

Deluged as the rectory was, beginning Thursday, March the second, with telephone calls and e-mail transmissions with respect to the current status of Father Altier, I felt constrained, as pastor of St. Agnes Parish, to compose a brief statement assuring one and all that Father Altier still serves in good standing as the associate pastor of St. Agnes Parish. At all of the Masses offered here at St. Agnes on the weekend of March 4th and 5th my statement was read from the pulpit without further comment. Since many have asked for a copy of that statement, I am printing a transcript here.

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Let me state at the outset that neither was I consulted about the command issued recently by the Archbishop to Father Altier nor was I informed about it prior to its announcement in the media. And for very good reason: the Archbishop is under no obligation to explain to his priests the reasons for his commands. During the ceremony of ordination priests take a vow of life-long obedience to their Bishop and to his successors. Fr. Altier accordingly (and quite predictably) honored that vow, submitting at once to the Archbishop's command by withdrawing from hosting his weekly call-in show on Relevant Radio and by removing the content of his website *The Voice in the Desert*.

It is important to make clear that Father Altier's faculties for maintaining his sacramental and teaching ministry here at St. Agnes Parish remain essentially intact; he will continue to say Mass, to hear confessions, to preach and teach and to give spiritual direction exactly as he has done in the past. I can offer no further comment because what I have just told you constitutes the entire sum and substance of my knowledge of this whole affair.

Should anyone question the Archbishop's authority to restrict or even to terminate an apostolate conducted by any of his priests *via* the electronic media, the code of Canon Law, canon 831, section 2 clearly states: **"It is for the conference of bishops to establish norms concerning the requirements for clerics and members of religious institutes to take part on radio or television in dealing with questions of Catholic doctrine or morals."**

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops accordingly adapted canon 831 to the conditions prevailing in the United States by adding the following complementary norm for canon 831, section 2: **"The National Conference of Bishops, in accord with the prescriptions of canon 831 §2, hereby decrees that, provided no harm to the Church could result from their presence, clerics and members of religious institutes may participate in radio and television programs which treat of Catholic doctrine and morals. A cleric or religious who regularly takes part in such programs must be qualified by his or her knowledge of the subject and the teaching of the Magisterium, and must obtain the permission of either his or her proper diocesan bishop or the diocesan bishop of the place where the radio or television program is originally broadcast.** In the case of members of religious institutes, permission of the competent superior is also re-

quired."

This complementary norm was submitted to the Roman Congregation of Bishops and was officially approved as having regulatory force by the Cardinal Prefect and by the Secretary of that Congregation. "This norm was granted *recognitio* by the Congregation for Bishops in accord with article 82 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* and issued by decree of the Congregation for Bishops signed by His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Prefect, and His Excellency Most Reverend Francisco Monterisi, Secretary, dated November 27, 2001."

All of us are edified by Father Altier's instantaneous and unquestioning submission to the Archbishop's command, surely proof, were proof needed, of his humility. And as Psalm 149 assures us: *"The Lord adorns the humble with victory."*

I have no further comment to make. I commend the Archbishop and Father Altier to your prayers.

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This coming Wednesday, March 15th—that's right! the Ides of March—strike a blow for freedom against a new kind of tyranny, that of using your state tax dollars to pay for abortions (currently some three thousand such abortions a year)! **On Wednesday, March 15th, at 10:30 in the morning, the Speaker of the Minnesota State Legislature's House of Representatives, Steve Sviggum, is willing to meet with any and all of the citizens of our state who object to such diversion of tax receipts to support the murder of the unborn. The meeting is scheduled for Room 400 North in the State Office Building at 100 Martin Luther King Drive, a good stone's throw from the State Capitol.** If the crowd is too large for room 400 to accommodate, alternative arrangements will have been made. I encourage attendance though I will not be able to be there myself since I will be undergoing a series of medical tests during most of that morning, tests that would be difficult to reschedule. **In general it's always good to recall that in the world of politics it's the wheel that squeaks the loudest that gets the grease.**

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A final important word to parishioners who are parents of children and teenagers: the St. Agnes Schools will NOT—repeat NOT—be using the "Talking about Touching" material as part of our participation in the mandated national program to protect children from sexual exploitation. We will be using the vastly more appropriate Arlington-Harrisburg program which incorporates the essential delicacy and discretion that teaching about chastity requires. This is the program that I am told on good authority Archbishop Flynn himself prefers. As long as I am pastor of St. Agnes parish our school at its various levels will give appropriate instruction on the virtue of chastity, a virtue without which the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be attained, but **secular sex education will have no place in our curriculum.**