

A Statement from the Leadership of The Faith Community of Saint Sabina

At approximately 3 pm this afternoon, the Faith Community of St. Sabina received an official press statement from Francis Cardinal George Archbishop of Chicago stating, that the Cardinal has asked Father Pfleger to step back from his obligation at St. Sabina and take leave from his pastoral duties for a couple of weeks. Father Pfleger has communicated to the Cardinal that he is not in agreement with this decision and desires to maintain full pastoral authority at the Faith Community of St. Sabina. As the elected and pastoral leadership of St. Sabina, we wholeheartedly disagree with the Cardinal's decision both in its substance and the manner with which it was implemented. We respectfully request the Cardinal immediately reinstate Fr. Pfleger as full pastor of St. Sabina and request an immediate meeting with Cardinal George to discuss the future of the entire Faith Community of St. Sabina.

For the past 33 years the Faith Community of Saint Sabina under the leadership of Fr. Pfleger has risen from a parish community in distress and destined to close to becoming a beacon of the lived out Gospel of Jesus Christ in this community, this city and in this world. The Faith Community under Fr. Pfleger's leadership has had significant impact in the Auburn Gresham Community and the city of Chicago. This impact is been realized in our Employment Center that services over 7000 people annually; a social services center that feeds, clothes and advocates for over 20,000 per year; a youth center that assists over 25,000 young people; a grammar school that has a current enrollment of 530 students; two safe homes for foster children; and a homeless intervention program that has moved over 30 men back into active society. St. Sabina has brought over 80 units of affordable senior housing to the community, not to mention the numerous businesses that St. Sabina has helped to facilitate along 79th Street. The Faith Community has also helped in the rehabilitation of drug addicts and prostitutes. Our Faith Community has

worked to eliminate the sale of drug paraphernalia and tobacco and alcohol billboards around schools. In fact, the City of Chicago SAM program, (Selling Alcohol to Minors) was modeled after a St. Sabina response to the sale of liquor to young people in our community. We have funded an AIDS Clinic in Africa, helped over 200 Katrina survivors who relocated to Chicago, and exposed youth to some of the greatest international leaders including Bishop Tutu, Paul Russesabagena from Hotel Rwanda, and the vice president of South Africa, just to name a few. St. Sabina also supports parishes in Mexico and around the world. All of these efforts have grown and are a direct result of Fr. Pflieger's direction and leadership.

For clarity, The Faith Community of St. Sabina is broader than Fr. Pflieger. It consists of over 2000 people, both young and old, married and single, black, white, and Latino who are committed to the clarion call of justice and assistance to those in need. St. Sabina has ministered a message of hope and healing to thousands of people, the indigent and the wealthy, those in Chicago and the Suburbs, catholic and non-catholic alike. St. Sabina and Fr. Pflieger's ministry has also brought many disenchanted Catholics back to church. Under Fr. Pflieger's leadership, the church has produced trained ministers, priests, deacons, and lay leaders who are empowered to live the fullness of the Gospel as articulated in Matthew 25.

As a collective group we are opposed to the appointment of a temporary administrator. While any administrator may be capable, St. Sabina, is led by a group of pastoral ministers and lay leaders, including our Pastoral Associate, who are more than capable of leading the day to day operations of our church in Fr. Pflieger's absence. Cardinal George as bishop of the local Catholic flock, should, in our opinion discussed this decision with the people of St. Sabina who he shepherds. Decisions regarding our Faith Community must be made with the inclusion of those who have given numerous hours, gifts, talents, and their

financial support to this faith community. Every month St. Sabina, through its tithes and offerings sends an assessment of approximately \$75,000 to the Chancery. In addition to fulfilling this requirement, St. Sabina as a church, raised over \$500,000 in 8 short weeks to cover the cost of the repair and refurbishment of our roof with over 50% coming directly from the gifts of the local flock and without any assistance other than the offer of a loan from the Archdiocese. St. Sabina under the leadership of Fr. Pflieger has gone from being in debt to becoming one of the most giving parishes in the Archdiocese.

In the past weeks, Fr. Pflieger has been at the center of a firestorm regarding statements made from a pulpit other than St. Sabina. Those that know him best, we his family, know that he is repentant of his actions and has taken the initiative to publicly apologize to the Faith Community and those whom he offended. We accept his apology and know his heart to be committed to the gospel of peace and justice. He has asked God for His forgiveness, and we know that God has forgiven him for God is faithful and just to forgive.

We love and respect our pastor, as imperfect as he may be. He is the person that has baptized us, married us, buried us, shared in the Eucharist and Word with us, prayed with us and for us, laughed with us and most recently cried with us. Our tears were a result of enduring a deluge of hateful statements, directed at both Fr. Pflieger and the collective church from the named and unnamed, from self described Catholics and racial supremacists alike. He is our pastor and spiritual leader and we will continue to love and support him.

In closing, we restate our request for the immediate reinstatement of Fr. Pflieger, and call for Cardinal George to meet with parish leadership of the St. Sabina, and have an open heart to discuss the future of Fr. Pflieger and our church.

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