



November 2, 2007

Mayor James J. Schmitt
City of Green Bay
100 North Jefferson Street
Room 200
Green Bay, WI 54301-5026

Your Honor:

As you may know, upon the departure of Bishop David Zubik, His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI asked that I serve as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Green Bay until a new bishop is appointed. I approach you now with respect and goodwill.

I have been closely following the discussions and proposed actions to aid those homeless in Green Bay who fall outside of the qualifications of other shelters that serve the community so well. I thank you, your staff, the Green Bay City Council, and all of the individuals and organizations who have worked so hard to try to arrive at a solution to provide shelter for these individuals before the cold of our Wisconsin winter arrives. I also want you to know that I share your frustration and disappointment that some solution for adequate shelter could not be achieved.

The Catholic Church of course has a moral imperative to serve those who are in need. This mandate is rooted in the Bible, the teaching of Jesus, and the Tradition of our faith.

The prophet Isaiah instructed the people of his time that the Lord expects His followers to share food with the hungry and give shelter to the oppressed and the homeless (Is 56:7). In His discourse on the final judgment, Jesus describes the righteous as those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome to the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the ill, and visit the imprisoned (Mt 25:35-36), and He said "that which you do for the least among you, you do for me" (Mt 25:40). In the letter of James, we hear, "If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (Jas 2:14).

This ministry to the poor and homeless has been consistently and emphatically taught by the Catholic Church for the past two thousand years. For example, the late Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical letter, *On Social Concern*, that "the motivating concern for the poor -- who are, in the very meaningful term, 'the Lord's poor' -- must be translated at all levels into concrete actions, until it decisively attains a series of necessary reforms. Each local situation will show what reforms are most urgent and how they can be achieved." (§ 43) He also went on to write in his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "As the unequivocal words of the Gospel remind us, there is a special presence of Christ in the poor, and this requires the Church to make a preferential option for them". (§ 49). Our current Pontiff also emphasized the exercise of charity as one of the Catholic Church's essential activities: "Love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind is as essential to her [the Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel." (Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Deus caritas est*, 22)

Here at home, the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Green Bay incorporated this mandate into its own mission statement by including the necessity of the faithful to "compassionately serve those in need."

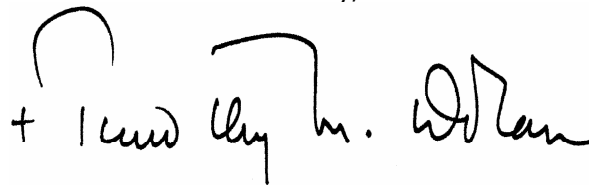
It is clear that ministry and service to the poor and homeless is an essential part of our mission as the Church. Because the City of Green Bay and the Church of Green Bay currently face a situation that does not provide a viable option for the homeless who do not qualify for care with current agencies, the Catholic Church feels obliged to fulfill its gospel mandate and moral imperative to serve these people as best we can. It would be very difficult for us to put people out in the cold or refuse them admission. After consultation with Bishop Robert Morneau and Bishop Robert Banks, I have asked Deacon Timothy Reilly, Diocesan Director of Administration, to study and implement whatever measures are helpful to ensure that the safety and well being of the homeless are met. He has informed me that the best temporary shelter for these individuals is at the site of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Parish, through the utilization of its former school building.

I also understand that, regrettably, the St. John facility did not receive the zoning variance for which it petitioned. We know and respect the diligence that you and others have demonstrated in trying to find common ground to serve the homeless. Our action is being taken only because the homeless currently have no other place to turn. Further, I believe that our action is consistent with the First Amendment rights of the Catholic Church to fulfill its essential ministry, and am advised that there is judicial precedent to protect that (cf: Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church v. City of New York, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, 2nd Circuit, 2002).

In my conversations with diocesan personnel, I understand that there is widespread support in the wide community to help individuals who are homeless. I hope that our action will be honored in the spirit in which it is meant. Please be assured that our efforts are not intended to be disobedient or confrontational, but only as sincere efforts to continue working with you and the city to meet obligations to the homeless. I pledge our prayers and support to the continued exploration of a long-term resolution to the care of the homeless, and hope we can continue to cooperate and dialogue with you and other officials.

With gratitude for your leadership, and prayerful best wishes, I am,

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy M. Dolan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Apostolic Administrator, *sede vacante*
Diocese of Green Bay