



DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 17, 2010

MEDIA STATEMENT

The Diocese of La Crosse has just learned that a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, with no knowledge of the Diocese of La Crosse, has issued a public statement criticizing the Diocese of La Crosse for not timely addressing his personal highly technical opinion of church law.

The Diocese took immediate steps to address his technical church law question and both reviewed with and retained independent canonical counsel to address that question. (See attached correspondence to the USCCB from the Diocesan Administrator Msgr. Richard Gilles dated April 29, 2010 and May 11, 2010.) As explained in the policy, the standard applied by the Diocese of La Crosse Child Sexual Abuse Review Board is “sufficiently confirmed”, a lower standard of proof than “beyond a reasonable doubt”.

In addition, an immediate review of all cases before the Board occurred to determine if, in any case, a finding of insufficiency was based upon any canonical technicality. The Diocese of La Crosse Child Sexual Abuse Review Board includes its Chair, a practicing attorney who previously was a state public defender; a retired police detective sergeant who investigated child sexual abuse cases; and a clinical psychologist who drafted La Crosse County’s Child Sexual Abuse Review protocols, all members well qualified to make such judgments. No such cases exist. The Board is confident that no child in the Diocese of La Crosse is at risk from any clergy.

The Diocese of La Crosse complies with both the letter and the spirit of the law by reporting and cooperating with authorities regarding all complaints of child sexual abuse. The best evidence of the effectiveness of the Diocese of La Crosse Safe Environment Program is that there have been no current confirmed cases of child sexual abuse in the Diocese of La Crosse by clergy since the very public prosecution and conviction in Marathon County in 2001 of Timothy Svea, a member of a Religious Institute. In that case, the Diocese both immediately reported the accusation and assisted the civil authorities in that conviction.

Despite any conjecture to the contrary, the Diocese of La Crosse is confident that all aspects of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People are being applied and enforced and that its children are safe.

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