



Cardinale Renato Raffaele Martino

Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace

Vatican City, 2 February 2017

Dear Father Pavone,

In response to your recent update about your many activities in 2016, I wish to encourage you and your team to continue the fruitful work that Priests for Life is doing.

You have every reason to proceed with confidence, because you have welcomed the assistance of the Church to strengthen your ministry as it continues to grow around the world. At the inception of Priests for Life in 1991, when it was given recognition as a Catholic Association of the Faithful, it was a relatively small apostolate focused within the United States on assisting priests to proclaim the Gospel of Life.

Since then it has grown and diversified into an entire family of ministries, and an international apostolate. While continuing to be faithful to your original vision of assisting and training the clergy, you have sought to follow the Spirit's lead and respond to the needs of the pro-life movement, and therefore have integrated into your ministry the work of Rachel's Vineyard, Silent No More, the Youth Outreach of Stand True, outreach to Hispanic and African-American communities, and the international work of Marie Smith and the Parliamentary Network for Critical Issues, which assists lawmakers in many other countries to defend the most vulnerable human lives. You have also become an NGO at the United Nations and continue to assist the Holy See Mission.

As your ministry has grown and diversified, you have outgrown (by your own discernment and decision) the original category of 'Catholic Association of the Faithful'. The Congregation for the Clergy here in Rome has accompanied you during this process and has affirmed your work.

I want to clarify for your supporters that in order for an organization to do good work in union with the Church, it is in no way necessary to be a canonical 'Association of the Faithful'. The Congregation for the Clergy has said that you are not 'a Catholic Association of the Faithful.' Nobody should think this means you are not Catholic. Many well-known Catholic organizations, like the Knights of Columbus, Legatus, and EWTN, are not 'Catholic Associations of the Faithful,' either.

What the Congregation has done is simply to clarify what kind of structure you have. You are, like so many Catholic apostolates, a 'non-canonical entity'. You are a civil corporation doing work to advance Catholic values. In fact, the Congregation has recognized the value of your work in the Church in the letters they have issued, stating things like the following:

PFL is present in more than 50 nations, and its work benefits the Church both in the United States and beyond...Without doubt, PFL has offered to the Church a great service in the Pro-Life movement. By all indications, Father Pavone is a truly charismatic leader who has led PFL to significant heights...(T)he work and finances of PFL are in order...The Association has been well administered financially...(T)he administrative costs of PFL are in keeping with other groups receiving similar funding in the United States.' (Visitation Report, Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, November 2013)

Moreover, as the Congregation has indicated in a subsequent letter, *'there is nothing to prevent 'Priests for Life, Inc.', together with its numerous affiliated agencies, from continuing to labor on behalf of the pro-life movement,' with 'the many excellent works which Priests for Life continues do in promoting respect for the sanctity of human life'* (Letter of His Eminence Cardinal Beniamino Stella, Prefect, Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, to Fr. Pavone, February 6, 2015, Prot. N.20150367). Bishops, of course, are free to associate with and support your work in the ways that they wish to do so, and as many have done over the years.

Please know, then, of my continued support as an ecclesiastical advisor and friend. I encourage all the supporters of Priests for Life to increase that support and work harder than ever to build on the progress you have already made in bringing about a Culture of Life

Sincerely

Renato R. Card. Martino