

## OLG parishioner wants answers from bishop, archbishop

Recent events at Our Lady of Grace Church have brought substantial pain to the parish and have led some parishioners to stop attending mass, to cease exercising their ministries and/or to cease donating to the church. Many have found the events have shaken their faith but this should not be the case. This is but a human event and one's faith should not be affected by it.

Since 1980, Our Lady of Grace Parish in Aurora has had a turbulent history. We had a brief period of great spirituality in the mid-eighties which culminated with the removal of our pastor due to the fact that the Chancery had seen it fit to insert into our parish an assistant pastor who had a history of paedophilia. Then followed some rather irrelevant, uninspired and uninspiring priests who alienated many parishioners by their authoritarian demeanour. A pastor once told me that we didn't need a Pastoral Council because he took his instructions from the Archbishop who got his from the Pope; and "you know where he gets his instructions from." As a result of this, we took refuge at St. John Chrysostom's in Newmarket.

During this time, an "antievangelisation" was taking place in our parish. The pastors could not relate to the young people, who were now staying away from the church. The pastors did not understand the culture of the youth and they dismissed it. Their homilies were canned, irrelevant and uninteresting. These men tended to be very Pharisaic in their dealings with parishioners.

Then came Father Joe: not at all self-serving as the others had been, he made everybody think he or she was the most important person in the world. He brought humanity to Divine Liturgy and we were living and loving the dream of how good it was to be a Catholic with Pope Francis and Father Joe. Father Joe raised the spirituality in the parish to new heights. He was loved and admired not only by parishioners but by many in the community at large.

Now that dream has been shattered and we have to pick up the shards and piece our faith community back together. This is to be done without the help of the Chancery.

Letters to Archbishop Collins and to Bishop Kirkpatrick have not been given the common courtesy of an acknowledgement or a reply. One would have thought that the archbishop and the bishop would have come to the church outside of the Divine Liturgy to meet with us and hear our complaints, to provide good counsel and to provide healing. But that did not happen and Father Joe was given no choice but to leave the priesthood.

Here was a good priest put out to pasture for having committed peccadilloes and for not meeting the criteria of some self-righteous elements in the parish. Our Lady of Grace is now deprived of a pastor the parishioners loved and needed. What did Jesus say? "I know my sheep and my sheep know me." This is not good diocesan pastoral work, in my opinion.

Pope Francis called us to ask ourselves, "In my heart, what more can I do? Do I have other people serve me, do I use others, the community, the parish, my family, my friends? Or do I serve, am I at the service of others?"

I would like the archbishop to answer the Holy Father's query.

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