



DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE

OFFICE OF THE DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATOR

May 11, 2010

USCCB NATIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Attention: Ms. Diane M. Knight and Board Members

3211 Fourth Street Northeast

Washington, DC 20017

RE: Complaint of Father James E. Connell

Dear Ms. Knight and Board Members:

This letter is an update of the actions taken by the Diocese of La Crosse regarding recent the concerns expressed by Father James Connell.

In addition to what I already described in my April 29, 2010 letter to you, the Diocese has since contacted Msgr. Ronny Jenkins to seek his independent assistance and canonical review of the matter.

Moreover, the Diocese of La Crosse Child Sexual Abuse Review Board met on May 6, 2010 and reviewed the report of its own canonist, Father Michael Gorman. While Father Gorman points out some ambiguities which could give rise to some confusion about the burden of proof, Father Gorman does not share Father Connell's views and opinions.

Most importantly, the Board rejected Father Connell's unsupported conjecture that an inappropriate standard of proof was ever used or resulted in a recommendation from the Board that a pedophile priest go free. In its view, Father Connell's statements are careless and insulting. They appeared to be of the nature which we have grown to expect from the irresponsible public utterances of SNAP.

As an example of how the Diocese of La Crosse Child Sexual Abuse Review Board (Board) applies the standard of proof in its recommendations to the Bishop is the case of Brenda Varga vs. Father Raymond Bornbach (deceased). In 2003 for the first time, Brenda Varga alleged that Father Raymond Bornbach, then a retired priest in advanced age and poor health, sexually abused her in 1971. Father Bornbach denied the allegations. Brenda Varga alleged that the act of sexual abuse was interrupted by Father Bornbach's housekeeper (an eye witness). During the investigation of the case, the housekeeper now in her late 80's but competent was interviewed and firmly denied the Brenda Varga allegation. Despite Father Bornbach's vigorous denial and an eyewitness to his innocence, the Board concluded that Ms. Varga's claim was "sufficiently confirmed". That recommendation was sent in 2004 to me who was the Diocesan Administrator. I adopted the recommendation. Father Bornbach was "Chartered" shortly before his death.

USCCB National Review Board

May 11, 2010

Page 2

As a side note, you should know that Ms. Varga has now sued the Diocese claiming that in 1968 the deceased Bishop Fredrick Freking was informed of Father Bornbach's propensities, an allegation without any record of support.

In addition, the Board, at its May 6, 2010 meeting, recommended that the Diocese work with Msgr. Jenkins and Father Gorman to come up with a clearer description of the meaning of "sufficiently confirmed". It finally recommended that any suggested modifications of Diocesan Policy regarding its handling of child sexual abuse be presented to the new Bishop after his installation.

I believe we have now responded clearly to the concerns of Father Connell's letter and intend to proceed as the Board has suggested. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration and your understanding especially at this time when the Diocese of La Crosse is without a Bishop.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



Msgr. Richard W. Gilles
Diocesan Administrator

cc: Diocese of La Crosse Child Sexual Abuse Review Board
Monsignor Ronny Jenkins
Father Michael J. Gorman
Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI
Archbishop Raymond L. Burke
Father James E. Connell

bbc: Attorney James G. Birnbaum