

2-7-08 - Letters, Stamford Advocate re: Moynihan

To the editor:

The most shocking element in the Father Michael Moynihan saga is not his personal life decisions ("New woes for Moynihan," Feb. 4), but rather the "complete surprise" and "we had no idea" reactions (that Father Moynihan is involved with the former parish choir director) by the Diocese of Bridgeport, and of course, the "judgment call" not to promptly disclose the diocese's decision last week to withdraw Moynihan's authorization to function as a priest.

One would think that pro-active and timely disclosures would be in the best interest of the people. To suggest that making an announcement from the altar was the driving force against immediate disclosure is an excuse worthy of a grade-schooler. A simple press release would have worked last week as it worked this week.

We Catholics are adults. Stuff happens. We can handle it. Treat us like adults, but please don't think for us.

Thank God for secular newspaper reporters in Greenwich, Stamford and New York City. Thank God also for the U.S. Attorney's Office. These good people - public servants all - have uncovered information and brought forward the truth about things at Saint Michael Church, including the off-the-books accounts. One wonders why the diocese has been so far out front claiming that there was no fraud or theft committed by Father Moynihan with respect to the unaccounted for \$1 million. Any lay person found under such circumstances would be immediately fired, investigated by public authorities and arrested, if necessary. Not so with the Diocese of Bridgeport and the Father Moynihan case.

The maze of conflicts-of-interest in the diocesan-parish governance model is mind-boggling. The Catholic pastor is the sole, authorized executive officer/manager of a parish. As a Catholic priest, the pastor promises obedience in perpetuity to the bishop on his ordination day. The bishop needs the pastors to raise money for him. The good character of most pastors aside, satisfying one's civil-law fiduciary duty to the parish religious corporation under this framework requires an ongoing miracle.

This is the environment in which Father Moynihan operated for so many years (like Father Michael Jude Fay, Monsignor Charlie Stubbs and all the others). The diocese's new six-step program for financial transparency and accountability simply does not address these fundamental conflicts.

In reality, the challenges facing our parishes, dioceses and our U.S. Catholic Church go well beyond \$1 million and boyfriends.

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