

Good evening, my name is Trudy Peterson. It is wonderful to see the amazing support for Father Bryan. Elizabeth Upgren is going to begin with an opening prayer.

During the last weeks I have had a heavy heart. Since Father Bryan's notice from the Diocese for his removal, I felt helpless. There were days of anger, days of despair, and days where I couldn't understand how a church I loved could hurt me. Thursday evening I prayed with my daughter for Father Bryan and for direction on what I could do. Within minutes, the idea of a Prayer Service came to me. I thought about Father Bryan's teachings and it made sense. We are called to be followers of Jesus. If Father Bryan taught us anything, it was that following Jesus above all else is our mission. This is not a time to turn our back or walk away. It's not a time to stop going to Mass. During our times of trial, we are called to join together, to look to the Lord. We have come together tonight as one body of Christ.

Please join in singing "We are One Body".

I would like to read a passage from the Mass on January 12th, before Father Bryan left. It is a reading from Isiah Chapter 42:

Thus says the LORD:
Here is my servant whom I uphold,
My chosen one with whom I am pleased,
Upon whom I have put my spirit;
He shall bring forth justice to the nations,
Not crying out, not shouting,
Not making his voice heard in the street.
A bruised reed he shall not break,
And a smoldering wick he shall not quench,
Until he establishes justice on earth;
The coastlands will wait for his teaching.
I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
As a covenant to the people,
A light for the nations,
To open the eyes of the blind,
To bring out prisoners from confinement,
And from the dungeon, those who life in darkness.

We are here to show support for St Philips and Father Bryan. Over the past weeks and months, we have dealt with a lot of information, much of it disappointing and disheartening. We are all in a different place in dealing with this. Father Bryan is being treated unjustly, there is corruption in our diocese, and St Philips parish feels like it is being torn apart. You may know of parishioners that have left St Philips or are considering leaving. Maybe you have had these same thoughts. You may be feeling saddened, disappointed, angry. I didn't know that a church could make my heart feel broken. Tonight, we need to look around at our fellow parishioners, our fellow followers of the Catholic faith, and come together as a family to protect our church. This is our church. Families go through struggles and this is our family. Father Bryan is a part of this family. Our goal for this evening is to come together to support Father Bryan.

Our hope is that tonight can be launchpad for future discussions so our church can begin to heal. We value your thoughts and ideas but in an effort to keep our focus on Father Bryan tonight, we ask that you provide feedback in the Social Hall after the closing prayer.

On January 2nd, the Knights of Columbus board members wrote and signed a Resolution asking for further investigations into Bishop Hoepfner's actions following the recent release of depositions. Father Bryan, as the Chaplain for the Knights of Columbus, signed that resolution in solidarity with the board.

On January 8th, Father Bryan had a meeting with Bishop Hoepfner and Msgr. Foltz in Crookston. At that time, he was advised that he would be sent to Pennsylvania on Tuesday, January 14th for a psychological evaluation. Based on the press release from the Diocese of Crookston Father Bryan's issues had been brought to Bishop Hoepfner over time, and were non-criminal, non-sexual, boundary violations. Father Bryan's personal statement is available on the resource table in the back for anyone who would like to read or take a copy. He clearly explains all of the complaints against him, the timeline of those complaints, and how no measures were taken to look into the truth of those allegations.

The most recent update from Father Bryan is that although he was initially informed of a one week psychological evaluation, upon arrival in Pennsylvania he was informed that the Diocese ordered a two week evaluation including psycho-sexual assessments and a polygraph examination. Based on the issues identified by the Diocese, the magnitude of the evaluations appears disproportionate.

For many of us the removal of Father Bryan was the final straw in an already hurting parish. We need to support Father Bryan as he deals with the injustice dealt by the Bishop. So where do we go from here? Prayer is number one. Father Bryan needs our prayers to support him. He is specifically asking for us as a parish to pray for wisdom and surrender to God's will. Unity is number two. This is not about picking sides or creating division. This is about bringing our family back together. If our members, or our families, leave St Philips, we have all lost. Satan has a hold on the situation and we need to reverse the roles. Six months ago we had a thriving parish. We were in the middle of a school construction project and we had two priests that made St Philips feel like home. How blessed St Philips is to have two priests that care so much about our parish, each bringing different strengths. Father Chuck facilitated long range planning that the entire parish took part in. The school has experienced growth. St Philips held a successful capital campaign in which we have the resources to complete an addition to the school, to improve our cemetery, and acquire property that sustains the long-term goals of St Philips. Father Bryan came at a time when many were hurting with the retirement of Father Don and his debilitating disease. He brought us lengthy homilies but more than that he brought passion. He brought scripture to life. He challenged us to be better Catholic Christians. He held a highly attended Lenten series that sparked a desire in many to learn and to grow in our faith. He brought energy to our school and our youth. It is clear that each priest used their God-given gifts to bring their best to our parish.

We need to reunite our family and we need to show that we are standing together. We won't stand for taking away a beloved priest, especially from our parish when we are hurting. The first step that will start the healing is to right the wrong with Father Bryan and to bring Father Bryan back to St Philips. We need to move to action. In our efforts, we will unite. Through prayer and petition we can will come together to make a difference. Our hope is that everyone here will sign a petition to support Father Bryan's return to St Philips. We need the support of St Philips, parishioners, school families, staff, as well as our Catholic brothers and sisters of the Diocese. You may also have seen an address for Father Bryan in Pennsylvania on Social media. He does not want cards, gifts, or anything sent. What he wants are prayers. A message Father Bryan sent to a parishioner said "I don't need anything except so many prayers. They are really working, I am grateful but need more."

Please join in singing "Lord I Need You"

When faced with challenges, it is difficult to stay positive. That is a challenge for all of us but we've dwelled in the negative for too long. We need to remain positive and forward thinking. We have resources for you to take with you. During this time, keeping Father Bryan close to our hearts will help give us strength. There are links to Father Bryan's homilies, links to videos he has posted on a variety of topics, and prayers. There are notecards in the social hall for you to write your ideas, comments, concerns. I hope that you had an opportunity to pick up a copy of "Letter to a Suffering Church" that was available after Mass this weekend. We think this book can provide valuable discussion in the healing of our parish. The Knights of Columbus are serving soup and sandwiches in the Social Hall. Please take this time to have discussions with one another. I challenge you to keep your conversations positive and forward thinking. We hope to build off of this first night and come together again as we reunite our parish. We need to learn from our past but look to the future. We need to return to a place where our discussions are about Jesus instead of about scandal.

Parishioners in Crookston began the Mary Undoer of Knots Novena prayers on the day Father Bryan left for Pennsylvania. Tonight we will pray the first day of the Novena. The most recent information says that Father Bryan's evaluation in Pennsylvania will take 2 weeks. Beginning the Novena prayers this evening, we will complete the last prayer on his last day at the treatment facility. There is a link to the prayers on the resource table and there are printed copies of the prayers for anyone who does not have computer access. Elizabeth is going to lead us in the Novena Prayer.

In closing, we want to share something Father Bryan recently wrote to the Knights of Columbus: A simple prayer comes to mind as I write to you. This prayer is called The Jesus Prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy me, a sinner." There is a tradition of repeating this prayer over and over while sitting in a quiet place. It's a great way to get "lost" in meditation while simply calling upon the name of the Lord. As Christians we believe St. Paul is speaking truth in Philippians 2: 10-11 when he says "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father." I love the Jesus Prayer. In fact, at each Mass, during the consecration, when I am elevating the Body and Blood of Jesus for all to adore, I recite this prayer in the silence. I'd encourage you to do the same.

We will close with reciting the Jesus Prayer. We will repeat it and gradually fade to silence at which time you may continue repeating The Jesus Prayer in silence or stay and remain in prayer for as long as you would like. When you are ready to leave, please leave quietly so not to disturb others. In the Social Hall, please take a resource page, sign the petition, leave comments and partake in the wonderful food and fellowship, courtesy of the Knights. .