

December 22, 2023

Wilton Cardinal Gregory
P.O. Box 29260
Washington DC 20017

Dear Cardinal Gregory:

This will confirm my meeting with you on January 18, 2024 at 12:30 pm. I was informed by Father Charles Cortenovus that Father Anthony Lickteig, as well as Bishop Juan Esposito-Garcia, will also be in attendance at this meeting. Insofar as Maryland is not a one-party consent state, and in keeping with the Catholic Standard's headline that "Cardinal Gregory's leadership [is] ... marked by transparency," I trust you will consent to my recording the meeting as a material pre-condition of my attendance. I herein agree you may also record the meeting or I will give you a copy of my recording.

Over five years ago in July of 2018, Cardinal Wuerl placed me on leave after I was reported for having lost my temper at a funeral that I was asked to conduct for an African American Catholic woman who was not a member of our parish. Because I was known in the community to be very involved in helping the poor, including many African Americans, and because the family of the deceased said they could not afford a funeral, I personally raised \$4,000 to pay for the cremation and other associated costs.

On the day of the funeral, I was called from the sacristy and shown how our decades-old heirloom ciborium (that is the receptacle of the body, soul, and divinity of our most Blessed Lord), was stepped on and irreparably destroyed by friends of the decedent's family. In the process of gathering up unconsecrated hosts that were trampled upon after falling from the ciborium onto the floor, I felt very distressed owing to a perception of a total lack of respect for the Eucharist and an indifference to the Catholic Faith.

Even though I went out of my way and worked hard to assist the family whom no other priest would help, I felt that I could not proceed with the funeral and that it would be best that the family had a memorial service conducted at a place that reflected their non-Catholic beliefs.

Unfortunately, the lack of gratitude, disrespect, and destruction of the ciborium caused me to lose my patience, raise my voice, and dismiss the assembly in an emotionally charged manner. As a consequence, I ended up being portrayed in the media as an insensitive, racist priest. Not one word was reported about all that I had done for the family up to that point. Nevertheless, regretting that I raised my voice and the manner in which I directed those assembled to leave, I apologized to the family of the deceased and to anyone who might have been scandalized by the way I handled the situation.

After reading the one-sided reports of the incident, many people came to my defense. Those who had known me for a long time were deeply aware of my "racial color blindness" in ministering to the poor. Some questioned if a priest should even celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for a group of people he perceives to be non-believers. Fortunately, I received support from four bishops, two of whom are African American, along with many Catholics and non-Catholics from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. These good people helped to counter the defamation I experienced stemming from the very unfortunate event. Cardinal Wuerl, concerned for my safety following the publication of one-sided, defamatory articles that portrayed me as a racist, transferred me to another parish in southern Maryland.

While living at St. Mary's Church in Clinton, MD, I met a couple in the parish with a 40-year old epileptic son. Knowing that I suffered from epilepsy when I was younger, the mother asked if her son could accompany me on my food deliveries to the poor and homeless. Unfortunately, the boy's mother became enamored with me and wrote me love letters. I made it perfectly clear to her that I, a faithful celibate priest in his 60s, was fulfilled in my vocation and had no interest in pursuing a relationship with her or any woman.

On one occasion in late October 2021, the mother was present as her son and I were unloading cases of food. When she tried to get the attention of her son while we were transporting very heavy items, I yelled back at her to stop distracting her son lest she cause a serious accident. Rather than recognizing that I wanted to prevent her son from being injured, she reported my response as an unwarranted display of anger in a telephone conversation to the Vicar for Clergy, Father Anthony Lickteig.

Instead of speaking with me to get "my side of the story" as to why I raised my voice with the aim of preventing an accident, Father Lickteig violated due process and reasonableness by calling me to say that he had suspended me. He also stipulated that I needed to leave the rectory that night. Had Father Lichteig spoken with me or others who were aware of the woman's real problem with me, he would have known that her accusation and complaint had very little to do with my yelling during the unloading process. As some women who know both the mother and myself later testified, the woman was not upset at me for raising my voice, but she was reacting to my proper and prudent refusal of her uninvited and improper advances.

It appears to me that the archdiocese is using the 2018 episode at the funeral and the 2021 incident with the epileptic son's mother to argue that I have anger issues which require in patient treatment. While another person's bad behavior does not excuse one's own transgressions, justice demands people be treated fairly and be allowed to offer factual explanations, thus giving proper context to the incidents. Interactions between people do not occur in a vacuum.

Should Pope Francis have been suspended in March of 2016 for losing his temper in Mexico when someone grabbed his arm causing him to yell at them saying, "Don't be selfish!" Would it have been fair to accuse the Pope of being an anti-Asian racist in January of 2020 when he was reported for reacting angrily by smacking the hand of an Asian woman who grabbed his arm in St. Peter's Square? Seven months ago, did not the Pope apologize for losing his temper with a woman who asked him to bless her dog which moved him to admit, "I lost my patience and upbraided her saying 'many children are hungry and you bring me a dog'." Might these anger incidents involving the Pope be grounds for him receiving inpatient treatment in a mental health facility?

Please justify my continued suspension. Monsignor Walter Rossi, while under investigation, was never removed from ministry like I was in response to far less serious allegations. How do the accusations against me compare with those of Monsignor Battista Ricca whom Pope Francis returned to ministry and appointed to be the director of his papal residence after Ricca was reported for cohabitating with a former Swiss Guard in Uruguay; was caught with a gay prostitute in an elevator; and was beaten up in a gay "cruising ground?" What might you say to Catholics who question how LaCrosse Bishop William Callahan used "mercy" to justify returning "Grindr" Msgr. Jeffrey Burrill to ministry after he was found to have engaged in sexual relations with numerous men when, at the same time, "mercy" cannot be extended to a priest like myself whose "punishment does not seem to fit the crime?" How can you explain keeping me out of ministry for two years while returning a priest like Father Park to ministry who was credibly accused in a lawsuit of grooming seminarians in Rome and homosexual misconduct in the District of Columbia? Is my ongoing suspension a valid and just response to an allegation made by a scorned woman, or does it have more to do with my disrespect for closeted bishops and priests who break their vows of celibacy and use parishioners' contributions to fund their gay lifestyles? It is the contention of civil counsel with whom I have consulted that the facts of my case point to discrimination based on my heterosexual orientation within an institution dominated by closeted homosexuals who perceive me as a threat that needs to be eliminated.

Had someone written to you accusing me of carrying on an affair with a woman, would you or Father Lickteig not contact me to respond to the allegation? In my May 30, 2023 letter I asked you to answer "yes" or "no" to this question: "Have you ever lied down with another homosexual man and had sex with that homosexual man?" I asked this question to you privately because I was informed that you were unkindly known as the "African Queen" while you were the Archbishop in Atlanta. Had you denied the allegation with supportive evidence, I would have gone out of my way to squelch the malicious rumors. However, in keeping with the maxim of the law, *Qui tacet consentire videtur*, your silence and failure to deny allegations that you were sexually active with other men could lead one to form a rebuttable presumption that you are *de facto* guilty of violating your vows of celibacy.

As you are well aware, your canonical attempt to censure me is under appeal to Rome. This appeal is similar to that taken by Chicago Father Paul Kalchik who was removed from ministry by Cardinal Blase Cupich for burning a rainbow gay oriented banner that was displayed in his church by a previous pastor who was found dead and naked in his rectory bedroom while connected to a sex machine. Insofar as blessed objects like the banner in question are to be disposed of reverently by either being burnt or buried (Code of Canon Law # 1171), the Congregation for the Clergy ruled in Father Kalchik's favor and directed that he be reinstated as pastor. It remains to be seen if that same Congregation rules that I committed acts that warrant the sanctions you have enacted against me.

Is it true that some 200 letters in support of my ministry from many Catholic laity and clergy, as well as numerous non-Catholics, have never been forwarded to the Congregation for Clergy? Did you also withhold from the Congregation evidence you received of my dedication to serving the poor for over 30 years?

Our poor are among those who have little or no voice. You may succeed in removing me from the Catholic priesthood, but you will never succeed in preventing me from living my vocation in service to the least among us. This calling is my response to Christ's invitation, "Come, follow me."

What has this canonical process really shown me and many others? When I told a priest friend about my upcoming meeting with you, Bishop Esposito, and Father Lickteig, he wondered if you intended Bishop Esposito and Father Lickteig to play the same role that King Henry VIII had Thomas Cromwell and Richard Rich play at the trial of Sir Thomas More. In his opinion, your plan might be to use others to "rid" the archdiocese "of this turbulent priest" just as King Henry II dealt with Thomas Becket who dared question his authority and immoral actions.

Tragically, many US cardinals, archbishops, and bishops have been promoted over the past decades despite having been homosexually involved with boys and vulnerable adults like seminarians and young priests. My sins, thank God, do not include drugging and raping boys; having sex with men at bath houses or truck stops; hosting clerical gay orgies in my rectory; covering up abuse; lying under oath; or destroying incriminating evidence. Are these sins now acceptable? When I consider how ex-Cardinal McCarrick, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, and you denied Dominican Father Thomas Doyle faculties to celebrate the sacraments in retaliation for his testimony at numerous sex abuse trials throughout the country, I consider myself in good company in having my faculties also removed.

I commend an article available online to you entitled, "Cardinals Behaving Badly," by Father Thomas Doyle, O.P. The highly respected Canonist and abuse victims' advocate recounts how Cardinal Edwin O'Brien attempted to get Monsignor Eugene Gomulka to undergo a psychological evaluation after Gomulka accused him in 2002 of covering up the sexual predation of Catholic Navy Chaplain Father John "Matt" Lee. Neither O'Brien, nor Lee's Ordinary, Cardinal McCarrick, investigated the allegations O'Brien received from Gomulka about Lee's "live-in boyfriend." Five years later Lee was arrested and charged with conduct unbecoming an officer, aggravated assault, sodomy, and failure to inform sex partners that he was HIV positive. Neither O'Brien nor McCarrick's successor, Wuerl, revealed in 2007 that Gomulka warned O'Brien about Lee's predatory behavior. Gomulka regrets that he did not record his meeting with O'Brien when O'Brien failed to get him to undergo a psychological evaluation and when O'Brien refused to discuss and investigate the allegations against Lee who today is serving a 30-year sentence in the Petersburg Federal Correctional Institution. Seeing that Lee was probably himself groomed and abused when he was in the seminary like countless bishops, priests, and seminarians, I can't help but ask if he is still a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington and if you or anyone from the chancery visits him on a regular basis.

Scandals involving clerical sexual predation and homosexual misconduct stem from leadership failures on your part and other predominantly homosexually oriented bishops who allow homosexual activity and predation in the Church. As a consequence, horrific criminal clerical behavior and cover-ups continue today. During our upcoming meeting, I would like to know how you responded to sexual harassment allegations brought forward by former seminarians Karl Discher and Jonathan Ulysses Barahona against Father Carter Griffin. Please do not tell me that the allegations were investigated and found "unsubstantiated" when the victims were never asked to testify as to what they alleged occurred at St. John Paul II Seminary. I can't help but wonder if you plan on getting rid of me for reporting Park to the police like you orchestrated Barahona's dismissal from the archdiocese for reporting Griffin.

Park, who along with Griffin was ordained by ex-Cardinal McCarrick, was sent into hiding after allegations of sexual predation at the North American College (NAC) came to light, and after priests even in Rome were found to be using the Grindr app to facilitate homosexual hookups with other gay men. Following the announcement that you were assigning Park as Pastor of St. Paul's Parish in Damascus, MD, you were forced to rescind his appointment after many parishioners objected to being sent a priest reported for his sexual predation of seminarians and his active homosexual lifestyle. When you then quietly assigned Park as chaplain at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, MD, I informed Captain A. Daum at the Montgomery County Police, District 2 Headquarters about the sexual abuse allegations that were filed in court against Park. If Park is later accused of abusing young men in Maryland or the District as Lee did at the Naval Academy and Marine Corps Base Quantico, the victims, along with their families and lawyers, will have proof that the Archdiocese was warned of the clear and present danger Park posed and it failed to act when it had the legal and moral obligation to do so.

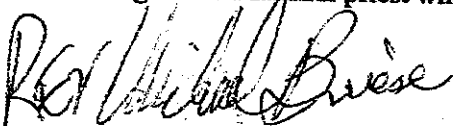
All I asked from you was to be fair and transparent in addressing my concerns. In these past two years you consistently attempted to destroy my priesthood through nothing short of a very unjust process filled with lies and innuendos. Your repeated failure to speak directly with my witnesses reflects an unjust and biased process to which I have been subjected. You personally denied me due process and attempted to coerce me into therapy treatment in Texas, an illegal ploy known to be used often by bishops to discredit whistleblowers who confront them for engaging in or covering up clerical sexual abuse and/or homosexual misconduct. In response to your attempt to abuse the powers of your office as archbishop, I reminded you that what you were attempting to do by ordering me into an inpatient mental health facility was in clear violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Why is it that after I voluntarily, at my own expense, met multiple times with Rev. Dr. Martin Burnham, a Sulpician psychologist at Theological College, you neither acknowledged nor acted on his enclosed favorable recommendation that I be restored to ministry? To this date, I don't know if you even read his report in an effort to make an informed decision in my case.

While I would like you to adhere to the belief, "When someone makes a mistake, don't forget about all the good they have done," my interaction with archdiocesan leadership has led me to conclude, "People will always remember your one mistake, not a thousand good things you did for them."

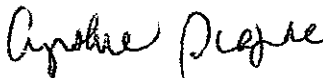
My dear Cardinal, even though you act like you are a sovereign, remember that all the armies of your ordained soldiers cannot destroy the powerful faith which Christ Himself has bestowed upon my much wounded heart and the life I have already given in service to the least among us. It appears to me and others that you wish to destroy my priesthood, my social reputation, and health. If this is your favored choice, then continue to proceed in this destructive process. However, I will remain a priest forever "in the order of Melchizedek" and you cannot invalidate the Divine Invitation extended unto me by none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. You may be the local feudal lord in the Archdiocese of Washington, but you can never prevail over the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is my fervent prayer that the upcoming meeting may disprove my apprehension that your goal is to rid yourself of a man you perceive to be "a turbulent priest."

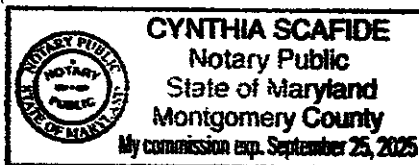
I remain a good and faithful priest whose heart is afire with Divine Love,



Rev. Michael Briese



CC: Alessandro Fanella
Rev. Thomas Doyle, O.P.
Rev. Msgr. E. T. Gornulka
Rev. Dr. Martin Burnham, PSS
Captain Amy Daum



Encl: Psychological Report by Dr. Burnham