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Regarding Br. Baker and claims by SNAP...

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information contact:

Ned McGrath, Director of Communications
PRoffice@aod.org
313-237-5943

An open letter dated January 30, 2013, the group SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) levels a series of unfair and untrue statements regarding the Archdiocese of Detroit.

1. *Regarding Br. Stephen Baker, TOR (Third Order of Regular Franciscans):* The Detroit Archdiocese has no record of sexual abuse complaints brought against Brother Baker during his two years in Michigan. As a professed Franciscan friar, Brother Baker took classes and worked at Orchard Lakes Schools (OLS) from 1983-85. OLS reports that it does not have any record of an abuse complaint during or after those years. Neither the archdiocese nor OLS ever received any reports/advisories from the other locations where Brother Baker subsequently worked. Additionally, we were not informed of the legal claims made against Brother Baker or his apparent suicide last weekend. SNAP's criticism of the archdiocese makes absolutely no sense. How and why would the archdiocese be criticized as negligent for not disclosing information it did not have?
2. *Regarding Fr. James Kurtz, SJ (Society of Jesus):* When a sexual abuse complaint involving a minor came in against Father Kurtz in 2002, then a teacher at University of Detroit Jesuit High School (UDJ), the Detroit Archdiocese notified the Jesuit provincial and the office of the Wayne County Prosecutor. Information about the 2011 arrest and subsequent legal actions involving Father Kurtz was communicated locally by UDJ officials and nationally by the Chicago-Detroit Province of the Jesuits. [Father Kurtz is listed on the archdiocesan website.](#) These facts counter the claim made by SNAP that the public was not notified about this matter.
3. *Regarding Fr. Thomas Williams, LC (Legion of Christ):* While he grew up in the Detroit-area, Father Williams neither studied for nor was ordained to the priesthood in the Detroit Archdiocese, nor did he serve here. When information regarding his personal life was released last year, Father Williams' religious order granted him a leave of absence. The Legionaries were not required to report to the archdiocese his choice of residence. They did not and have not. Father Williams does not have "faculties" (permission) from the archdiocese to perform any public ministry in southeast Michigan. Again, SNAP criticizes the archdiocese for not warning the public about something it did not know, i.e., that a religious order priest on leave might be living in the Detroit-area.
4. *Regarding Fr. Maurice McNeely, a retired priest of the Diocese of Honolulu:* While he grew up in the Detroit-area, Father McNeely neither studied for nor was ordained to the priesthood here, and did not serve here; he was ordained in the Diocese of Bismarck and later transferred to the Honolulu Diocese. In a civil suit filed last fall, and still pending an outcome, Father McNeely was accused of sexual abuse dating back to 1976. His choice of residence — temporary or long-term — is not something that would be known or monitored by the archdiocese. Father McNeely does not have "faculties" (permission) from the Detroit Archdiocese to perform any public ministry in southeast Michigan. In this case, SNAP criticizes the archdiocese for not warning the public about an out of state priest who is the subject of civil lawsuit.

In its letter, SNAP accuses the Detroit Archdiocese of being "silent" and "secretive" about clerical sexual abuse. Such claims, a common *modus operandi* of SNAP whenever it shows up in front of the archdiocesan chancery with one of its statements, are not supported by the facts. Reviews of past so-called revelations by SNAP have proven them to be misguided and misinformed, be it by design or default. Regrettably, the media outlets that rush to print or broadcast SNAP's claims — without giving the Detroit Archdiocese a reasonable chance to look into and respond to matters that most often involve persons from outside our state and employ — are failing to perform the basic fact-checking routines the public deserves. As for leaders of SNAP, they continue to refuse issuing a correction or clarification regarding their statements, even when their claims, assumptions, and attacks are proven to be wrong.

The Detroit Archdiocese takes all matters involving sexual abuse with the utmost seriousness, and we share any claims with civil authorities. Anyone who is a victim can call our victim assistance coordinator confidentially at 866-343-8055 or report via our website at www.aod.org/safeenvironments.

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Creating Safe Environments

Our goal is to empower children, youth and adults to avoid and report unsafe or harmful situations.



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Archdiocese of Detroit
12 State Street
Detroit, MI 48226-1823
313-237-5800

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