



ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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28 September 2018

To the priests of the Archdiocese of Denver,

I am writing you today because many of you have asked about the situation with Fr. David Nix. Unfortunately, Fr. Nix has made public statements and accusations that are false. In priest personnel matters, it is the Archdiocese's and my practice to honor confidentiality. In this situation, because Fr. Nix is attacking the Church, my staff, and me, and is speaking about these things in a very public way, it is necessary to be clear with you about this matter.

Fr. Nix has been in an ongoing dialogue with the Archdiocese for years about his difficulties holding a parish assignment. This started before I was installed as the Archbishop and has continued during my tenure. Placing Fr. Nix in a parish has been challenging because the faithful, parish staff, and the priests who have worked with Fr. Nix believe he causes trouble. Putting the very best light on this, one can see Fr. Nix as over-zealous in his belief that many people are too casual in matters of liturgy and doctrine. He has been very judgmental and vocal about these issues. I am not intending to evaluate his beliefs, just recognize that this is the status of the matter. It reached a point where, after four failed parish assignments, it became very difficult to find a pastor who would receive Fr. Nix as a parochial vicar. In the face of this difficulty, my staff and I have continued to work hard to find an assignment for him, including with various groups outside of the Archdiocese. All of these efforts have failed, and each time Fr. Nix has been sent back to the Archdiocese. Since Fr. Nix was asked to leave his most recent assignment at the end of March, we have not given up, but his behavior has made it difficult to even establish a dialogue with him.

A much more serious issue and charge is the notion that we have not addressed a matter about sexual abuse reported to us by Fr. Nix. The truth is that in an email he wrote on May 24, Fr. Nix made threats that if he couldn't dictate his own assignment, he would pursue civil litigation, embarrass me personally, or make known to the media supposed harmful information about two historical situations. This approach of using a threat to obtain his desired outcome raises serious civil and canonical implications, which is exactly what he was told, and frankly it is offensive to any right-thinking person. Of course, I would never participate in such a scheme.

To be clear, the two allegations Fr. Nix was using to try to control his assignment are not dark secrets that somehow make Fr. Nix a "whistle blower." One involved a seminarian and the matter was fully reported to law enforcement in 2012 and the seminarian involved was dismissed from the seminary. Fr. Nix has admitted his concern about this situation is that the family did not receive a proper apology, which is not correct. The second allegation involves a third-hand report from the 1980s, and Fr. Nix confirmed in writing, and then in person to both an official of the curia and a member of the Conduct Response Team, that there was absolutely no allegation of any sexual contact or abuse.

In all of our dealings with Fr. Nix, we have been clear that if there is information about a crime, it must be reported to law enforcement. If there are issues about violations of the ministerial standards, those must be fully addressed, including being brought to the Conduct Response Team. We have said he is free to hire a lawyer, and if that is his course of action, our civil lawyer would be ready to meet with him. Most importantly, I have always been direct that in no event would I allow any wrongdoing to be "covered up," for his benefit or for any other reason.

Fr. Nix's statement that he has been forced to be homeless and has been ignored by the Archdiocese is just another sad chapter in this long saga. Rest assured that contrary to Fr. Nix's claims, he has been paid the full salary due to him, which of course is a documented fact. We have tried to speak with Fr. Nix, but he fails to show up for scheduled meetings, is hard to get ahold of, and even just yesterday he rebuked Bishop Rodriguez. We will continue to try to help Fr. Nix, if he will let us.

I ask each of you not to be mad or upset with Fr. Nix, but instead we must always act with compassion and caring. This has been a challenging situation for the priest personnel board, Bishop Rodriguez, and for me. Our focus is always on doing what we can for all priests, in charity and with continuing humility.

Please pray for all those involved in this matter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Samuel J. Aquila". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L.
Archbishop of Denver