

**1983-1984 Correspondence and Meeting Minutes with Most Reverend
John Keating, Bishop of Arlington**

1983 letter to bishop asking for meeting

1983 December 13 to bishop – celebrate in Franklin Sherman School

1983 December 22 – from bishop

1984 August – minutes from the meeting with bishop

July 17, 1983
4603 Cheltenham Drive
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

Bishop-Elect John R. Keating
Chancery Office of the Archdiocese of Chicago
P. O. Box 1979
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Dear Bishop-Elect Keating:

We approach you in a spirit of hope at a time of great despair. We represent the Pax Community, a group of approximately 250 Catholics of Northern Virginia. Pax is a family-oriented faith community whose reason for being is to plan and celebrate Sunday liturgies. For fourteen years Pax has been an integral part of the St. Luke Parish in McLean, Virginia.

Over the past three years deteriorating relations with the parish have brought the community to the point of crisis. The weekend before the announcement of your appointment as Bishop of Arlington the community had concluded that it must leave St. Luke's and take the community worship to a non-parish, non-church setting. This was a tearfully painful decision because Pax was founded to be a group devoted to liturgical planning within the parish structure. Many of us have been very active in our parish. Nevertheless, frustration and despair had moved us to decide to leave. Your being named bishop led us to defer our action and to attempt to present our situation to you in the hope of timely redress.

Although we recognize that your arrival in Northern Virginia is imminent, the community's despair and our need to act decisively in the near future to save our community moves us to request a 30 to 60 minute meeting with you prior to your installation. We are prepared to come to Chicago to meet with you at any time (day or night, weekday or weekend).

Attached is a history of the Pax community. We appreciate that in this hectic time it is unlikely you will be able to read the entire package. The two parts we hope you can address are the 13 page summary, the first item in the package, and the section supplied as Attachment 15, which summarizes the relations with our pastor over the past few years.

We will call about an appointment within a day or so or Pax can be contacted through the Chair of the Steering Committee, Kathryn A. Bissell, home phone (301) 652-2463 or (6:00 P.M. to 6:30 A.M. Eastern Daylight Saving Time) or work phone (202) 634-3290 or (301) 634-4140 (7:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., EDST).

Respectfully yours,

Kathryn A. Bissell
Chair of the Steering Committee
for the Pax Community

JOHN D. HUSHON
1050 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036-5339
(202) 857-6290

December 13, 1983

Bishop John R. Keating
Chancery Office of the Diocese of Arlington
200 N. Glebe Road
Arlington, Virginia 22203

Dear Bishop Keating:

Several weeks have passed since we last met and talked with you, and many decisions have been made by The Pax Community during that time.

After our last contact and a PAX general meeting, members of the Community informed Fr. Hughes and St. Lukes that PAX could not continue to support the late Saturday evening liturgy at St. Lukes. We immediately commenced negotiations for a location at which to celebrate on Sunday morning.

On the feast of Christ the King, PAX celebrated its first liturgy - a concelebrated liturgy of great joy - at the Franklin Sherman School in McLean. About 220 attended that Mass, including many families which had found the Saturday evening liturgy impossible. Masses since then have been attended by about 150 people, with some different families each week.

We have made arrangements for the school location through at least November 1984. Our celebrants are those whose names were previously given to you. We have arranged for musicians, vestments and the other necessary physical needs of the liturgy. We appear to be financially secure and are searching for outreach opportunities.

PAX has tried to make it clear to its members (and to those outside PAX) that circumstances have forced us to celebrate our liturgies outside the parish, but we have not urged anyone to withdraw from the parishes in which they are registered. In fact, many members of PAX remain active in those parishes as lectors, committee members, communion distributors and financial supporters. Many continue to hope for future reconciliation within an established parish.

Bishop John R. Keating
December 13, 1983
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Meanwhile, and as she indicated to you on the telephone, Sr. Kevin Bissell is working with other members of the Community and certain experts from Catholic University on a presentation to you suggesting a formal status under Canon law for The Pax Community.

We hope to be able to meet with you in a few months when that work is complete. In the meantime, we wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your time, your understanding and your wishes for us as we pursue our community-building and liturgy planning. We look forward to further discussions and perhaps the opportunity to celebrate a liturgy with you.

Sincerely yours,

John D. Hushon
For the PAX Steering
Committee

cc: Fr. John Hughes
The Pax Community



Chancery Office

SUITE 704
200 NORTH GLEBE ROAD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22203
(703) 841-2500

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 22, 1983

Mr. John D. Hushon
1050 Connecticut Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

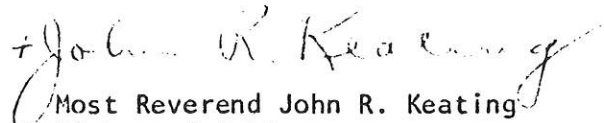
Dear Mr. Hushon:

Thank you very much for your initiative in writing to me under date of December 13, 1983. You inform me that the PAX Community has decided to sponsor the celebration of Mass on Sundays at the Franklin Sherman School in McLean. I understand that you invite priests of your choosing to come to preside at these liturgies.

I hasten to acknowledge your letter lest the legal axiom "Qui tacet consentire videtur" mislead people into thinking that these actions have the approval of the Bishop of Arlington.

My invitation always stands, that you rejoin the larger worshiping community and bring to us the benefit of your deep religious sense.

Devotedly yours in Christ,


Most Reverend John R. Keating
Bishop of Arlington

MEMORANDUM OF MEETING

Attended by: Bishop Keating, K. Bissell, T. Campbell,
J. Delker, J. Hushon

Friday, August 10, 1984, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

The meeting commenced on a friendly and cordial note. The Bishop spoke of his recent visit to Rome and we remarked about the favorable publicity which had appeared in connection with his first anniversary as Bishop of Arlington. The Bishop had before him our petition and one page of typewritten notes (which later appeared to be commentary on Canon Law which we had cited in the petition). He also had a copy of the new Canon Law.

When conversation turned to the petition, (BK *Bishop Keating*) complimented us on the preparation of the text and stated that first he would like to turn to the law - and then we could discuss "matters of the heart." He told us that he had once again spoken to Fr. Hughes.

He then reviewed one by one the three non-parish affiliation options we had presented:

1. Non-territorial (he used the word "personal")
2. Quasi-parish
3. Non-parish

In his view, the overall structure of the new Canon Law utilizes the normal, territorial "community" of the parish as a building block of Christian life, cites an "end to experimentation" and emphasizes the "normalcy" of the Sunday morning parish Mass. The types of status which we had suggested were basically "aberrations" for specific purposes, for example:

new mission-type groups which would become a parish in the future

- temporary gatherings of Christians out of necessity (military base, colleges)
- "parishes" for special purposes such as communities of clerics, etc.

We spoke about these examples and how PAX fit or did not fit. He told us that he was "not convinced" that PAX fit into one of these categories, although he admitted he could make such

a finding of fact if he wanted to. He also stated that he could find no basis in the law for the "pastor" to be other than a single priest. [Discussion then digressed into his first pastoral letter due this fall on the proper role of laity parish advisory boards in parish life.] He rejected the shared lay-priest responsibility concept of governance suggested in the petition.

BK then stated that even if he were convinced of our Canon Law position, he was personally convinced of the desirability of the parish unit and was not willing to introduce this new concept to his diocese. He talked about other groups like ours who might want to follow and the pressing needs of refugee Catholics in the diocese for special consideration.

We then talked about reaffiliation with St. Luke and reviewed our experience. While emphasizing the "rights" of the pastor repeatedly, BK did admit that many pastors were accommodating to their parishioners - even outside the strictures of Canon Law. He seemed to accept that present reaffiliation was not possible since he moved the discussion to present status by asking "since only a few of your members seem to require an official recognition and there is nothing wrong with what you do, why not keep on with what you are doing?" He then said, "I expect that you will keep on doing what you are doing after today."

Jean Delker then initiated a discussion of needs for the sacraments. BK reviewed the Canon Law rights of all Catholics - practicing, attending, contributing or not - to access to the sacraments in their territorial parishes. We talked about St. Luke's historic position as a "magnet" for parishioners outside its territorial boundaries. BK said he knew some pastors would serve "regular" parishioners from outside the boundaries, but indicated there was no legal right to demand this.

We then talked about comments that the PAX Mass did not fulfill the Sunday obligation. BK stated that "without question" attendance at Mass celebrated by a priest with faculties fulfilled the Sunday obligation. He stated that he had the power to stop the PAX Mass but did not intend to try to do so.

In summary, BK asked that we "be patient" since ultimately he believes the solution will entail reaffiliation with a territorial parish. He repeatedly complimented us on our initiative and spiritual commitment. Repeatedly he used words like - "Of course, you will go on." "I expect you will go on." In almost an offhand way, BK suggested that PAX might wish to consider forming itself into a formal group of church faithful - with a specific purpose - akin to a brotherhood or sisterhood, in which case a special case could be made under Canon Law.

He clearly gave us the very strong impression that although he would not sanction or authorize PAX officially, he hoped we would go on and suggested he would not try to stop us. He seemed not to accept the fact that PAX had a "problem" although he did seem to accept that there was a strong animosity emanating from the pastor toward PAX.

We, in turn, committed not "to embarrass" him by claiming sanction. There was a clear understanding of our mutual positions and respect, a hope for the future. We promised to keep in touch and to search jointly with him for a resolution.