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**To all who have mandated Mr. Philip C. L. Gray, JCL as their  
Procurator/Advocate with the purpose of pursuing the removal of Bishop Michael  
Olson from his appointment as Bishop of Fort Worth**

My Dear Friends,

“Grace to you, and peace from Him Who is, Who was, and Who is to come” (Rev. 1:4).

On 19 July 2019, the Bishop of Fort Worth issued a letter *“To All Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious Women and Men and All the Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth.”* I have read the letter. Like other public addresses he has made in defense of his actions as the Bishop, his letter is filled with statements that do not reflect the reality of circumstances he has caused nor the legal realities within each of those circumstances. Let me be clear: he is a bishop. And, as a bishop, he controls the rhetoric on the diocesan website, in the diocesan newspaper, and the official statements made in the name of the Church published through secular media outlets (e.g. Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Twitter). He has friends in high places, including some in local and state offices. His public persona and his political connections likely afford significant influence on what is published. I say this because such outlets have not always published letters which correct misinformation presented by the Bishop or his staff. For that reason, it is my intent to respond, as I am able, to every public statement he makes and provide a balanced commentary that does not betray the Truth. That is the purpose of this letter, and the purpose of any press release my office will issue parallel to this letter. Until he is removed from office, the only way to correct that misinformation in the public forum, and encourage the faithful to pursue the Truth, is to provide a counterbalance.

In his letter, the Bishop begins by touting his resumé. At the third paragraph, he admits there is a movement of the faithful pursuing his removal as Bishop of Fort Worth. This paragraph is so significant to my response that I quote it here in full:

*In recent months, objections have been raised about some of my decisions, and a few in the diocese have even called for me to resign or be removed by the Holy See because they object so strongly to the way in which I have fulfilled my responsibilities as your bishop. I write to you now, both to acknowledge the hurt these people feel and to call attention to everyone that in my ministry as the shepherd of the diocese, my first duty is to be a witness to Jesus Christ: the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

Following this paragraph, he then expresses regret over how *“some now feel in the way”* he has exercised his *“office of oversight,”* especially his obligation to discern the gifts of individuals and communities in the Diocese of Fort Worth. Then, over the next five paragraphs, he curiously identifies only two of many situations occurring in the Diocese. He claims that only *“a few”* people are responsible for the Petition for his removal. Within those five paragraphs, he presents a defense of his actions relative only to Father Richard Kirkham and San Mateo *Parish*. Oddly, he never mentions the effort calling for an apostolic investigation, which began in 2018. Nor does he mention any of the other controversies or issues related to his ministry that have become notorious.

At the end of his letter, he exhorts “*everyone who has been affected by these and other disputes*” to return to a full commitment to our Catholic Faith. He expresses this in sacramental language. He closes with a paragraph claiming that serving Fort Worth as a priest and bishop is the greatest joy of his life, then quotes from Philippians 2:1-2 with the words, “*...complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*”

For the sake of the Truth, and in defense of the Faith we hold so dear, please consider these points in response to his letter. Before I present those points, I remind you of my unwillingness to make known all the “other disputes” that are not publicly known, and I will not start now. I will share what I know is public knowledge, or use generalities based on the evidence I have accumulated. Those who have suffered harm from one in public ecclesiastical office understand why I do this; those who do not understand will simply have to bear patiently with me.

1. Toward the end of the second paragraph, after giving a summary of his resumé, the Bishop writes: “*I have worked to the best of my ability to summon all of us to an ever deeper conversion to Jesus Christ through the obedience of faith in His Gospel.*” I will not dispute the intentions of his heart implied in this statement. To be honest, those intentions have nothing to do with this case. Rather, the entire case against him hinges on the effects of his ministry, not his intentions. Has he been effective in bringing about a deeper conversion of the faithful in the Diocese of Fort Worth? Has he been successful in calling the faithful to greater obedience to the Gospel? Has he shown a zeal for souls (c.f. Canon 378)? Has he attended to the priests of his diocese with special solicitude (c.f. Canon 384)? Has he listened to his priests as “assistants and counselors” (*Ibid*)? Has he been “an example of holiness in charity, humility, and simplicity of life (Canon 387)?

Herein lies a significant element of the problem, and his letter exposes it. The Bishop touts his ordination to the priesthood, his consecration as a bishop, his position as a rector in a seminary, and he claims a preparation for the unique situation of the Church in North Texas. He recognizes himself for the collar and the miter he wears, but not for the justice and charity he is to practice (c.f. Mt. 23; Canons 383-387; *et al.*). Jesus did not tout a collar and miter when He gave an example of how to be a bishop. Rather, He stripped Himself, wrapped a towel around His waist, and washed the feet of the Apostles (Jn. 13:3-10). Within 24 hours, He would be stripped of His clothes, extend His arms, and die on the cross in the ultimate example of “*the power of God unto salvation to everyone who has faith*” (Rom. 1:16). Instead of stripping himself in service and crediting God for the demonstrable acts of power and grace, the Bishop’s entire letter points to himself. He presents a resumé as a public defense without evidence.

2. In an article published by the Star-Telegram on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Bishop’s spokesman reportedly stated that the Bishop had not received any official notice of my involvement. That statement was inaccurate at best. As is known, I had sent him a letter dated 17 June 2019 with delivery verified only a few days later. A FAX transmission verification was made the same day. I have since copied him on correspondence I made with the Vatican after June 17<sup>th</sup>. Now, in his public statement dated 19 July 2019, he admits that there is an action being taken against him but diminishes the substance and wide pursuit of this action. He has made no attempt to communicate directly with me or accept my invitation to meet with him. If you are like me, you are probably wondering if his 19 July 2019 “Pastoral Letter” is a response to the 17 June 2019 letter I sent to him; an official notice that his spokesman previously claimed the Diocese had no knowledge of.
3. He characterizes those of you pursuing this case as “*a few*”. The implications of his words are that only a small number of people are making a loud noise. His letter ignores the significance of this action. According to Pope Francis, a diocesan bishop “*can be legitimately removed from this office if he has through negligence committed or through omission facilitated acts that have caused grave*

*harm to others, either to physical persons or to the community as a whole. The harm may be physical, moral, spiritual or through the use of patrimony.... The diocesan Bishop or Eparch can only be removed if he is objectively lacking in a very grave manner the diligence that his pastoral office demands of him, even without serious moral fault on his part” (Motu Proprio: As a Loving Mother, art. 1).* In application, the physical, moral, spiritual, or patrimonial harm will be assessed under Canon Law by the standard of effectiveness to fulfill the noble Office of Bishop.

I believe that Bishop Olson’s actions meet the necessary criteria for removal, even if there is no serious moral fault on his part. As I noted above, his intentions and resumé have nothing to do with this case; and whether he possesses moral fault has no bearing. However, his ineffective and even harmful acts have had such grave effects on the priests and faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth that I agreed to accept this case and pursue the mandates presented to me. While it is the Holy Father who will make the final determination this side of Heaven, I am convinced, based on the evidence I have accumulated, that Bishop Olson must be removed. The criteria for that removal are not based on the counting of heads who want his removal vs those who do not. The criteria are about his effectiveness in fulfilling his obligations as a bishop; as one who must follow the example of the naked Christ Who washed dirty feet and stretched His arms out to die for those who killed Him.

4. He wrote his 19 July 2019 letter “*to acknowledge the hurt these people feel.*” Does his July 19<sup>th</sup> letter actually “*acknowledge the hurt*”? If so, how? By relegating the matter to an insignificant few? By making a public statement instead of addressing the people harmed directly? By ignoring invitations to meet with him? There are three ways “to acknowledge the hurt” from a wound that has been inflicted. A person can simply say, “*Oh, you are bleeding,*” and take no responsibility to help. Second, one can strike the wound and make the bleeding worse. Finally, one can say, “*I am sorry you are bleeding,*” and dress the wound using appropriate remedy. Those of you who read his letter judge for yourself. How did Bishop’s letter “*acknowledge the hurt*” of those he has harmed?

He identifies only two issues that are already public, claiming only those associated with these two issues drive this action for his removal. His memory is short. The Bishop himself identified the following issues as the basis for a very small but vocal group “*seeking to undermine his leadership*”: Petition by the FRK Advocates that include issues “*beyond [Father] Kirkham’s departure*”; “*questions about the resignations of the Rev. Jeff Poirot...and the Rev. Gary Picou; the closure of San Mateo Catholic Church; and changes at Nolan Catholic High School*” (Star-Telegram, “I’m Not a Dictator”, 15 Dec. 2018). The issues identified in the FRK Advocates Petition for an Apostolic Visitation are well documented on their website, frkadvocates.com, and for space considerations, I will not add them in full here. They do include documentary evidence of the Bishop telling parishioners from St. Martin de Porres Parish that he cannot comment on Father Kirkham’s case to them, but he turned over to the secular press a copy of what would be considered under Canon Law to be a highly sensitive and confidential communication. Additional public matters include his handling of the former Pastor of All Saints Parish, his handling of Catholic ministries at TCU, and his handling of the affair with Fischer-More College. All of these issues have been commented on in the secular press; sometimes because diocesan personnel provided the information.

There are two sides to every story. What diocesan personnel have published on these matters are not the full stories. I doubt I have the full stories. Only God knows. I do know this; the Bishop’s characterization of this action for his removal as being driven by only a few, vocal people who are unhappy with changes he has made is patently false. He has consistently diminished the seriousness of issues in his public presentation. And, he has consistently withheld critical context and circumstantial information about these issues that leads those involved to question his integrity.

I will not comment on the matter involving Father Richard Kirkham. Father Kirkham has a competent canon lawyer representing him, and it is not my intention to involve myself in that process. As the canon lawyer representing San Mateo Community and Church, I will offer my brief statement on that matter below. Here, I want to make something clear. Neither case, in isolation, convicted me to accept the mandates for the Bishop's removal. All the issues within the case for his removal involve harm to the Church's Mission over a broad spectrum across the Diocese of Fort Worth. Those who have signed mandates live in every area of the Diocese. Some currently work in diocesan and parish ministries.

I have been asked to pursue the removal of other bishops. Until now, I have never accepted a mandate to do so. I have handled multiple, simultaneous cases in other dioceses, never believing the removal of the bishop was warranted. The Bishop's presentation that only "a few" representing two issues are behind this endeavor is a blatant misrepresentation of what he knows; of what he said in the past.

5. As noted above, I will not comment on Father Kirkham's case. His canon lawyer has indicated the recent statements made by the Bishop in that case do not represent the reality of that process and situation. I can say unequivocally that the presentation by the Bishop about 'San Mateo Parish,' as found in his 19 July 2019 letter, is a misrepresentation of facts. Further, he uses language that is offensive to those involved and misleading to those not involved. I will be brief with the facts:
  - a. In the case of San Mateo, there are two legal realities that must not be conflated: 1) The San Mateo Community and 2) the San Mateo Church. Bishop Olson has chosen to conflate the two realities by use of the identifier 'Parish.' It is a red-herring intended only to deflect the very real issues presented in law and fact.
  - b. The appeal had nothing to do with whether San Mateo Community was a Parish; the appeal had everything to do with the rights possessed by a community of the Faithful, including ownership and use of a consecrated church.
  - c. The appeal against Bishop Olson's actions relative to the San Mateo Community and Church was not undertaken "by some parishioners who wanted things at San Mateo not to change." The appeal was undertaken in defense of said rights after they were violated by the Bishop's manipulation of facts and legal process. For those who want to know the truth, please go stand outside San Mateo Church; and when you see a group of people praying the Rosary, ask them for the truth. Most likely, they will be the same beautiful women who were praying a Rosary outside the Cathedral and found themselves accosted by a fully vested bishop; such that a man had to intervene for fear of their safety and dignity. Evidence? It was videoed, like so many other public appearances the Bishop has made.
  - d. The appeal was also undertaken in defense of San Mateo Church consecrated by solemn rite on 1 March 1998. San Mateo Church is not a "chapel of ease". Bishop Olson's characterization is offensive to the sacred space, to the people who built it, and to the Bishop who consecrated it. In fact, his characterization of San Mateo Church in his July 19<sup>th</sup> letter is inconsistent with his purported statements to the Holy See about the same matter. In reality, the consecration of a church bears with it rights and obligations to the community that built it, financially supports it, and worships within it, as well as to the sacred space itself. Those rights and obligations were violated by Bishop Olson.
  - e. Canon Law requires a bishop to hear those whose rights could be harmed by a potential juridic act before he places the act. He claims an "extensive consultation with those in the diocese and canon lawyers" before he made his decisions about San Mateo. His consultations should have been wider, and they should have been perceptibly authentic. Unfortunately the consultation did not extend to everyone that Canon Law requires be consulted.

f. Finally, the Bishop's decision relative to San Mateo Church was not "*upheld by the Holy See*". At best, his statement is patently false. At worst, it is a manipulation of fact contrived to mislead. His original decision was to close San Mateo Church. His statements prove this. Worse, the Diocese obtained a demolition order from the City of Fort Worth and attempted its demolition while the appeal was pending before the Holy See. Public documents prove this. The San Mateo Community was forced either to allow their beloved spiritual home to be demolished or fight to save it. They chose the latter, hired civil lawyers, and the demolition was suspended. The Holy See determined that San Mateo Church is indeed a "*consecrated church*", and that the Bishop did not follow the proper process when he closed it. Despite the ruling by the Holy See, the Bishop did not communicate with the San Mateo Community, and he neglected to protect the sacred patrimony. Is this not another important responsibility within his office of oversight...to provide oversight of all sacred patrimony, especially consecrated churches? Had he taken prudent measures to protect the consecrated church as a sacred space, the Diocese would not have to be making the repairs recently reported in the press. As in so many other situations, the Bishop's words relative to San Mateo betray reality by diminishing and mischaracterizing the situation.

6. The Bishop hopes and prays that all affected by these two situations "*will now return to a full and zealous commitment to the goal that unites us all.*" If the Bishop had identified objective ways that particular people had broken their unity, this would be a good statement to conclude with. When I read Sacred Scripture or the Fathers of the Church, these kinds of statements are preceded by identifying specific violations of the moral law. Certainly, the implication of this statement is that those who are seeking his removal are not fulfilling their baptismal promises and are somehow at odds with the Church. Without identifying a violation, he exhorts a return to unity.

Those who attended my presentations know the truth about this process and its focus on authentic unity. You know our ultimate purpose is to bring an end to the grave harm to souls taking place because of the Bishop's actions. You know that we are acting in conformity to Christ and His Church. As I explained, if we follow a process given by the Pope, in a manner consistent with the Gospel, we are in unity with Christ and His Church. The Bishop may not like what we do. He may disagree with us. What can I say, that is the point. There is significant disagreement, if not aversion to him. For him to imply that people pursuing this action are breaching unity is wrong. The Holy Spirit commended the Ephesians for exposing false apostles (Rev. 2:2). The Pope has given us a way to do that. The Bishop's implication that we are breaching unity only proves our point about his ineffective and gravely harmful behavior.

I have worked with groups of the Faithful all across North America. What impresses me most about those of you who have mandated me to pursue this action are two things: First, you are the most diverse group I have ever worked with. Second, within your diversity there is a deep love for Jesus Christ and a desire for the salvation of souls. This second characteristic has been the greatest motivator for me to represent you. You hold different political views; you possess different spiritualities; you speak different languages; but all of you want Jesus Christ to be the focus and center of your lives. What do you do to witness grace in this regrettable and horribly difficult situation? Five Rosaries a day are organized and prayed; Wednesdays are voluntarily accepted as "Fast for Fort Worth" days. I have heard many of you offer your sufferings and daily consecrations for the renewal of Fort Worth. Your actions are prayerful and directed toward authentic Unity. I am humbled by your Faith. The fact that the Bishop takes no notice of your deep Faith and your willingness to remain in complete obedience to the practices of the Church in unity with Jesus Christ is an example of how out-of-touch he is with you.

7. The issues are not the only consideration in this action. The gravely harmful effects of the Bishop's actions must also be considered. Here, I will mention only three: 1. The presence of a Culture of Fear by which the Bishop rules, particularly expressed within the presbyterate and those who work in parish and diocesan offices; 2. The substantial diminishing of financial donations both to parishes and the Diocese of Fort Worth; and most harmful, 3. The loss of souls. So many have left the practice of the Faith because of the actions of Bishop Michael Olson. I have in my possession more than two thousand pages of evidence. After almost two months of activity on this case, that body of material grows almost daily. Two particular pieces of evidence from the Wichita Falls area expose some of the most intimate details behind a broad range of Bishop Olson's activities. These lengthy pieces of evidence are too sensitive for me to share publicly, but they give increased credibility to the countless other pieces of evidence that have been submitted to me. They expose the grave harm.

Within these three categories of grave harm, I must recognize that many of you have been removed from parish ministries because you are part of this action. While we have not politicized this action, and take it to preserve our Faith, both the Bishop and some of his priests have removed people from ministry or rejected them for parish apostolic ministries on the basis of their involvement in this action. Recently, I filed an appeal on behalf of a mandater whose removal from ministry violated her rights under Canon Law. I will continue to take similar actions when warranted.

8. The Office of Bishop is a noble office instituted by Jesus Himself. By God's design, its presence is necessary for the Church to provide a full expression of grace and salvation through the ordinary means of her Mission. For the Office of Bishop to be sufficiently effective, the man in the Office must be "*outstanding in solid faith, good morals, piety, zeal for souls, wisdom, prudence, and human virtues, and endowed with other qualities which make him suitable to fulfill the office in question....[He must be] of good reputation*" (Canon 378§1.1-2). Those other qualities which would make him suitable to fulfill the office in question would be determined by the circumstances and needs of the people placed under his care. Not unlike secular offices, when the man in the Office of Bishop acts in a manner that undermines the basic Mission of the Church, the Office of Bishop suffers disrepute. All other men who share that noble Office and exercise it effectively suffer for the harm to the Office. When Bishop Olson is removed, it is hoped that justice will be restored in the Diocese of Fort Worth. I also pray that the dignity of the Office he holds will be restored and the faithful will regain confidence in ecclesiastical authority. These things will be proven when the thousands who have left the Faith because of the Bishop's actions return to faithful practice.

When I travel the Diocese of Fort Worth and speak to priests, seminarians, and the Catholic Faithful, I am struck by the Culture of Fear that has gripped the parishes. Pastors are pitted against the people. Priests are pitted against each other. Seminarians are pitted against spiritual directors and the presbyterate they will become a part of. Check the statistics; Mass attendance is lower now across the Diocese of Fort Worth than it was six years ago; the number of active priests has declined significantly; the number of seminarians has declined. There is significant loss of donations. In the midst of all this, the number one motivator I hear from you to pursue this action is that you want authentic renewal and revival. You want your brothers and sisters to return to the practice of the Faith. You are pursuing the great exhortation given by God in Jude 3, to fight earnestly for the Faith once delivered to you. Your pursuit inspires me.

In closing, I beg you not to allow the Bishop's public statements to discourage you. God often allows our Faith to be tested in order to purify us (cf. Sirach 2, the stories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Judith, Esther, *et al.*). Let us continue to follow the Seven Action Points I presented to you, especially to entrust our work to the Blessed Mother and encourage each other in the Faith. Do not allow the Bishop or his curia to drive you from the practice of the Faith. Do not allow them to determine your relationship with God. Many of you have been dismissed from parish ministries or other volunteer programs simply

because you wear blue ribbons or have used legitimate processes to challenge wrongful acts. Your continued presence at Mass and in the Parishes is a continued reminder that they do not control your heart or your Faith. Let us stand in solidarity of Faith. Let us continue our prayers and fasting and never lose sight of our ultimate purpose in this cause; to fan the smoldering wick and burning embers into bright flames again; to give Hope to our brothers and sisters who have left the practice of the Faith.

God bless you all; St. Joseph keep you.

May God be Praised!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Philip C. L. Gray". The signature is stylized and includes a circular mark on the left side.

Philip C. L. Gray, JCL  
Procurator/Advocate