

POSITION STATEMENT RE: BUILDING OF A NEW CHURCH COMPLEX

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The most recent meeting of note in Rome was the Consistory of Cardinals May 21-24. The Holy Father sat facing the Cardinals and said *“This must be a free and fraternal exchange of opinions.”* The keynote speakers stressed poverty. French Cardinal Etchegaray stated *“A missionary Church will be a poor Church, a poor Church will be a missionary Church.”* Ukrainian Cardinal Husar stated, *“Our Church must be permeated with poverty”*.

Freedom and poverty are two themes that haven't been around Stoney Point lately. The proceedings of the changes in the Church have been shrouded in secrecy. Our Faith communities are in chaos.

Many people come to my house, as I am a Spiritual Director certified by the Jesuit Spirituality Center. I have had many teary-eyed ladies and men in their prime of life crying in despair.

I have heard so much about process and discernment. How do our leaders define process? Is process two meetings? How do they define discernment? Does discernment mean finding the will of God for us, or is discernment leading to a preconceived plan?

Last week I was visiting our local nursing home. A daughter was visiting her Mom. I see them often so I said, *“Don't worry about me I'm making a retreat and then there is the meeting with the Bishop on Wednesday”*. Then the daughter looked around cautiously and said in hushed tones *“The church, the church, I don't want it knocked down but we can't talk about that.”* What engenders such fears? Perhaps the homily that Father Dwayne gave before the election when he said *“If you appreciate what I have done for fourteen years you will vote for the new church. Whom do you follow?”*

After this statement, the vote was no longer free. I believe this statement over steps the lines of authority.

Only one side of the issue was presented to us. Grossly inflated charges for the repairs of the churches were included. At the second meeting, Mr. Mike Lanoue, an accountant and a well-respected member of our cluster family, presented a scholarly piece showing how the numbers were inflated. Inflated numbers always come back to haunt you. As of today none of our leaders have asked to see the report or to discuss it with Mr. Lanoue.

We received the letter from the Bishop. It shows how ill informed he was. You would think that we were a band of brigands. Instead we are people who love our Church. We have been trained to study both sides of an issue. Pray on it and then follow our conscience in the choices. My conscience will not allow me to vote for the new church.

Missionaries from Brazil and Nigeria stay with me for rest. Their church is a roof held up by 2 by 4's. In Nigeria little protects them from their rainy season. They and their flock are members of the Living Christ as we are. How can we spend over a half million just to knock our churches down when the scandal of starvation is still with us?

How can we plunge ourselves into terrible debt so that we will be unable to help the suffering Christ ?

Will closing buildings help the exodus from our Church ? People are leaving our cluster for churches in Tilbury, Belle River and Woodslee. The sad part is some people are not going to church at all. Are we watching the slippery slide that we observed in Quebec ?

Pope John XXIII about forty years ago opened the windows of the Church and let the laity inside. Our bishops and priests are so apprehensive about the shortage of priests. They need not be. There are creative ways of handling the situation. With the priest as sacramental minister and with the burden of administration, building and finance taken from him, he will be free to do the work for which he was ordained. This is working in many places in the United States.

We need not remain in the old fashioned, rigid way of "*Father knows best. I'll ask Father. If it doesn't fit into Father's plans, I won't listen*". These are all cliches of the past. Encourage the people to grow up and assume their adult responsibilities in the Church.

Let us encourage people, not break their heart.

Let us be creative, not destructive.

Let us listen to the people.

No firm decisions were made at the Consistory of Cardinals. However, the consensus was that the bishops should come every year so that the Cardinals could hear from the base unit, the people.