

SLAVES OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

Saint Benedict Center
Post Office Box 627
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Pentecost Sunday

May 27, 2007

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Christ Jesus be praised! This letter is urgent.

We find ourselves fighting for our survival. In a moment, I will outline the steps that have brought us to this point, but straight away, I want to give you an overview of what is happening now and why we need your help.

Due to a coordinated attack against our apostolate locally, and the effects of a national smear campaign, our already shaky finances have turned into a bleak fiscal situation. As I write, we are \$50,000 in debt. Moreover, we are facing litigation to fight for our civil and religious rights, and maybe for our very existence.

The purpose of this letter is to request funds to offset our debt and to survive. Whatever we get on the plus side will fund our publishing efforts, for getting out the important Catholic message is our bread and butter.

Here is a summary of key events in this debacle:

1. For the last two years, we have appeared before our Town Planning Board to build a 10,300 square foot chapel-school building. There have been over 20 meetings about this project, 6 of them being public hearings. This prolonged review has drained our time, money, and other valuable resources, such as our limited man power.

2. Several residents who were against this project went to the local press, hired an attorney, and started a campaign of lies and rumors — a sort of whispering campaign — which created and fostered a vicious mythology surrounding our priests, religious, and layfolk.

3. At around the same time, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) produced a series of articles in its magazine, *The Intelligence Report*, which maligned several traditional Catholic groups, including ours. (If you don't know what the SPLC is, suffice it to say that it is a \$60-million-plus-endowed professional demonizing firm that masks itself as a civil rights organization.) Our local enemies used this bad PR to portray us as a dangerous cult.

4. *The Keene Sentinel* (the newspaper in this region) began a series of articles covering the local Planning Board controversy. Then they started two blogs concerning us on their web site. This allowed people with an agenda to attack us, even anonymously or under assumed names. The blogs were not those of some private individual; they had the respectability and high profile of the *Keene Sentinel*.

5. The local mythology about us was publicized on the blogs. We were accused of lying and fostering hatred; were called “unbalanced,” “dangerous,” and “a cult”; and had monikers like “pistol packing priests” thrown around about us. After much protest to the *Sentinel*, one blog was shut down. The other still remains and is still causing damage.

6. These blogs sent ripples to other blogs, fostering more hatred, lies, and slander. The whole mess keeps growing.

7. Then, we discovered on April 19 that the SPLC is doing another story on us, this time an apparently more in-depth piece written by a senior writer. This article will cover the local controversy and is virtually guaranteed to portray us as Jonestown with Rosaries. Going from what our local enemies have said in our regard, and the SPLC's penchant for manufacturing hate to raise money, we can come to no other conclusion as to the article's outcome.

8. Besides our own faithful, there are other local residents — numerous non-Catholics among them — who find this whole affair outrageous. They have tried to defend our reputation. If unchecked, the SPLC piece will serve to embolden our local enemies and invite yet more media hack jobs on us. We are small, poor, and have few resources. In short, we are sitting ducks for all this.

Thank God we have secured generous pro-bono legal help, without which we could not challenge those who have wronged us. But this help will not cover all the expenses associated with the battle.

We could give up on the building project altogether. However, besides the real need we have for more facilities, there would be another disastrous effect to a retreat at this point in the battle. It would turn into a rout, for if we pull out at this point, we may never be “allowed” our civil rights again. The local forces who are aligned against us have become so organized and furious that they will doubtless muscle through local statutes, zoning ordinances, etc., that will make our future expansion impossible, pulling up the drawbridge and throwing alligators in as we retreat. They have already proven their power at political activism.

So, if we don’t fight this, a handful of anti-Catholic bullies will win. They will leave us as beat dogs who will do only what we are allowed by a tyranny of enlightened bigots. The lesson in humility may do us good, but what comes of the apostolate?

I do not like debt, nor do I take a cavalier attitude in failing to make timely payment. It is humiliating and demoralizing to look at people who have performed good services and tell them that we cannot pay them their just due. Our Order has never been in this situation before, and I am appealing to your generosity to assist us at this grave moment.

What are our other options? We can put ourselves in a holding pattern to reduce all expenses drastically, cutting staff and focusing our efforts elsewhere. But this will limit the Crusade to whatever we are able to do here locally and on the Internet — without regular publications, without conferences, and maybe even without our school. All this would allow the religious to produce a limited amount of publications to distribute exclusively through our bookselling apostolate, without the pressure of publication deadlines for newsletters and magazines, or the headache of having to prepare lesson plans. We can survive on this, and even afford the additional expenses we see coming in the form of new — yes, more — religious vocations.

However, this course of action will not stop the forward momentum of our enemies, at least some of whom clearly want to be rid of us altogether.

We are praying and trusting that our Blessed Lord and our Blessed Lady will not leave us abandoned. We also know that we have to fight the good fight, and for that, we need your immediate help.

Is there anything you can do to help our Lady’s work? Please call or email me if you would like to discuss it. My personal contact information is below. Be assured of the prayers and gratitude of all the brothers and sisters and may God reward your generous help.

In the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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