



March 16, 2022

Michael Hichborn President
Lepanto Institute
PO Box 269
Partlow, VA 22534

Dear Mr. Hichborn:

Thank you for your detailed reply to my letter of February 9, 2022. I appreciate your stating the suppositions that are the source of the Lepanto Institute's skepticism concerning the Association of US Catholic Priests. I would like to begin my reply by correcting the mistaken assumptions of the institute.

The bishop of the Diocese of Toledo is not the ordinary of AUSCP. While our Executive Secretary does operate out of the location of her residence as a religious, as I do out of mine in Notre Dame, Indiana, the association is incorporated in Chicago, Illinois. We do not have a national office, per se, but do business wherever the persons doing it are located. The Cardinal Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago does not share the opinion of Bishop Thomas.

Ms. Beverly Bingle, who I do not know, is not now, nor has she ever been, a representative of AUSCP. As I understand it, she belonged to a local Toledo peace and justice group, which included some members of AUSCP. That group no longer exists.

AUSCP was not among the sponsors of Fr. Helmut Schuller's speaking tour in 2013, nor have we ever officially harbored him or anyone else. His tour was sponsored by Call to Action, Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, CORPUS, DignityUSA, FutureChurch, National Coalition of Religious Nuns, New Ways Ministry, Voice of the Faithful, Quixote Center, and Women's Ordination Conference (*National Catholic Reporter*, June 3, 2012). Incidentally, while individual ordinaries do have the authority to forbid persons from speaking on church property located in their dioceses, they have no such authority over any other venues.

The remainder of your letter asks for a response to 15 questions you have formulated. My response is simply this: AUSCP has not taken a pro or con position on any of these issues, nor can I foresee us ever doing so. As an association, we are only answerable for positions made by consensus of the membership at an annual assembly.

I am pleased that neither you nor the institute are accusing AUSCP of canonical heresy. We are extremely careful lest any of our positions or statements directly contradict Church dogma. We have and will continue to speak out for due and just processes for any priests, members or not, who have been accused of any canonical violation by Church authorities. This is quite different from supporting any or all their personal positions. In addition, we will continue to advocate for synodal discussions on matters of concern to the Church as a whole.

You dislike my mention of slander. Both our corporations need to be careful lest we are guilty of the sin of detraction, which is the unjust damaging of another's good name by a lessening of reputation or esteem especially by envious, malicious, or petty criticism. I promise to monitor our communications in that regard.

Sincerely yours,

(Rev.) Stephen P. Newton, CSC
Executive Director