is the case with St. John the Apostle and Evangelist in St. Louis and Old St. John's in Chicago, both affiliated with St.

John's Lateran; and St. Adalbert, Buffalo, affiliated with St. Peter's. As we have already pointed out, affiliation does not confer the rank or prerogatives of a minor basilica."

This historian's work does not answer our initial question "Could we have been designated a basilica and the paper not filed?" This was our primary reason for wanting you to contact the Vatican since we do not know if other paperwork existed in addition to the document of affiliation which we possess.

In fact, in light of Rev. McNamara's research and article we feel that as a church, whether we have basilica status or not, we deserve to remain open due to the fact that we are one of only three sites in Western New York (the others being Our Lady of Victory Basilica and Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Lewiston) that visitors can come to, follow prescribed criteria, and obtain the same indulgences as if they visited St. Peter's in Rome. We do not take this privilege lightly.

As a Council, we believe that the Diocese is making a blatant attempt to close us as we witness deals being conducted within our parish structure and with surrounding parishes. Twice your response has indicated a total disregard for the parishioners of St. Adalbert's and demonstrated an unfair handling of our reasonable request to contact Rome.

Therefore, as a Council, it is our decision to continue pursuing this matter. Our successful St. Adalbert's Response to Love Center and St. Adalbert's cemeteries are also part of this equation. It makes absolutely no

sense to this Council that the Diocese would take steps to divest us from these lucrative investments only to let them remain open and close the parish. We are not only an example of competent stewardship in the inner city; but a source of spiritual benefits. Many people throughout the Diocese have contacted us in disbelief that the Diocese would be willing to close a parish that not only is responsible for a success story in the RTL Center; but one that offers spiritual indulgences by affiliation to Rome.

We, as, a Council, are asking this question: How can you purport this process is a Journey in Faith and Grace and then eliminate St. Adalbert's church which is a source, of grace? Therefore, we cannot accept the decision to close us. We intend to solicit the support of parishioners, former parishioners, Polish organizations, friends of St. Adalbert's and the media to champion our cause. We petition you, once again, to leave our parish and our worship site open.

We respectfully request that copies of this letter be provided to the commission.

Sincerely,
St. Adalbert's Parish Council
Stanley A. Kowalski Jr.,
Council President

*(This letter was also signed by
12 parish council members.)*