

4-11-08 - Archbishop Burke bans canon lawyer from St. Louis archdiocese

By CHERYL WITTENAUER, Fort Mill Times (MO)

ST. LOUIS — A prominent Roman Catholic priest and canon lawyer, who says he has been helping those "harmed by the institutional Catholic Church" since 1985 and counseling a Polish heritage church here, has been banned from working in the archdiocese.

The Rev. Thomas Doyle, a Dominican priest and canon lawyer based in Virginia, also has been ordered by Archbishop Raymond Burke to pay back any payment he received from St. Stanislaus Kostka Church.

Burke issued a decree charging Doyle with two "canonical crimes" related to his defense of two excommunicated board members of St. Stanislaus.

The decree, published Friday in the archdiocesan newspaper, says Doyle did not receive prior approval from Burke to represent board members Stan Rozanski and Bernice Krauze. It also says Doyle didn't immediately respond to Burke's summons to appear before him.

Burke wrote in an accompanying article in the St. Louis Review that Doyle failed to represent the board members "properly or effectively."

"As the chief shepherd of the church in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, I have the duty and moral obligation to uphold the teachings and practices of the Catholic faith," Burke wrote. "Those teachings include the obligation of a bishop to safeguard the legal processes under which the church operates."

An archdiocesan spokeswoman said Burke was unavailable for comment Friday.

Rozanski, the board member, said no money was exchanged.

"He refused to take anything," he said. "He's not that kind of guy."

Reached Friday by phone, Doyle accused Burke of "vindictively clubbing people with canon law."

"He's making a mockery of the role of the bishop, a mockery of himself, and the role of leadership in the church when it comes to resolving disputes and problems."

St. Stanislaus, founded by Polish immigrants in the late 1800s, has been in a yearslong struggle with the archdiocese over control of its assets. Burke has excommunicated St. Stanislaus' board and the Polish priest it hired two years ago.

Burke also has refused to allow St. Stanislaus' pastor, the Rev. Marek Bozek, to be represented by Doyle. When pressed to explain why, Burke has said that some of Doyle's beliefs are inconsistent with Catholic teaching. Bozek continues to seek Doyle's counsel.

Doyle said he didn't get Burke's approval to represent Krauze and Rozanski because he was already representing other board members in their appeal to the Vatican.

"He exaggerated it," he said. "It's total nonsense."

Doyle also objected to Burke's contention that he has publicly taken a position contrary to the infallible teachings of the church.

"My faith and what I believe, and how I believe is none of his business," he said. "It's personal."

"My obedience to him has nothing to do with my standing with the higher power."

Doyle, who has a doctorate in canon law, left a career at the Vatican Embassy to become an outspoken advocate for church abuse victims.

He warned the Catholic hierarchy of the potential scope of the sex abuse scandal in 1985, 17 years before it erupted in 2002.

He said he has been working to support and defend those harmed by the church since then.

He was an Air Force major stationed in Germany, and also served as a military chaplain in Iraq.