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# Catholic Courier

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## Corpus Christi BLUES

### Can parish sing a new song?

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Since Bishop Matthew H. Clark removed Father James B. Callan last fall as pastoral administrator of Corpus Christi Church, Rochester, the parish has experienced great turmoil. This article is an update on the parish's status, as well as the status of those Corpus parishioners who have chosen to found a new church not affiliated with the Diocese of Rochester.

As she has done for years, Myra Humphrey sang with the Corpus Christi choir at the 11:30 a.m. Mass on Sunday, Jan. 31.

This would be unremarkable except for the fact that, back in December, she was fired from the parish staff by Tom Riley, the parish's part-time operations director. Humphrey had been the church's hospitality minister.

Riley fired Humphrey and five other parish employees for reportedly refusing to cooperate with the parish's pastor, Father Daniel McMullin, who had replaced Father James B. Callan as parish leader in October.

Father Callan was removed from the parish in September — and later suspended from the priesthood — by Bishop Matthew H. Clark for publicly defying church teachings on women's liturgical roles, ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics, and intercommunion with non-Catholics.

In the wake of his removal, several Corpus staff members either left the parish — as did former associate pastor Father Enrique Cadena, currently on leave from the priesthood — or were fired, as was Mary Ramerman, the parish's former pastoral associate. At Masses Jan. 30-31, Father McMullin announced that Sister Sue Hoffman, SSJ, would become interim pastoral associate, replacing Ramerman. Sister Hoffman, former pastoral associate at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece, began working at the parish Feb. 1.

Despite the turmoil at the parish, Humphrey said she and several other supporters of Father Callan plan to continue worshiping at Corpus.

"I've spent a lot of time with Jesus during this time," Humphrey told the *Catholic Courier* about her experiences during the past few months. "My prayer life has probably doubled," she said after the Jan. 31 liturgy.

Humphrey acknowledged that standing on the same altar with her former boss, Father McMullin, may make both of them feel a bit uncomfortable. Nonetheless, she believes that continuing to serve Corpus as a singer and parishioner is something her faith — a faith that entails reconciliation — calls her to do.

"I plan to keep singing and saying 'hello,'" the former hospitality minister said.

#### A new symphony?

Father McMullin wants to perform music at Corpus Christi as well — the music of parish harmony. He underscored that theme in a "State of the Parish" address he delivered to more than 400 people gathered in the church Jan. 28.

"Our musical score is the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church," Father McMullin said. "We are the instruments who will breathe new life into that tradition. And it is my privilege to have been called to lead this great local orchestra of faith."

However, Father McMullin would be the first to acknowledge that his orchestra has lost quite a few of its players.

In a Jan. 27 interview with the *Courier*, the priest pointed out that Corpus Christi's weekend Mass attendance averaged in excess of 2,000 people prior to his arrival, but now currently averages 900. Many, he acknowledged, have chosen to give their time and money to a community of former and current Corpus parishioners who have been holding services in a Rochester Protestant church on Thursday nights.

He also reported that a related decline in the parish's collections means Corpus will face a \$500,000 deficit when it ends its 1998-99 fiscal year June 30. The parish's budget exceeds \$2 million this year, he said.

He noted, however, that the deficit actually started accumulating prior to Father Callan's removal, but was exacerbated by the recent controversy.

The pastor also pointed out that at least \$100,000 of that deficit is attributable to subsidies the parish has extended to several of its outreach ministries. Riley pointed out that some parish ministries — including Isaiah House, a home for the dying — are financially self-sufficient.

Still, Father McMullin noted in his "State of the Parish" address that he could not promise to leave the parish's outreach ministries untouched in any austerity budgeting process.

#### Governance questions

Under Father Callan's leadership, many parish decisions were made during community forums in which all parishioners present voted on various issues. In an interview for this story, Father Callan told the *Courier* that on a number of issues, his position was voted down at a forum, and he acceded to the majority.

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People should be asking

themselves, "What is

God doing in all this?"

What is God trying to

invite us to? What is

God saying to

both sides in this?"

— Father James Hewes, Geneva

Story by Rob Cullivan