

Dear People Whom God Loves,

## **CHURCH HUMAN & DIVINE**

I have been asked on a number of occasions –how can I support St. Stan’s financially without financially supporting our Archdiocese.

To put my response into the proper context I want to tell you my vision of church. I hope that will help you to see church from another point of view.

The anger that many feel about the whole child abuse situation is understandable and justified. The anger seems to be stronger against the mishandling of the abuse by the church leaders then against those who did the abuse.

The pain that this has caused is enormous. What I want to encourage is our remedying the problem in the most beneficial way. It is understandable that when we are angry (which is good) we will be inclined to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

The perspective I am offering is obviously limited but I hope that it will be of some help.

### **PART I**

The prime image that the Second Vatican Council used for church is “the people of God”. This tells me two things. The church is primarily the people. It is not primarily the structure.

It also tells me that because the church is people it will always be affected by the human condition. We people love and we hate. We act virtuously and we act sinfully. We are at times wise and at times stupid. We are both beautiful and ugly. We are sometimes humble and sometimes proud. We are sometimes generous and at other times selfish. We are these strange wonderful mixed up beings that are cherished, loved, understood, protected and never abandoned by the Ultimate Reality we name GOD (LOVE).

If this is true-and I think that it is-church will always be messy. Church will always be a series of growth steps and relapses. The history of our church confirms that there have been many of rises and relapses. This is why we are called a pilgrim church. We are on a journey that is difficult, exciting and confusing.

Our hope is not based on our belief that we humans will figure it all out but on the Spirit of God that lives in us as individuals and in the community we call the church.

\*\*\*\*\*

I believe that the Spirit of God ordinarily works through imperfect creation and through us imperfect humans. I see the SPIRIT (LOVE) working not only through our wisdom and virtues but also through our stupidity and sins. We grow spiritually through love and suffering. It takes both for full and deep spiritual growth.

GOD (LOVE) calls us to look at ourselves and our church honestly. GOD (LOVE) will be holding us as we fearfully acknowledge our sins and mistakes. GOD (LOVE) will heal our wounds when we are at least a little willing for LOVE to heal. We will be held and cherished whether we know it or not.

\*\*\*\*\*

Besides the image of "the people of God" for church the Second Vatican Council uses the image of "communion" for church.

We are not people who are isolated from one another. We are called to live in the community we call church. GOD (LOVE) calls us not only as individuals but as community of people. We are made in the image and likeness of GOD (LOVE). We are called to be lovers. We cannot be lovers if we are isolated from one another.

If we are going to live together we must have some kind of structure. It is not to be an oppressive structure but it will put some limits on us. There will be a mixture of freedom and boundaries. This is true even in the small community we call the family.

I believe that we do not grow into the fullness of our humanity unless we are both free and limited. A community is healthy when both are honored and fostered.

\*\*\*\*\*

Structures are necessary but they will always be imperfect because they are made up of people who are imperfect. One thing that can limit the imperfection is that those who are leaders in a community and those who are not listen to and learn from each other.

Leaders must be humble enough to recognize that they have much to learn from those who are not leaders. Those who are not leaders must be humble enough to learn from those who are leaders.

It is so easy for us to fall into the trap of only seeing what our little group sees. Then we will think that we have the whole truth and have nothing to learn. I believe that the more we know the more we realize how much we don't know.

## PART II

Where does St. Stan's fit into the big picture? Church is present here in our parish. Like all parishes we have our unique characteristics.

We do not, however, exist in isolation. We are joined to many other parishes in our Archdiocese through our connection with our Archbishop. There wouldn't be a St. Stan's if there weren't an Archdiocese. That is why we can't act as if we were completely a completely independent church.

In turn our Archdiocese is not a church in isolation. Along with the many dioceses of the world we are joined together by our connection with the Pope. (As an aside, there can be fruitful looking into the role of the national conferences of Bishops and the ancient structures of patriarchates.)

I am so honored to be pastor of St. Stan's. We have so many wonderful people. Like other parishes we have our unique characteristics. But we must remember that we are part of something much larger.

## PART III

I now want to make clear the financial connection between St. Stan's and our Archdiocese.

### Parish Assessment

- From the donations you give us 91% stays here at St. Stan's. 9% goes to the Archdiocese.
- What does 9% provide for us directly?
  - Administration of an excellent insurance plan
  - Administration of a pension plan
  - Access to legal advice
  - Processing of sacramental requirements of canon law

### Catholic Services Appeal (taken up each spring)

- This money does not go to the Archdiocese. It goes to support the following good causes.
  - Clergy Services-
    - St John Vianney - seminarian support
    - The Saint Paul Seminary- seminarian support
    - Hospital Chaplains
    - Prison Chaplains
  - Community Services-
    - Catholic Charities
  - Education-
    - Elementary school – subsidies
    - Secondary school - tuition aid
    - Campus ministries
  - Parish Outreach-
    - Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women
    - Latino Ministry
    - Indian Ministry
    - Deaf Ministry
    - Venezuelan Mission
  - Marriage, Family and Life-
    - Archdiocesan Youth Day
    - Disabilities Outreach
    - Marriage Preparation Classes
  - Evangelization and Mission-
    - Rediscover: initiative
  - 25% rebate to St. Stan's when we reach our goal. If we don't reach our goal, we receive no money.
  - You may specify to which of these good causes that you want your donation to go

### Special Fundraisers

- Why do we have the Christmas and Easter fundraisers each year when we have \$600,000 in savings?
  - These savings were mostly the result of the leasing, contract for deed and sale of our school building.
  - Since this money was the result of the leasing and sale of our property, it was decided to keep it in reserve for emergencies.
  - This particular fiscal year we did have more income than expenses. The previous two fiscal years our expenses exceeded our income by more than \$70,000 each year. A few years before that there

were lesser deficits. If we did not have this reserve we would have been in serious financial difficulty.

- We do on occasion receive special gifts and bequests. The amount varies greatly. The Christmas and Easter fundraisers put us in a more stable financial condition.

Most importantly, everyone is welcome at St. Stan's regardless of their financial situation.

Also remember that I am here to help you spiritually whenever you need it.

Smile, God Loves You,  
Father Clay