



# SNAP

Survivors Network of those  
Abused by Priests

December 7, 2014

Archbishop Blase J Cupich  
Archdiocese of Chicago  
835 N Rush St  
Chicago IL 60611

Dear Archbishop Cupich:

We are members of a support group called SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. We welcome you to Chicago. Unfortunately, there's a pressing issue that needs your prompt attention.

Fr. Michael W. O'Connell is still on the job today in a parish despite

--two separate allegations of child sexual abuse, and

--a pending criminal investigation into the allegations.

In a move that is both disturbing and laughable, he has voluntarily claimed he'll keep himself away from children in his parish.

We are sorry that your predecessor and his staff have acted so irresponsibly in this case. It should not have been left to you to deal with. This priest should have been suspended – again – the minute his second accuser came forward, or at least the minute police announced they were continuing their investigation into his alleged crimes.

We are asking you to:

- 1) immediately suspend him from his post at St. Alphonsus parish,
- 2) discipline all archdiocesan staff who have let him stay in the parish,
- 3) attend a "town hall meeting" later this month we are holding about the troubling situation, and
- 4) personally visit St. Alphonsus and beg anyone who may have information that might prove or disprove crimes or misdeeds by Fr. O'Connell to call police.

Fr. O'Connell was temporarily suspended in December 2013 after the archdiocese received an allegation of sexual misconduct involving a boy at Our Lady of the Woods in Orland Park years earlier. In April of this year, Cardinal Francis George reinstated Fr. O'Connell even though the Cook County Sheriff's Department never closed the criminal case.

Weeks later, new allegations surfaced involving alleged abuse of different boy in the 1990s and police continue to investigate. Today, however, archdiocesan officials are keeping Fr. O'Connell on the job. Catholic officials claim O'Connell is to avoid the parish school and will not be alone with a child.

This is precisely the kind of reckless behavior that Catholic officials have engaged in for decades, with disastrous results. It's precisely the kind of irresponsible decision-making that Catholic officials have pledged for years would no longer happen.

Yet now, in 2014, a dozen years after you and your fellow bishops finally formally adopted an allegedly binding "one strike" abuse policies, a twice-accused priest remains on the job in your archdiocese. If we are mistaken and either that national policy – or its local Chicago equivalent – has a provision letting a twice-accused priest stay in ministry during a criminal investigation and "self-police" by allegedly staying away from children we hope you will inform us right away.

Even more than most of your colleagues, you repeatedly talk of "transparency" in clergy sex cases. So we urge you to show, in a tangible way, your commitment to transparency by joining us in a public setting to discuss this alarming case. We're holding a "town hall meeting" on Thursday, Dec. 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the Belmont Lincoln Public Library at 1659 W Melrose Street about the Fr. O'Connell case. We are inviting parishioners from St. Alphonsus – and elsewhere – to it. Please consider this our formal invitation to you.

Parents, parishioners and the public need and deserve to hear the full truth about Fr. O'Connell and the inexplicable archdiocesan decision-making process that enables him to have access to trusting families and innocent children even now.

We hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

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