

CHURCH CHAT

BY

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BISHOP SCHNEIDER'S PRIESTS

I never met Bishop Schneider even though he lives somewhere near my frontal lobe. But, as I said in my last Chat, I do have access to his journal which, I am happy to report, he writes in every night. My guess is that he would stop writing if he knew I could read it. That frontal lobe neighborhood is tricky, you know.

A case in point: what he wants from the priests in his Mt. Vernon diocese.

A few entries gives you the idea:

9/25/13: I assigned two more Nigerian priests to parishes today. They seem like nice priests and they will fill some gaps. It doesn't take as long as some people say to get used to their accents, and it sure beats lay people running the parish. What I like best about these international priests is that they are loyal to the Church and to me. I can rely on them. They come from a culture where the clergy are respected, like it used to be here 75 years ago, and still is today in Nigeria. It's a good thing I have personal connections with Bishops in other countries so I can recruit these priests. As long as they say Mass on weekends, I don't expect much more from them, and they keep the parish going by being there.

10/13/13: I just don't understand why some of my diocesan pastors became priests. They dress how they want. They think how they want. They do what they want. They don't seem very reverent. And they clearly don't respect me. They claim to be Vatican II priests, whatever that means. Vatican II didn't change things nearly as much as they think it did. We need to emphasize how that council continues the long standing traditions and teachings of the Church. Continuity is much more valuable than change, despite the different style of Francis. Some of my priests are terrible representatives of the Church. I don't know what to do with them but I am determined to maintain my course.

11/6/13: Today was very frustrating. We had a meeting of the Priests' Personnel Board and a few of my pastors on the Board always question my assignments. They claim they know some of my pastors better than I do, and they said Fr. Schilling would not be a good fit for Vienna. Nonsense! I talked with Fr. Schilling and he said he would go, so I am sending him to Vienna. Just because these priests know one another from seminary days doesn't mean that they know better than the Bishop. When will they accept that?

12/16/13: I got another anonymous letter today about Fr. Boswell changing some of the wording at Mass. When I ask about him, and a few others, I never get too many specifics although it seems he recites the Eucharistic prayer pretty much intact. But he keeps adding his comments and prayers like his homily extends to other parts of the liturgy. We can be “personal” but only within the approved ritual. After all, it is the Church's prayer, not his. I'm not sure what I will do about this but it is not right to let it go. I have to come up with something.

1/8/14: Pope Francis is remarkable. I will give him that. But his impact on my priests is a problem. He is encouraging the ones who have criticized me and I feel some pressure to imitate his style. I can hear it in the comments of people when I go to a parish and they ask about Francis and my reaction. One lady in Waterloo had the gall to ask if I was going to move out of my house. I even sense a change in some of my pastors who have been loyal to me, including Bernie, my Vicar General. They're switching some of their personal loyalty to Francis. I can feel the tension when I talk with some of the other Bishops too. We don't know where we stand any more. The wheels are coming off my career and I may end up here in Mt. Vernon for a very long time. Here's the worst part: I know some of my priests want me gone and they think Francis is giving them a reason to get rid of me. Little do they know!

2/3/14: Fr. Schilling called me today and he now wants out of Vienna. The people are nice but it is too small and there's not enough for him to do. I told him absolutely not!