

# Texas priest ends hunger strike against alleged racism

By Joe Michael Feist  
Catholic News Service

DALLAS — A Dallas diocesan priest who went on a hunger strike July 21 to protest what he said was racism in the diocese ended his fast July 28 after an emotional visit by Bishop Thomas Tschoepe of Dallas.

Father Justin Lucio, 46, a Mexican-American, began his protest fast two months after leaving his Dallas parish amid allegations of homosexual conduct and embezzlement of church funds.

Father Lucio, who had served as administrator of St. James Parish, has denied the allegations, saying racism is the real reason

he was ordered to leave the parish following a March 28 meeting with Bishop Tschoepe. In a July 19 statement, however, Bishop Tschoepe said the priest left the parish on his own accord.

The bishop persuaded Father Lucio to end his fast during a surprise visit to Casita Maria, a Hispanic aid center in Dallas where the priest had stayed during the protest.

Observers of the meeting said the bishop and priest embraced, spoke briefly and then, at the bishop's suggestion, drove to Our Lady of San Juan-Santa Teresita Church in Dallas to pray.

"I thank God and our Blessed Mother



CNS News  
Supporters of Father Justin Lucio picket the Dallas chancery office July 21. One woman (center) carried a sign that, in English, says, "Father Lucio is not alone."

that Father Justin Lucio today ended his fast and that true reconciliation took place," the bishop said in a statement.

The bishop reiterated earlier statements that Father Lucio was a priest in good standing and that allegations against him

"remain unsubstantiated."

Bishop Tschoepe said he merely suggested the priest take a leave of absence for rest and medical care. Father Lucio is a diabetic and suffers from ulcers. He has also undergone psychiatric treatment for what he has said was the trauma caused by the accusations.

During his fast, the priest complained that the diocese lacked a commitment to minority concerns and did not understand the needs of poor parishes. His supporters said he was the victim of racism.

In a statement released July 28, Father Lucio said he and the bishop "will continue to discuss and share concerns and ideas" regarding the diocese's mission in order to address "the needs of the impoverished and minority community."

Bishop Tschoepe said he hopes Father Lucio "will use the coming days to regain his physical strength and stamina."

# Ukrainian Catholics continue striking for religious freedom

By Greg Erlandson  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Ukrainian Catholics demanding legalization for their church were continuing a hunger strike in Moscow begun last May, the Rome headquarters of the Ukrainian Catholic Church said in late July.

The Ukrainian church's press bureau said that at any one time 20-30 hunger strikers were maintaining the demonstration in front of a Ukrainian-language bookstore in central Moscow.

Press spokeswoman Sonya Hlutkowsky said the hunger strikers were rotating every three or four days, with new strikers coming from the Ukraine to continue the public protest.

According to the bureau, Ukrainian priests began the strike in May after efforts to present a petition requesting religious freedom to high-ranking Soviet officials in Moscow failed.

The petition was signed by 14 Ukrainian Catholic clergymen. It pledged loyalty to the Soviet government, at the same time calling for a legalized church.

"The Catholic Church is not a political

organization which is leading the fight against the government," the petition said. "We support the rights and freedoms which are guaranteed by the Soviet constitution. That support strengthens our loyalty," it said.

The appeal was signed by Archbishop Volodymyr Sterniuk; Bishops Pavlo Vasylyk, Filemon Kurchaba and Sofron Dmyterko; nine priests and a monk.

The hunger strikers have sought to call attention to the suppressed church during the meeting of the newly elected Soviet parliament.

Ukrainian Catholics have become increasingly public in their efforts to gain recognition for their church. In June public prayer services were held in a number of Ukrainian cities and in Moscow. Pope John Paul II referred to the Ukrainian church case indirectly during his trip last June to Scandinavia.

Speaking of religion in the Soviet bloc while in Helsinki, Finland, he noted what he called the "regrettable cases of the total denial of religious freedom to communities of Eastern-rite Catholics."

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