



VI ER OGSÅ KIRKEN

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**Congregazione per i Vescovi
Palazzo delle Congregazioni
Piazza Pio XII - 10
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Skibby, 21st July, 2003

Criticism of Bishop Kozon - Copenhagen- Denmark

Dear Sirs,

We are an association of Danish Catholics working a.o. for, that the spirit of the II. Vaticanum of freedom, openness, room for all and the will to reform, will get new power and possibility of spreading in our catholic area. Our name is "We are also the Church", and you can learn more about us on our homepage: www.veok.dk.

We want to draw your attention to an Episcopal procedure that worry us and many Danish Catholics, as it causes more problems than it solves, and will result in frustration and even lapsing amongst the members of the Church. An article in Kristeligt Dagblad (the daily Danish newspaper treating religious subjects) wrote on the 3-Jul-03 an article on the front page '**Castling of priests causes troubles**': On page 6, written by the journalist Bente Clausen, it reads:

"Czeslaw Kozon lays himself open to criticism for using undemocratic methods. CK has ordered 1/5 of the 80 catholic priests to move".

The article refers to an open letter from Mr. Leif Starostka (chairman of a parochial council) which – under the headline:

The catholic bishop has left six members of the parochial church counsel frustrated, angry and without any understanding why the bishop has decided to move their priest:
- reads as follows:

"Dear bishop Czeslaw Kozon,

I am writing to you on behalf of 6 members of the parochial church council elected by congregation of Church of Saint Knud (in the city of Fredericia in Jutland, translators comment).

We are writing to you because you decided to move our acting parish priest Michael Bienkowski to Taastrup (a town outside Copenhagen, translators comment) from 1-Aug-03. Michael has been in Fredericia for 3 years and I have emphasized to you what it meant to us again having a priest living with us in Fredericia and I also mentioned the marvellous work Michael has done for our congregation.

Øvrige bestyrelsesmedlemmer:

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We wish to hear your objective reasons of your decision. We have been told that Thomas Birkheuser, who is curate in Taastrup, feels disinclined to go to Fredericia. What are your reasons for moving Michael who has been acquainted with the congregation in Taastrup to Fredericia, while Michael, who is acquainted with us in Fredericia is ordered to Taastrup? I hope you will answer us and also in your mail state how often a congregation, in this case Fredericia, can expect to have a new priest. What are your fundamental views on this matter?

I can promise you that we will give Thomas a good reception if or when he arrives in Fredericia. Our letter is basically not about Thomas, our letter is about the democratic process in the Danish catholic church. We acknowledge your authority to make decisive decisions, but to put it mildly we disagree with your manner of making decisions. We believe in a dialogue, real dialogue, where the arguments have influence on the decisions and hence create respect in spite of differences of opinion. We, the congregation in Fredericia, feel that our reply to you about the removal of Michael is totally unimportant to you. We have not yet received a reasonable explanation of your decision.

Finally I want to inform you that you leave behind you six members of the parochial church council elected by the congregation in a state of frustration, angriness and with no understanding of your decision. We do not feel that you being our bishop attend to the interest of our congregation and unfortunately we do not even think matters will change!

Because we in this letter ask you fundamental questions that very well could be of importance to other congregations, we have sent the letter to Katolsk Orientering (the official Danish catholic bi-monthly newspaper, translators comment). However Katolsk Orientering refused to print the letter so we subsequently sent it to Kristeligt Dagblad.

Kind regards
Leif Starostka. +45 64 44 2553
Chairman of the Parochial Church Council
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(The article has been translated by Monique Buch)

Yours faithfully,
Vi er også kirken

Bent Raith
chairman

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