NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER DONATE NOW!
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Pavone pleads with donors for more money

Tom Gallagher | Oct. 3, 2011

Fr. Frank Pavone (CNS file photo)

Fr. Frank Pavone, a high-profile abortion opponent who was reined in by Catholic officials raising questions about his financial dealings, recently mailed a frantic fund-raising letter urging that supporters send his organization "the largest gift you possibly can today."

Pavone, head of the non-profit Priests for Life, sent the Sept. 22 letter after Amarillo, Texas, Bishop Patrick Zurek ordered Pavone to return to the diocese because of "persistent questions and concerns" about how he was handling millions in donations to his organization.

Pavone, in the fund-raising pitch sent via overnight UPS courier services, begs for a response:

> "I had to reach you [the donor] right away and address some important issues that concern you, me, and our work together at Priests for Life, and the entire pro-life movement here in the United States. Before I go into that with you, I must first tell you that it is critically important that you send me a response of any kind to this letter."

Impressing the need for response, he begs for "unconditional support for Priests for Life and the fight to end legalized abortion-on-demand."

"Right now," he demands, "that means doing whatever is necessary to send Priest for Life the largest gift you possibly can today. Not tomorrow. Not next week. But right now!"

Following the initial news that Pavone's bishop was calling him back to Texas and confining his work to Amarillo, additional reports added to the questions about his organizations' finances.

David Gibson of Religion News Service reported that Pavone's organization, which has raised millions of dollars, is facing a $1.4 million shortfall [2]. Karen Smith Welch of the Amarillo Globe News, reported that a related Pavone organization, Gospel of Life Ministries, lost its tax-exempt status three years ago but is still collecting donations [3].

Zurek originally asked Pavone to return to Amarillo "to spend time in prayer and reflection."

According to the RNS report, a recently released audit of PFL showed that its problems stemmed both from the economic downturn, which caused a drop in donations, as well as a decision to spend down all of the organization's reserves.

In addition, the PFL organization loaned Gospel of Life Ministries, an organization aimed at uniting evangelical and Catholic anti-abortion activities, a total of $879,000.

A statement attached to the audit of PFL said the group spent its reserves because it had responsibilities as an anti-abortion leader to "maintain the momentum."

According to the RNS report, the audit showed that PFL's income rose from $9.3 million in 2007 to $10.8 million in 2008 to $12 million in 2009. Donations dropped to $10.7 million in 2010, but spending remained the same, creating the shortfall.

According to Guidestar, a Web Site that tracks non-profits, the IRS revoked the Gospel of Life's tax-exempt status when it failed to file tax forms for three consecutive years.

Disputes with bishops and failed ventures have marked Pavone's career. Zurek explained to other bishops that he expected Pavone to disclose requested financial documents and to cease his "incorrigible defiance of my legitimate authority as his bishop."

Pavone, who was recording shows for the EWTN television network when Zurek's letter was made public, said he would return to Amarillo but was also seeking Vatican permission to seek another diocese.

In his mailing, Pavone blamed "over-zealous members of an abortion-friendly news media as well as enemies directly involved with the abortion industry" for spreading "misinformation and totally false allegations against me and Priests for Life."

He said he has not been suspended nor lost his priestly faculties and has "not been charged with any malfeasance" or wrongdoing while admitting that his ministry is currently "restricted to the diocese of Amarillo."

While many in the anti-abortion movement have come to Pavone's defense, one conservative blogger, Philip Lawler, editor of the Catholic World News web site, said Pavone for years has "run PFL as his own personal fiefdom," [4] and has been "answerable only the PFL board of directors ? on which he and his paid subordinates have formed a solid voting majority. That long run of complete autonomy is now coming to an end."

According to the last publicly available information, PFL's 2008 IRS Form 990, PFL's board of directors is made up of mostly PFL staff members: Pavone; Janet Morana, who also serves as PFL's executive director; Fr. Peter West, who also serves as associate director of PFL; Augustinian Fr. Denis Wilde, who also serves as an associate priest of PFL; another Augustinian priest, Walter Quinn, who also serves as associate priest of PFL; and Anthony DeStefano, vice chairman, who was paid a total of $192,000 for his board service.

There are no cardinals or bishops or representatives of the U.S. bishops' conference serving on PFL's board of directors.

In an e-mail answer to a question from NCR seeking the names of the current members of the board of directors for PFL, Gospel of Life Ministries and a related organization, Rachel's Vineyard, PFL spokesman Jerry Horn said: "Full financial and management disclosure by Priests for Life has been made to the Bishop of Amarillo. Full disclosure has been made by Rachel's Vineyard and Gospel of Life as well. Since Bishop Patrick Zurek is out of town and has yet to respond to our disclosures, it would be unfair and imprudent to provide further information to the press as this time."

[Tom Gallagher writes the Mission Management column for *NCR*.]

To read the fundraising letter and enclosures, click here: **Pavone Letter** [5].

Related stories:

- Priests for Life head Fr. Pavone suspended over finances [6]
- Who is Fr. Frank Pavone? [7]
- Bishop tries to rein in high-profile pro-life priest [8]
- Priests for Life in financial trouble [2]

[9]

[9]

Enjoy this article?
Help support more like it by **donating today!** [9]

Source URL (retrieved on *05/06/2015 - 03:43*): http://ncronline.org/news/politics/pavone-pleads-donors-more-money

Links:
[1] http://ncrnews.org/webathon/donate/in-content

[2] http://ncronline.org/news/politics/priests-life-finacial-trouble
[3] http://amarillo.com/news/local-news/2011-09-24/pavones-group-unclear-revocation#.TooPHHKti5I
[4] http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/otn.cfm?id=841
[5] http://ncrnews.org/documents/pavone_letter.pdf
[6] http://ncronline.org/news/popular-priest-suspended-over-finances
[7] http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/who-fr-frank-pavone
[8] http://ncronline.org/news/bishop-tries-rein-high-profile-pro-life-priest
[9] http://ncrnews.org/webathon/donate/article-end