



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



**Statement to the Faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth by Bishop Michael F. Olson
in response to the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
upholding decisions regarding the Arlington Carmel**

May 22, 2024

On May 21, the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life informed me that it has upheld the decisions I made last year opening the investigation at the Arlington Carmel upon receiving information that Mother Teresa Agnes had violated the sixth commandment of the Decalogue and her vow of chastity, placing Mother Teresa Agnes on a leave of absence following her admissions of grievous misconduct, and admonishing the members of the Monastery that obstruction of the investigation could result in the imposition of penalties. All decisions were made for the good of Mother Teresa Agnes and the Arlington Carmel and its sisters, in accordance with my obligation under canon law and the *Rule* and *Constitutions* of the Arlington Carmelites as the local bishop.

The Dicastery has also informed me that it overturned the decree dismissing Mother Teresa Agnes from the Carmelite Order. Although the Dicastery acknowledged that Mother Teresa Agnes admitted to misconduct against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, they reasoned in part that her admission did not establish that the misconduct was “perpetrated by the exertion of force or violence.” Additionally, the Dicastery reasoned in part that her admission of misconduct did not establish abuse of her ecclesiastical authority of prioress, since she “possessed no real or even imagined authority” over her accomplice, a priest of the Diocese of Raleigh, since he was not “subject to Mother Teresa Agnes’ authority as Prioress.” This priest refused to cooperate with our investigation into the admissions made by Mother Teresa Agnes.

As the Bishop of Fort Worth, I was also obligated under *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* to report Father Philip G. Johnson, the Raleigh priest named by Mother Teresa Agnes as participating with her in the acts against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue and in violation of her vows. I made that report approximately one year ago and have regularly inquired about the progress of their investigation into the priest’s role in the misconduct revealed by Mother Teresa Agnes. I still await the results of the investigation into the misconduct I reported to the Diocese of Raleigh for the sake of transparency and accountability for all involved.

I am grateful that the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life recently entrusted the governance and oversight of the Arlington Carmel to Mother Marie of the Incarnation, President of the Association of Christ the King, of which the Arlington Carmel is a member. I am also grateful to Mother Marie of the Incarnation and the Association for accepting this extraordinary responsibility entrusted to her by the Holy See. This appointment by the Dicastery offers Mother Teresa Agnes the opportunity to seek restoration and recovery to live as a faithful

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member of the Carmelite Order in accordance with her religious vows but without the burdens of leadership that come with the office of prioress. It will also ensure that all the nuns within the monastery can be heard, rightly cared for and nurtured in their religious life in full communion with the Catholic Church. As their Bishop, I stand ready to pastorally assist the nuns of the Arlington Carmel.

I have known the Carmelites for more than 30 years, during which time I have prayed with them, offered Mass for them, and relied on their prayers for me. Their example of prayerful fidelity has for many years strengthened the mission of the Catholic Church in North Texas. I ask the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth and all people of good will to continue to pray for the Catholic Church in North Texas, including the Arlington Carmelites, as we persevere together in service to Christ by ministering to our community.

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