

Diocese of Savannah

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP



CATHOLIC PASTORAL CENTER
601 EAST LIBERTY STREET
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31401-5196

PHONE (912) 201-4080
FAX (912) 201-4081
Email: bishopsoffice@diosav.org

24 March 2011

Reverend Arthur B. Schute
AOSUSA Cruise Ship Priest
Board Representative
2500 Harbor Blvd
Port Charlotte, FL 33952

Dear Father Schute:

I am writing in response to your letter of March 17, 2011 to acknowledge your concerns about the future of AOSUSA's Cruise Ship Program ("Program"), which has encountered significant financial difficulties, most recently as a result of the steep decline in the number of Celebrity cruises requiring the services of Program priests. I appreciate the efforts AOSUSA has already made to reduce its Program operating expenses and understand that these have not been sufficient to enable AOSUSA to operate the Program on a break-even basis.

I also understand that AOSUSA had expected a response from USCCB earlier this year. Unfortunately, the USCCB consultative process has taken longer than anticipated. It remains my hope that USCCB's response will be forthcoming within the next few weeks. In order to enable AOSUSA to make necessary decisions regarding the future of the Program beyond 2011, I am able to tell you up front that USCCB has never designated funds for the support of the Program and that the Program is not part of USCCB priority planning through 2012. In addition, there remains a \$24,000 unpaid balance on the 2003 loan made by USCCB for AOSUSA's Program start-up expenses. Any requests by AOSUSA for Program funding or for forgiveness of the 2003 loan would have to be made through the normal USCCB budgetary process and would require approval of at least the USCCB Committee on Budget and Finance. There can be no guarantees that either funding or loan forgiveness would be forthcoming or even when such a decision would be made.

Although USCCB will respond to Fr. Oubre directly, I did want to share my assessment of the realities of the situation, given the decisions that will need to be made by the AOSUSA board of directors at its upcoming spring

Reverend Arthur B. Schute
March 23, 2011
Page Two

meeting. In their proper roles, members of the board must decide the Program's future in the best interests of AOSUSA. USCCB accepts that the board's decision may well be to discontinue the Program. Even so, Fr. Schute, I wish to express my gratitude to you for your dedicated efforts on behalf of this ministry. It often proves a difficult task to secure sufficient funding for such programs. In light of that, I understand that you and the board must take account of the current financial conditions as you plan for the future of the Program.

May the Spirit guide you in your deliberations.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Kevin Boland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Most Rev. J. Kevin Boland
AOS Bishop Promoter

cc: Sr. Myrna Tordillo
Fr. Allen Deck, SJ
Fr. Sinclair Oubre ✓
Msgr. Ronny Jenkins