

Parishioners of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish
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AN APPEAL THAT WILL NEVER MAKE THE NEWS
FROM A GROUP OF ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA PARISHIONERS

February 21, 2005

Dear Friends in the Archdiocese of St. Louis:

Since March 2004 Catholics in the St. Louis area have been affected by a dispute between the Archdiocese of St. Louis, and the lay board of directors of the civil corporation of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish which illegally took away control of the parish corporation from the Roman Catholic Church. The conflict escalated after the board refused to bring the parish civil structure into conformity with Church law that clearly states that the pastor appointed by the Archbishop, not a group of laymen who assign the pastor the role of an employee, has ultimate authority regarding parish life. As a result of the board's defiance, manifested by offensive behavior of board members towards our priests, in August 2004 Archbishop Burke transferred the parish center to St. John, Apostle and Evangelist Church in downtown St. Louis. Parishioners who support Archbishop Burke continue to celebrate the Mass in Polish there and the parish continues to thrive.

Many Catholics in the St. Louis Archdiocese have initially expressed support for the board of directors of the civil corporation of St. Stanislaus Parish. This was a result of an intensive media campaign conducted by the board of directors and their supporters. The main objective of the board seems to be to discredit Archbishop Burke, damage his reputation, and portray the parish community as a victim of his demands. Secular media not only disregarded the existence of parishioners supporting Archbishop Burke, but also distorted the truth about the background of the conflict. One such distortion relates to the fact that St. Stanislaus Kostka parishioners supporting Archbishop Burke refused to participate in January 9th voting which was orchestrated as another publicity exploit by the board of directors and its media advisers. Although the board and their spokesmen loudly attempt to portray themselves as representatives of St. Stanislaus parish community, in reality they represent only a group of supporters who choose to affirm them. This critical distinction was never made by the media.

Support for the "Save St. Stan's" campaign mounted by the board of directors is provided from many sources interested in destroying the unity of the Roman Catholic Church. The campaign slogan became even a City of St. Louis mayoral race issue, when one of the candidates publicly expressed support for the board of directors, while acknowledging no affiliation with the Catholic Church. The public scandal caused by the board, which has been instrumental in swaying the opinions of many of its supporters, and of the general public, has created much pain in the Archdiocese of St. Louis and in the community at large.

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Unfortunately, the campaign proved to be very persuasive in deflecting the attention of many parishioners, as well as the public, from fundamental principles of operating a faith-based community. These include the structure and authority of the Church, respect for law, and accountability to parishioners and the public at large. Over the last several years members of the board fostered a culture of blatant disrespect for the Church as well as for many members of the parish community. There is ongoing speculation about the reasons the board of directors changed corporate by-laws and assumed control over the parish finances. It is apparent that this situation exempted the board from the strict accountability required of all other parishes of the Roman Catholic Church. Contrary to public declarations, the board refused to conduct an independent financial audit by a *certified public accountant*, and to disclose details of parish operations, including procedures for awarding contracts and service agreements. The change of corporate bylaws was done with premeditation through amendments in 2001 and 2004. This itself is a clear violation of the original 1891 corporate bylaws, which explicitly state that corporation bylaws must be in conformance with diocesan rules, regulations and requirements.

A few months ago, members of our congregation published an “*Open Letter to Parishioners and Supporters of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish*”. The letter outlined details of the parish conflict, and expressed support for Archbishop Burke in his efforts to bring the parish structure into conformity with the governance model that is followed by all parishes in St. Louis diocese. These efforts were subsequently affirmed, and mandated, by the Vatican in its decree of November 11, 2004, rejecting the appeal against the Archbishop made on behalf of the board of directors. The full text of the *open letter*, as well as other documents related to this conflict, is available at the website of the Archdiocese of St. Louis: http://www.archstl.org/parishes/documents/st_stanislaus.html. Please contact us if you would like to receive a copy of our letter.

We are deeply concerned that the actions taken by the board of directors are clearly intended to weaken the authority of the Holy See and of Archbishop Burke. We reject the board’s rhetoric comparing their role to that of *Solidarity* in the fight for the freedom of Poland. This comparison is simply insulting to many of us who are parishioners, and who personally participated in the fight for the freedom of Poland, and drew our strength and inspiration from the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Resolution of this conflict will have a profound impact not only on the future of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish but on the entire Catholic community in the United States. We reject the notion of separating St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish from the Roman Catholic Church. We call on the board of directors of the parish civil corporation to stop the campaign of hostility and animosity towards the Catholic Church, and its leaders in Rome and in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, a campaign that knowingly, deliberately, and publicly has damaged seriously the unity of the Roman Catholic community.

None of us – Roman Catholics in St. Louis Archdiocese – should remain disinterested in this matter. This conflict is a test of our judgment as Catholics, a test of our ability to clearly comprehend the complexity of the situation, and of our courage to make a conscientious choice.

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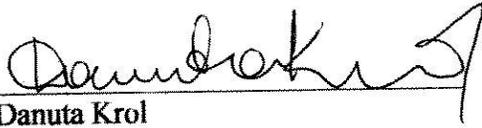
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We appeal to all Catholics the in St. Louis Archdiocese to express strong support for Archbishop Burke in his efforts to resolve this matter. On the second Sunday of each month we invite you all to attend our monthly bi-lingual *Mass of Solidarity with Archbishop Burke* during which we will pray for the strength of our spiritual leaders, unity of the Catholic Church, and the future of our congregation. The first Mass of Solidarity will be celebrated on March 13th, 2005 at 9:00 a.m. at St. John, Apostle and Evangelist Church in Plaza Square in downtown St. Louis. We kindly ask for your support.

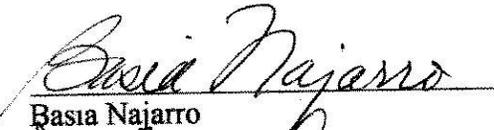
God Bless,

ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA PARISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

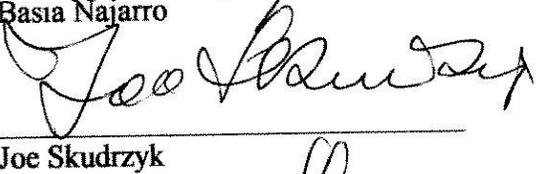

Andrzej Blek

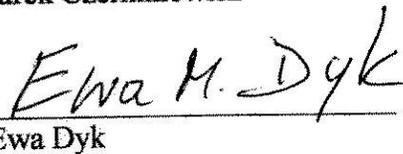

Danuta Krol

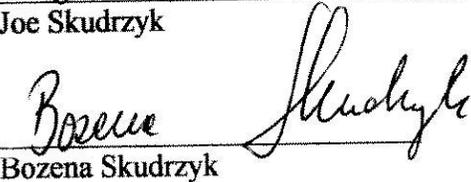

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