



March 18, 2015

Bishop George Lucey's Response to Fr. Anthony Lipari's Laicization

Recently the Archdiocese of Newark published an article about Fr. Anthony Lipari's laicization, which appeared on the Archdiocese of Newark's webpage. Bishop O'Connell of the Trenton Diocese followed suite and re-published the article in the Trenton Diocese. Now I understand that Archbishop Myers has ordered the article to be published in the bulletins of the parishes where Fr. Anthony had served.

I was struck by both its mean-spirited tone and its misrepresentation of the facts. It is patently untrue that Fr. Anthony abandoned the Roman Catholic Church. He was asked to leave by Archbishop Myer's Vicar General, despite the fact that his record in the Archdiocese was stellar.

In accord with Catholic teaching on the ontological character of his ordination, Fr. Anthony has continued his priesthood in the American National Catholic Church in order to honor his vocation to serve the People of God.

So the supercilious and hurtful tone of the Archbishop's announcement about Fr. Anthony slanders a good priest. But more to the point, such untrue and slanderous public statements have negative consequences for the American National Catholic Church in the United States. As you well know, the Roman Catholic Church has no authority in the United States to determine who and who cannot call themselves Catholic. The word "Catholic" is not Rome's exclusive property.

On a personal note, I think the prominent placement of the notice of Fr. Anthony's laicization on the webpage of the Archdiocese is meant to imply that Fr. Anthony poses some threat to the Roman Catholics of the Archdiocese. My pastoral education taught me that such matters are properly handled using the internal forum rather than public forum. For the Archbishop to publicly announce a laicization in order to insinuate that Fr. Anthony is a threat to Roman Catholic laity is surprising at best and the least Christ-like action he could have taken.

We believe the American National Catholic Church was called into being by the Holy Spirit. We neither are nor wish to be in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. Yet Archbishop Myers and Bishop O'Connell of the Trenton diocese have on several occasions very publicly pronounced our priests and sacraments to be invalid. I doubt that these two prelates would publish the same about Episcopalian, Methodist, Coptic, or Polish National Catholic clergy.

Given the continuous scandal of Archbishop Myers extravagant spending on his personal residence, the less than transparent manner in which he addressed the sexual abuse of children in the archdiocese with the Michael Fugee case, the People of God would be justified in having more doubt about the validity of Orders in the Roman Catholic Church than in the American National Catholic Church.

Ironically, the churlishness of public comments by Roman Catholic prelates only further damages the already poor perception of the Roman Catholic Church in Newark, serving to drive many former Roman Catholics into the arms of the American National Catholic Church. As the old adage goes, "there is no such thing as negative press," and the ANCC continues to reap the benefits of these unhappy public attempts at power and control.

Yours In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Most Rev. George R. Lucey, FCM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Rev. George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop