



July 6, 2008

Diocesan Priest Submits Resignation after New Allegation of Abuse

The Reverend Patrick J. O'Connor, a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, submitted a letter of resignation from the priesthood on June 6, 2008 after he was informed of a newly reported allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor in 1997 and placed on Administrative Leave. In accordance with Diocesan policy, the allegation of sexual misconduct was shared with civil authorities and given to the Diocesan Review Board, the independent body created to examine such matters.

Father O'Connor had previously been restricted to Administrative Leave from September 2003 through September 2007 following an unrelated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor. In its investigation of that allegation, The Diocese of Cleveland Review Board determined no instance of sexual abuse of a minor had been established and that there were no factors shown which should prevent Fr. O'Connor's return to priestly ministry.

As required by the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms* of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the matter was presented to the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for review and determination. The Congregation concluded that Fr. O'Connor was to be allowed to exercise priestly ministry. Subsequently, Father O'Connor was appointed Chaplain to the Sisters of the Most Holy Trinity and Chaplain to Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, both located in Euclid in the fall of 2007. At the time of reinstatement, the Diocese determined that given society's sensitivities regarding the placement of a returning cleric to public ministry following such an allegation, it was appropriate, with regard to those sensitivities, to gradually return Fr. O'Connor to ministry and at that time restrict his access to children.

Upon receiving the most recent allegation, the Diocese of Cleveland submitted all information to the Lorain County Prosecutor. The Diocese was then asked by the investigating authority, the Elyria Police Department, to refrain from making any public announcements of Fr. O'Connor's removal from ministry and his resignation from the priesthood until their investigation was completed. The Diocese cooperated, having immediately disclosed all information to the law enforcement agency, and awaited an acknowledgment from the Lorain County Prosecutor that it would be appropriate to make a public disclosure of this allegation.

The Diocese of Cleveland remains committed to the protection of children and young people and reminds everyone that such allegations of clergy misconduct should be reported via email at response_services@dioceseofcleveland.org or by calling 216-334-2999, as well as any law enforcement agency.