



Mary Magdalene Church

Dear Friends,

As some of you may remember, about 1½ years ago I was invited to be a part of a team of five women who were charged with the task of helping the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC) prepare a keynote and some workshops to present at the synod regarding sexism in the church. Being women within this institution, we had years of personal history in the Roman Catholic Church to draw from, but we were also aware that there were ways that sexism still lived within the ECC even despite its progressive and inclusive practices and beliefs. We were very aware that despite women being included as priests, deacons and in positions of leadership within the House of Laity and the House of Pastors, the Episcopal Council was entirely comprised of male bishops. Up to that point the ECC had not consecrated a woman as Bishop.

For years people in the ECC have said to me that they believed I would make a great Bishop, and for years I have said "No way, No how!" And I meant it!! However, the Holy Spirit has been working on my soul for this past 1½ years.

Recently the Presiding Bishop of the ECC, Bishop Frank Krebs, in conjunction with the leadership council, indicated the need for an auxiliary bishop to assist him in addressing the pastoral needs of a Communion that is stretched across the nation. At the end of September, the process of accepting nominations began, and as you probably have figured out by now, I was nominated to be considered for this position.

What you need to know:

First of all- I will NOT be leaving my position as pastor of MMC. I will still be here and still be leading the community. You also need to know that I do not see this as a done deal- EVEN IF I'm the only one nominated. I've indicated my openness to the nomination, but I see this as a discernment process and I will be praying deeply on this as it moves forward. It brings up many feelings in me. Many people have said that it is a big honor, and I do understand that, but for me it is more a question of whether or not this is my calling. I have definitely felt the Holy Spirit opening my heart to this over the past 18 months, and I'm feeling that movement still. Paramount for me in all of it is both my family and MMC. You need to know that I would not do anything that might negatively impact either one!!

The election is projected to be mid-December and the consecration would be sometime after the first of the year. And remember, for me, being open to the nomination does not mean that is the direction this is going to go in. There will likely be others nominated and one of them might be elected. I can tell you right now that if that happens, I will breathe a huge sigh of relief!!! On the other hand, the Spirit has also helped me to realize the ways my life has prepared me for this next step. Pat Moriarty told me recently that he felt the

Holy Spirit has been "grooming" me for this position. While I was humbled by his statement I also realized there are some ways this may be true.

Assuming I am elected:

It will require more travel to other parts of the United States to celebrate ordinations and confirmations, or to help communities that are struggling or in need of some support. I would have some control over the dates, as I will be working with the communities involved in finding a time that works for them and for me. However we slice it, that will mean that I will be away more often. Fortunately, we have some beautiful resources already within Mary Magdalene Church to provide coverage and support when I am out of town, both pastorally and in the day to day operation of the church!! Clearly, we will need to have conversations with everyone involved and we will take this one step at a time. All of this will call us to grow as a community, but I believe the community is ready for that growth.

In light of all of this, I have decided to take some retreat time to pray about it and work on some of the things I need to prepare for the ECC, including a statement of intent, an autobiographical statement and responses to some questions that will go to all of the delegates as the election draws near. My request is that you might join me in prayer throughout this week as well.

I'd also like to invite you to come to our Parish Community Forum next Sunday, Oct 15. We will have the opportunity at that time for questions and concerns, as well as time to process what this would mean for us.

I trust that we are on this journey together and I find great comfort in the fact that I'm not alone in it!! Your presence and your support is extremely important to me. I continually feel blessed to be your pastor and I find that you in turn pastor me more than you know!!

Much love

Rev. Denise Donato

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