

## Stephen F. Parisi



August 15, 2019

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Bishop Richard J. Malone, Th.D.  
Catholic Center - Diocese of Buffalo  
795 Main Street  
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Bishop Malone, Father Creagh, Clergy and Seminarians at Christ the King Seminary:

After much prayer, spiritual direction, and reflection, I am writing this letter to notify you of my **immediate withdrawal** from the Program of Priestly Formation of the Diocese of Buffalo.

Before coming to Christ the King Seminary, I served this diocese for 24 years as a consecrated religious Brother, caring for the poor, the sick and the dying, including many priests of this diocese, many with very troubled histories. I expected to continue my service to the diocese as a diocesan priest, but I cannot ignore the alarming and problematic governance of the Diocese of Buffalo and Christ the King Seminary. My parents instilled in me a basic sense of faith and morals. I have come to the realization that the values and morals of this seminary and diocese do not correspond to my own.

I realize that my departure may come as a surprise to some, but considering all that the seminarians have endured last semester, including the recent news of the past few weeks concerning a seminarian who was allegedly sexually pursued by his confessor, Father Jeffrey Nowak, I cannot, in conscience, pursue a priestly vocation within this diocese. The manner in which this case has been handled by the diocese, as well as the manner in which so many of the other clerical sexual abuse cases have been handled is disgusting and revolting. I am confident that you understand why I have come to this decision. How could I commit my life to representing a diocese that is suspected of being so corrupt that it is being investigated by the federal government under the R.I.C.O. Act?

To my fellow seminarians, you know that I have tried my best to change some things for the better during my short time at Christ the King. I have tried to improve the seminarian health insurance coverage and I have advocated for improvement in stipends so that seminarians can meet their personal monthly living expenses. As dean of seminarians, I tried to obtain some compassionate understanding from professors regarding the obligation of pre-theology students

to submit final assignments for non-credit courses at the end of the extremely difficult and scandalous last semester. In addition, I have tried to improve a sense of pastoral understanding and compassion between professors and seminarian students, especially regarding the rigorous schedule and responsibilities that are placed upon seminarians.

I am sure you will hear stories about a final paper that I submitted for a non-credit pre-theology class. I would like to address this issue myself to prevent any misunderstandings. Before I wrote my paper, a seminarian asked that I proofread his paper. He used the *Kindle* version of the text and I decided to use the same version. The quotes my classmate used corresponded to the topic I wanted to write about so I used the same quotes, in the same order but used my own thoughts and words to explain the quotes. As you know, my parents have serious health issues and were hospitalized during the summer and all of us had a very chaotic year and semester, so much so that Father Andrew Lauricella, director of vocations and seminarians, informed Bishop Malone that he was concerned for our physical, emotional and spiritual health because of the hostile and chaotic environment of the seminary. I rushed to complete this paper and unfortunately, I forgot to put the opening summary in my own words. This was my fault, and I accept full responsibility for this error. I do not yet know what my penalty will or would have been.

Before I leave, I would ask each of you to have the courage to continue to advocate for holiness and positive change by demanding accountability from this seminary and diocese. Remember that YOU are the gift to the diocese during this chaotic time! Continue to call for respect for your basic human rights. Do not settle for less! YOU are the future of the Church and this diocese should be eager to invest in its future by treating each of you accordingly!

Seminarians know that Christ the King has a long history of forcing seminarians to repeat courses that a seminarian has already successfully passed for official credit. If you are ever in this situation, please be courageous and speak up. This is fraud and academic abuse. You have a fiduciary responsibility to inform your respective seminarian director and bishop so that your diocese is not paying for you to take a course that you have already successfully received credit for.

All of the seminarians either witnessed or at least heard of the following examples of unacceptable treatment that seminarians have dealt with at Christ the King. I will not name those who committed these offensive behaviors but these examples are certainly not considered Christian or professional behavior, especially in our current Church environment. Demand that formation directors and professors:

**STOP** with insensitive and sarcastic remarks against a seminarian who had the courage to share his ongoing abuse story with you. A good Father and Formation Director should be sympathetic and should do anything to help and defend someone under his care who has been abused by the Church.

**STOP** allowing priests to use information obtained in the confessional to blackmail seminarians or anyone else, for that matter.

**STOP** the power struggles that seminarians see existing between staff members, formation and students.

**STOP** discouraging seminarians from asking probing questions because they are afraid of being branded as a heretic in their annual review. If a seminarian does not fully understand a concept, how can he grow in his understanding of the faith and adequately answer questions as a priest?

**STOP** encouraging seminarians to drink fine Scotch so that their minds can loosen up enough to better comprehend philosophy. We know from last semester's accident that at least one seminarian struggled with alcohol. He was provided with alcohol by the seminary and tragically crashed through a neighbor's house, causing extensive damage to their house, attracting media attention, incurring a D.W.I., and totaling a seminary car.

**STOP** breaking federal and state liquor laws by *selling* alcohol without a license in the seminarian soda bar.

**STOP** making vulgar remarks to a class about what it sounded like for a female country music star to urinate while in police custody.

**STOP** encouraging seminarians to shoot or break the kneecaps of protestors and/or the press. This will only cast an even more negative image of the church and diocese which many believe to be suffering the effects of incompetent leadership.

**STOP** asking for honest reflection papers and then disagree in anger over a seminarian's honest opinion of the reading. Not only did one professor take personal offense to a student's reflection, he threatened public humiliation and retaliated by giving an unfair grade for an oral exam.

**STOP** assigning pointless and tedious papers that do not help students comprehend class material and then not return work with valuable feedback.

**STOP** harassing seminarians who try to perform their chores responsibly while only receiving a very small stipend which does not nearly cover weekly and monthly expenses.

**STOP** sending seminarians on seminary appeals without providing gas cards and mileage reimbursement.

**STOP** sending seminarians on summer assignments when they do not even make minimum wage and still cannot afford basic weekly and monthly living expenses. How can leaders of our Church preach that it is a basic human right for people to make a livable wage, yet fail to provide their own seminarians with enough money to meet monthly expenses?

**STOP** sending seminarians on summer assignments only to perform menial tasks instead of learning pastoral skills.

**STOP** neglecting to provide essential spiritual formation such as classes in personal prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours which is so vital to the life of the clergy.

**STOP** neglecting to provide classes in basic manners, etiquette, and community living skills.

**STOP** assigning endless papers, so much so that spiritual and human needs are neglected.

**STOP** disrespecting essential time needed time for rest, prayer, discernment and reflection.

**STOP** using the seminary as a dumping ground for (some) priests who have problems with their personalities and pastoral skills. Seminarians who are natives of the Buffalo diocese often know the troubled personal history of some individual priests placed on the formation team.

I do not know if the seminary or diocese will ever change for the better. Perhaps it will with your holiness and commitment. But I urge you to remember that if inhumane, harassing or illegal behavior continues, you can file Title IX complaints directly with the State without going through the seminary. Considering how the “leak” interrogations were handled after last semester’s pizza party event, please continue to record any and all conversations and meetings with seminary staff and formation directors. NY State law only requires one party to consent to being recorded and you do not need to disclose that you are recording them. And if all else fails, you can contact Charlie Specht from WKBW Channel 7 at this web address <https://www.wkbw.com/about-us/contact-us> or by calling (716) 845-6100 or by calling Charlie’s [REDACTED] Charlie is very sympathetic to what seminarians are going through, especially as his own brother is a Franciscan seminarian. He will keep your name and information in strictest confidence.

Father Andrew Lauricella encouraged many seminarians to reach out to Charlie Specht in the past, and I would encourage you to do this also. Father Andrew also strongly encouraged us to contact law enforcement if we should be subject to or witness clerical abuse while on summer or pastoral assignments. I know of at least one other seminarian who has personally reached out to the F.B.I. after last semester’s scandals.

I close by thanking Bishop Malone and the formation team for my time at Christ the King. The most valuable lessons I have learned at the seminary have not included how to properly write a paper, or even how to nurture a personal prayer life. By observing the behavior of most (not all) priests on the formation staff, I have learned how **not** to treat people.

If there is any doubt regarding the veracity of the examples cited above, documentation, witness testimony and other forms of evidence have been retained.

Bishop Malone, for the love of God and for the sake of the faithful of the Diocese of Buffalo, please step down!

In Christ,

Stephen F. Parisi

Dean of Seminarians

Seminarian of the Diocese of Buffalo

CC: Cardinal Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer

*Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.*

Cardinal Marc Armand Ouellet, P.S.S.

*Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops*

Cardinal Beniamino Stella

*Prefect of the Congregation of the Clergy*

Archbishop Christophe Pierre

*Papal Nuncio, United States of America*

Cardinal Timothy Dolan

*Metropolitan of New York*

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo

*President, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*

Cardinal Sean O'Malley, OFM, Cap.

*Archbishop of Boston*

Bishop Edward Grosz

*Auxiliary Bishop of Buffalo*

Bishop Douglas Crosby, O.M.I.

*Bishop, Diocese of Hamilton*

Bishop Terry LaValley

*Bishop, Diocese of Ogdensburg*

Bishop Arthur Serratelli

*Bishop, Diocese of Paterson*

Bishop Gerard Bergie  
*Bishop, Diocese of St. Catherines*

Bishop Douglas Lucia  
*Bishop, Diocese of Syracuse*

Rev. Peter Karalus  
*Vicar General, Diocese of Buffalo*

Sister Regina Murphy, S.S.M.N.  
*Chancellor, Diocese of Buffalo*

Rev. Andrew Lauricella  
*Director of Seminarians & Vocations, Diocese of Buffalo*

Rev. Robert Wozniak  
*Vice Rector & Director of Formation, Christ the King Seminary*

Rev. Joseph Rogliano  
*Pastor, St. Mark/St. Rose of Lima, Buffalo*

Steven Halter  
*Director of Professional Responsibility, Diocese of Buffalo*