

KENNETH KHANH NGUYEN

2717 S. Center St., Santa Ana, CA. 92704 - 6005

Telephone: (714) 883-5383 - Email: kennguyen104@gmail.com

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Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann
800 West Loop 820 South
Fort Worth, Texas 76108-2919

Your Excellency:

I am a practicing Catholic and a Vietnamese community leader in Orange County. We are anxiously and excitedly looking forward to welcoming you as the new Bishop of Orange. I would like to call your attention to our concern about the mistreatment of Vietnamese priests, and lack of consideration to the interests of Vietnamese Catholics by Rev. Msgr. Mike Heher and other officials of the Diocese of Orange. The most recent example is the incident that happened at St. Barbara Church in early October of this year. This incident has caused concern and anguish to Vietnamese Catholics and community members in Orange County and also to other Vietnamese Catholics around the world. Requests made to the Diocese by several parishioners to better understand the situation have been ignored and gone unanswered. Additionally, I fear that letters addressed directly to you have not been forwarded and that this issue may have been intentionally kept from you. I wanted to confirm your awareness and respectfully request your consideration in this matter.

On October 7, 2012, several visiting priests read a letter by Rev. Binh Tien Nguyen, Secretary to the Bishop and Director of Clergy Personnel, announcing the removal of two Priests, Rev. Michael Mai Khai-Hoan and Rev. Raphael Xuan Nguyen from St. Barbara parish without any explanation (see attached). This action has caused significant alarm, panic, confusion, disruption and concern to parishioners of St. Barbara because there were several times where there was no priest to celebrate Mass, Masses that started late, a lack of priests for confessions, no available priest to conduct the sacrament of anointing the sick or no available priest to meet the needs of parishioners. Some Vietnamese news media started reporting on this issue and speculated about some wrong doing by these priests and the news rapidly causing surprise, confusion, concern and anguish to the Vietnamese Catholic community.

On October 9, 2012, in response to an invitation to attend the candlelight vigil rosary organized by the Vietnamese pastoral council of St. Barbara parish, I sent out an email inviting other Vietnamese Catholic members to attend and to pray for Fr. Mai Khai Hoan and Fr. Xuan Nguyen. Fr. Binh Nguyen incorrectly accused me of calling a protest against the decision by Msgr. Michael Hehre while Bishop Tod Brown was out of the diocese. He expressed concern that the "*parish's scheduled prayer will be used by outside people with their own agenda*" and that it would "*mislead*" the parishioners of St. Barbara providing "*miss-information*". (Please see attached communications). As evidenced by the gathering that evening, I was falsely accused of organizing a protest when in fact it was purely a peaceful time for prayer. I further believe that false accusations have also been made against Fr. Michael Mai Khai Hoan and Fr. Rafael Xuan Nguyen.

On October 14, 2012, Msgr. Mike Hehre issued a statement that indicated Rev. Michael Mai and Rev. Raphael Xuan Nguyen are priests in good standing (see attached). Instead of damage control, the announcement created more distress and frustration among

parishioners. More Vietnamese news media including local and national TV stations and internet forums voiced their concerns and wanted to know why their priests were suspended from pastoral duties without reason. Several respected Vietnamese community leaders also have raised their concerns (see attached letters).

The decision has caused severe damage to the honor, integrity and reputation of Rev. Michael Mai and Rev. Rafael Xuan Nguyen. We agonized when we first learned about the incident and became more frustrated when more and more harmful and fallacious rumors continued about the two Vietnamese priests. Their honor, integrity and reputation has been slandered by these very negative speculations and accusations related to misuse of money or inappropriate conduct that was totally false. Rev. Michael Mai is a highly respected priest in the Vietnamese community who has more than 42 years of serving our Lord, who is the highly praised Director of the Vietnamese Catholic Center in Orange County, who is the most admired Chair of the Vietnamese Interfaith Council in America, who founded the first and most successful Vietnamese council of Knights of Columbus on the West Coast and most importantly, he is a priest who always upholds the highest virtues of humility and obedience.

We feel that their human rights have been violated and this decision was not in the best interests of Vietnamese Catholics community in Orange County. Additionally, our concern is that this issue may cause detriment and harm not only to the individual priests involved, but also to the Diocese of Orange and to the Catholic Church.

We find that the Diocese's decision about Rev. Michael Mai and Rev. Rafael Xuan Nguyen was unjust. We are aware that this is a personnel and confidential matter, but we most humbly and respectfully ask for your help in easing the pain and suffering of our priests and Vietnamese Catholics by doing whatever is in your power to stop the rumors, innuendo and malicious gossip about Rev. Michael Mai and Rev. Raphael Xuan Nguyen. If both priests are in good standing as the Diocese has indicated, then the Diocese should take all necessary steps to restore their honor and return them to their pastoral duties as well as to regain the trust from the Vietnamese community toward the Diocese of Orange.

Many people wanted to raise their concerns to you and ask for your help, but they fear that it might create a negative feeling toward them or you might have a negative impression about the Vietnamese Catholic community in Orange County. However, I am a firm believer that, unlike Vietnam, this country is built on freedom of speech, democracy and human rights. Based on your record of achievements and accomplishments, I am confident that you would be willing to listen to the concerns of your parishioners and would do anything in your power to prevent any actions that may cause detriment and harm not only to the individual priests involved, but also to the Diocese of Orange and to the Church. As a devoted Catholic and community leader, I feel that it is my duty to bring this issue to your attention and to speak in support of our beloved priests who need someone to stand up for them and bring justice to the matter. If I can ever be of any assistance to you, please feel free to contact me at anytime as I would be happy to help in any way I can.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Khanh Nguyen', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Kenneth Khanh Nguyen