

On the Future of OLMC

Occasionally one or more of the parishioners here are surprised when they hear that OLMC is owned by the Archdiocese of Denver. Originally this was not the case, since there was a not-for-profit corporation which owned the buildings and assets. But that corporation was dissolved in the late 90's, and our assets have been owned by the Archdiocese ever since.

The specific ownership is called a Corporation Sole, with the Archbishop as the legal (I speak of civil law here) owner of our property and assets. But while a bishop may own this property under state law, he does not own the property of a parish under canon law. A parish is a separately incorporated entity from the Archdiocese, and it owns a patrimony distinct from the Archdiocese.

The pastor is the proper administrator, and his obligations are those of a steward. Canon 1284 says that the administrator should perform his duties with the diligence of a good householder (*patrisfamilias*). This means he must see to it that damage to physical property must be repaired, insurance matters taken care of, civil law obligations met, guard carefully the income of the parish, pay debts and bills, keep accurate records, give an account of the administration of the funds at the end of the year to the faithful, amongst other duties. It's not as though I spend a great deal of time doing this. My role is more to supervise those who do. For example, the parish secretary enters records into the parish register, but I must look at those occasionally to see that they are done correctly. And my work is supervised by the Dean (each parish or quasi-parish resides in a deanery).

We're in a bit of a limbo right now however, since we are not a parish. In fact, our status is quite unclear at the moment, since the Archdiocese does not have any written agreement or contract between itself and the FSSP, and there is no written agreement between this community and the Archdiocese.

This is not a cause for alarm, since we have an archbishop who is quite honest, and a chancery which is the same. But while there may not be cause for alarm, there is cause for action, since the Archbishop could be replaced by someone not so honest. And since we have a rather shaky canonical status, it is most prudent to obtain in writing the agreement or contract between the FSSP and the Archdiocese, and OLMC and the Archdiocese.

Back to canon law for a moment, the Congregation for the Clergy (prot.20060481) makes it absolutely clear that when speaking about a parish, one does not speak about a thing, but a person. A parish is above all a community of God's faithful. This is in the great tradition of the Church, where for example St. Lawrence the Deacon was commanded under Roman persecution to round up all the treasures of his church, and bring them before the local authority. St. Lawrence brought all the poor people of his parish in a group before the magistrate in response!

But the letter from the Congregation goes on to say, "While the parish church and the parish physical plant may be closed, and the name of a particular parish extinguished, the spiritual needs of the portion of the Faithful which once constituted that parish must continue to be provided for in accord with their rights in law." It goes on to explain that a parish never becomes extinct unless all its members become extinct. Even then canon law

sets a time period of 100 years before the juridic entity of the parish becomes extinct by the law itself.

So it's a big deal for the Archdiocese to elevate our community from a shaky and temporary status (words like "temporary" and "transitory" are used frequently to describe a *quasi parochus* in canon law which is what we are), to the permanent one of a parish. We have *some*, even many of the rights and privileges of a parish granted to us, but when we become a parish, we receive *all* those rights and privileges. And remember, this is a matter of time, since the College of Consultors of the Archdiocese voted unanimously to make us a parish.

When we become a parish, you won't see many changes at all. I'll be called a pastor rather than a chaplain; we won't be called a Latin Mass Community, but rather a church. There will be a kind of tax imposed on us, to pay for the services of the Archdiocese, which we have been receiving for free (other parishes paying for these services on our behalf) for about a decade. The average parishioner usually does not see these services (from the direct service of the Archbishop, the Vicar General, the Judicial Vicar, the Tribunal, the Building Commission, etc.) but benefits greatly from them (as for example the new roof on the parish hall, the administrative work for which was accomplished by the Building Commission).

Once this tax is assessed, then we will need to evaluate our tithing to the capital campaign fund for the building of the seminary in Denton, and also make plans to serve the poor and the missions. At the same time, we have to plan long-term for the future of the buildings, or a possible move.

The first step in this will be to hire an architect, to give us all the possibilities of what can be done with the existing structures we have. After that study is completed, then there are any number of other steps which follow from it (these are outlined in the Archdiocesan Handbook), such as the formation of a building committee convened for the specific purpose of the project.

These guidelines of the Archdiocese have been hammered out the hard way, with much experience, and they are in full accord with the Code of Canon Law, and the spirit of the Church.

I hope this insert has answered some of the questions which have come up lately. Do feel free to ask me other questions.