

STATEMENT

When I became a bishop, I promised to maintain the deposit of faith, entire and incorrupt within the College of bishops under the authority of the Holy Father, successor of the Apostle Peter. I also promised to guide and sustain the people of God in the way of salvation.

Therefore, with this commitment in mind, to avoid any confusion, I need to clarify for the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama, the status of Father Leonard Giardina and the community of Christ the King Monastery, formed by him in Simcoe, Cullman County, Alabama.

Father Leonard Giardina had been an active Catholic monk at Saint Bernard's Abbey, Cullman, Alabama. He left the Abbey many years ago. My predecessor, Bishop Vath, withdrew the diocesan faculties and suspended him on May 21, 1981. Several years later on April 23, 1994, the Congregation for Religious in Rome confirmed the decree of dismissal of Father Leonard Giardina from the Benedictine Order.

When I arrived in Birmingham in May 1994, I visited Father Leonard. On my first visit, as well as on subsequent visits, I asked Father Leonard to be in union with me and with our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. He refused to be in communion with us or under our authority.

Father Leonard Giardina has separated himself and his community from my jurisdiction regarding the celebration of Mass and the pastoral care of the Catholic people in our diocese. He continues to function outside the Catholic Church.

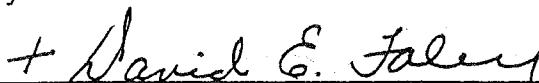
Therefore, with sadness, I must inform the Catholic Faithful under my care of the following declarations:

- The Masses celebrated by Father Leonard Giardina or other members of his community either at Christ the King Monastery, Simcoe, Alabama or other locations within or outside the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama are illicit. The Catholic Faithful do not fulfill their Sunday Obligation by attending them. Therefore, I advise the faithful that they should not attend these Masses.
- Neither Father Leonard Giardina nor other members of his community have the faculties of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama. Because they do not possess faculties, they cannot validly administer the Sacrament of Penance (hear Confessions), nor validly perform Roman Catholic marriages (Sacrament of Matrimony).

This situation of the invalidity of the reception of Sacraments is deeply disturbing to me because of the spiritual endangerment of our Catholic people.

I ask your prayers for Father Leonard Giardina and the Christ the King Community. I also ask prayers for myself. May Our Lord Jesus Christ in this final year of preparation for the Jubilee, a year for a return to the Father, bring about reconciliation and unity between us.

Date: September 1, 1999


Most Reverend David E. Foley, D.D.
Bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama