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Dismissed Oregon priest can't serve in Chicago over holidays

by Dan Morris-Young

Bend controversy

Seattle — According to his bishop, Fr. James Radloff is a priest in good standing in the diocese of Baker, Ore. But he has been denied a letter of good standing for the Chicago archdiocese and -- unless the denial is reversed -- will not be allowed to exercise priestly ministry at his mother's parish there during the Christmas season even though the pastor requested his help.

Radloff has been in Chicago since October, when he filed an appeal with the Vatican Congregation for Clergy asking it to nullify Bishop Liam Cary's formal removal of him as pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Bend, Ore. Radloff served at St. Francis, the diocese's largest parish, for about 21 months.

Cary barred Radloff from ministry in the Baker diocese even though Radloff had been assigned to Merrill, Ore., after his termination from St. Francis. That assignment was withdrawn in early November, when Cary accused Radloff and his canonical adviser, Fr. Thomas Faucher of the Boise, Idaho, diocese, of violating confidentiality agreements surrounding the Vatican case. Faucher strongly objected to the charge.

In a Dec. 18 letter, Radloff asked Baker vicar general Fr. Rick Fischer if "the reason Bishop Cary is punishing me in this way (is) because I have exercised my right to appeal to Rome?"

In the letter, portions of which Faucher shared with *NCR*, Radloff repeats his request for "a letter of good standing to Cardinal Francis George so that I may spend my time as a priest in good standing functioning as a priest in good standing."

Officials at the Baker diocese told a Chicago archdiocesan official in charge of extern priests in early

December that a letter of good standing would not be issued as required by the archdiocese for Radloff to exercise priestly faculties there, Faucher said.

"As people in the Chicagoland area, priests and laity, discover I am a priest in exile ... who is not allowed to say Mass or minister, the speculation this is causing has hurt me, my mother, my family, and my friends very much," Radloff wrote in the Dec. 18 letter. "The pain inflicted and tears caused to my mother, family and friends by Bishop Liam Cary's lack of transparency and his perpetual punishment of me is being seen as a penalty of some kind and abusive behavior."

"I myself do not actually know why I am being barred from public ministry. That has never been explained to me," Radloff wrote.

Similarly, in an October statement, Radloff said he had asked the Congregation for Clergy for permission to publicly divulge the reasons Cary used to justify the formal decree of removal as pastor of St. Francis.

Cary's action led some parishioners to resign from the parish council, finance committee and stewardship program.

On Dec. 8, a group of parishioners supporting Radloff placed envelopes containing reprints of the *NCR* story on Radloff's removal on car windows at the 10 a.m. Mass.

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Phone calls and emails to the Baker diocese asking for a response to Radloff's inquiries and requests were not returned as of Monday.

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