

# PERSECUTED PRIEST NEEDS YOUR HELP

## Father Joe Clark suspended for correcting deacon!

### *What happened?*

On August 5, 2005 Bishop Paul Loverde suspended Fr. Joseph Clark without notice and without serious cause. Why? On Sunday, July 24 Fr. Clark celebrated the 11:00 a.m. Mass at Holy Family Church in Dale City assisted by a permanent deacon who committed serious liturgical abuses in handling the Precious Blood. After Mass, Father attempted to correct and instruct the deacon who was unreceptive. Father told him in the future he would not permit him to assist if the abuse continued.



### *How did the deacon respond?*

A few days later Fr. Robert Avella, the Bishop's Delegate for Clergy, contacted Fr. Clark to say the diocese received "many" complaint letters. (The pastor, Fr. Donald Planty, received three.) The deacon accused Fr. Clark of "harassment" and threatened to sue. The deacon's wife and his daughter, who lives half a continent away and did not witness the incident, sent outraged letters to the bishop. Father asked to see the letters and the charges against him, but Fr. Avella refused. These two letters, which were obtained later, slander not only Fr. Clark, but the "new breed" of young priests in the diocese who are characterized as "critical and mean-spirited," basically for defending the integrity of the Mass. Statements in the wife's letter may explain the deacon's unreceptive response to correction. She wrote, "I am embarrassed to say we are from this diocese because we are known...as a very conservative diocese that can't have girl alter (sic) servers because the conservative priests are not open to it.... We have a group of priests that want to take us back instead of forward." Clearly more is going on here than the incident with Fr. Clark.

### *What did the bishop do?*

Fr. Clark was called to a meeting at the bishop's residence on August 6 which he thought was a one-on-one opportunity to discuss what happened. Instead, he found the bishop in the company of the diocesan lawyer and Fr. Avella. When Fr. Clark asked if it was a juridical meeting the bishop said yes. With no discussion or warning, Bishop Loverde presented Fr. Clark with a letter of suspension from active ministry and an order to vacate the Holy Family rectory within five hours. Fr. Clark was not informed of the true nature of the meeting beforehand, was given no opportunity to see the charges against him or have counsel, and was not allowed to defend himself. To add insult to injury, the suspension was dated the day before the meeting. The wording of the bishop's suspension repeats the uninvestigated allegations from the slanderous letter of the deacon's daughter.

### *What can you do to help?*

Fr. Clark must vigorously fight this unjust suspension which could result in his dismissal from the priesthood. He has hired a canon lawyer and plans to fight even to Rome if necessary. He needs your help in bringing this injustice to the attention of congregations at the Vatican. Please send letters asking for Fr. Clark's immediate reinstatement to the Congregation for the Clergy and the Congregation for Divine Worship. Since the accusations relate to abuse of the liturgy, please share any experience you have with Fr. Clark's reverent celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and your concern over abuses to the Holy Eucharist. Please keep your letters brief (two pages at most), respectful toward the bishop, and unemotional.

*(over, please)*

***Send your letter to:***

His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze  
Prefect, Congregation for Divine Worship  
10 Piazza Pio XII 00120  
Vatican City State, Europe

His Eminence Darío Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos  
Congregation for the Clergy  
3 Piazza Pio XII 00120  
Vatican City State, Europe

***One more thing...***

Priests' stipends don't include a slush fund for defending against unjust dismissal. Fr. Clark has no lawyers, staff, or bottomless basket of donations from people in the pews. He depends on our charity. Catholic Media Coalition (CMC) has opened a "persecuted priests" account to pay Father's legal bills. Because CMC is a volunteer organization there is little overhead. Even the printing of this flyer was donated. Almost every cent will assist Fr. Clark and other persecuted priests. Your donation is tax deductible. Please help! Make out your check to *CMC Persecuted Priests Fund* and mail to:

Catholic Media Coalition  
C/O Mary Ann Kreitzer  
1216 Mill Rd.  
Woodstock, VA 22664

*O Holy Father,  
may the torrents of love flowing from the sacred wounds  
of Thy Divine Son bring forth priests like unto the beloved disciple John...  
May Thy priests be faithful guardians of Thy Church...  
Give us priests who are on fire and who  
are true children of Mary.*

- From St. Therese's prayer for priests

This flyer was prepared by Les Femmes.  
For more information about Les Femmes visit  
[www.lesfemmes-thetruth.org](http://www.lesfemmes-thetruth.org).