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Most Reverend Thomas Rodi
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February 19, 2008

Your Excellency:

I am in receipt of your letter of February 12, 2008 and appreciate your writing it, although I admit to some surprise and initial incredulity, nevertheless I thank you for writing. I admit that I am not your equal in quoting scripture such as the three passages in your letter; however I am satisfied that the actions we have undertaken are justified. You, my Pastor and Deacon obviously have other opinions.

The quotation (1Corinthians 6: 1-11), as printed in your letter is incomplete. Perhaps this is the way it is done in Ecclesiastical terms. I am certain that Judge Zebert is not a pagan; he describes himself as a devout Christian. My understanding is that the early Church, definitely including Corinth, was in some degree of disarray when St. Paul wrote his first letter to them. The words of St. Paul seem to be directed to the faithful of the same rank and status. Our situation is a valid disagreement with our Church leaders, so to whom would we appeal in the local church? The suit in Chancery Court deals only with civil matters under the laws of Mississippi; our hierarchical appeal deals only with church matters and canon law.

Our canon law efforts or recourse to a Congregation in Rome is not over and final. I understand that an appeal can be made to the ruling of the Congregation for the Clergy, even to the Holy Father in the Apostolic Signatura. The letter from Archbishop Piacenza does say that our recourse has been rejected. However, the paragraph just above the rejection, paragraph five, states that our petitions made to the Ordinary (Bishop Rodi) and to the Congregation for the Clergy were made without regard to either the procedure for administrative recourse or the canonical time limits set forth in canons 1732-1739. In other

words, we were rejected because of a technical error. The letter does not state that the recourse was rejected because of the facts in the case. I assure everyone that a better job will be done next time.

A number of plaintiffs are now in the process of delivering your letter to the addressees; some have already been delivered by hand. It is a slow process and the insertion of your letter into the weekly bulletin has already reached a good number of people. They will be delivered to each and every plaintiff if at all possible.

Each plaintiff in the case of Schmidt et al vs Diocese et al is a single individual and each of equal importance and respect. Each one can react to your letter as they wish. If anyone wants to resign from the case, it is their own business and they will still enjoy the respect of the other plaintiffs. It is virtually impossible to obtain enough people to resign to stop the progress of this case. Only one plaintiff is needed for a lawsuit. We are near a ruling from Judge Zebert, so why would anyone want to leave the case now? These are good people who speak for themselves and cannot be stampeded so easily. After the Judge rules on the defense motion to dismiss the case, we may have a clearer idea of how prolonged this case will be. The advantages of appeal will be considered by each side; at present there are too many unknowns to decide. However, it is never too late nor too soon to meet and discuss the future of this case. Mr. Wooten has offered to set up a meeting if you are of a mind to do so. Discussion and reconciliation require at least two parties. So far there has been no discussion, either before or since the lawsuit was filed. The lack of being able to discuss the decision to destroy St. Paul as a church has largely been an incentive to file the suit.

The three parish meetings scheduled after Father Carver's announcement to build a new church were apparently meant to irritate and infuriate the people, for this is exactly what they accomplished. You have released statements and news articles and Father Carver has consistently ignored every question or approach by any plaintiff so now we have a lawsuit which you are trying to stop through the weight of your office. Perhaps if you tried a more person-to-person approach you could find some common ground.

The shameful and sacrilegious actions by Father Carver on February 5th and 6th in Our Lady of Lourdes Church are something I have never seen or even thought possible in seventy-four years of going to church. I presume you are aware of these things but in any case I will write another letter to you about this.

Dear Bishop, I sincerely hope that we can keep lines of communication open; I trust that we can learn some important things from each other. Our goals are not as far apart as they may seem. I follow your good example of closing your letter with scripture; I close this letter with a paragraph from Article #37 of Lumen Gentium:

“Let the spiritual shepherds recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity of the Church. Let them willingly employ their prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative. Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. However, let the shepherds respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city.”

“to rebuild the church is to rebuild hope itself”

You and our Pastor and Deacon will remain in our prayers as well as all clergy and religious of the diocese.

Sincerely,

Frank L. Schmidt, Sr., M. D.