

December 14, 2009

Resigned Priest Sentenced in Elyria Case

Patrick J. O'Connor, who resigned from active priestly ministry in the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland in June of 2008, has been sentenced by a Lorain County judge after having pleaded guilty to Corruption of a Minor. O'Connor has been sentenced to 90 days in prison and three years probation and must register as a sexual offender every six months for the next 25 years.

The case stems from an incident in 1997 that was reported to the Diocese in June of 2008. Following the disclosure of that allegation, O'Connor submitted his resignation from active priestly ministry. He has not functioned as a priest of the Catholic Church since he resigned from active priestly ministry.

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 O'Connor's return to priestly ministry.

As required by the *Charter for the Protection for 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 O'Connor was to be allowed to exercise priestly ministry. However, at the time of reinstatement, the Diocese determined that given society's sensitivities regarding the placement of a returning cleric to public ministry following an allegation, it was appropriate with regard to those sensitivities, to gradually return O'Connor to ministry and at that time restricted his access to children.

After receiving the report in June, 2008 of the 1997 allegation, the Diocese of Cleveland immediately submitted that information to the Lorain County Prosecutor and investigating civil authorities. The Diocese fully cooperated with their investigation.

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.