

STATEMENT OF THE DIOCESE
LAKE DELTON MATTER

There is a general perception that the Diocese of La Crosse knew far more than it actually did regarding what transpired on July 22, 2009 at the water park in Lake Delton. The first and only knowledge the Diocese had of the Lake Delton matter was when it received a mailed copy of the Lake Delton Police Report consisting of five (5) pages. It was received by the Diocese seven weeks after July 22, 2009 on September 8, 2009 and it did not contain any written statements from Noah's Ark staff, including the now widely published Noah's Ark report of April 28, 2010 or any other additional information. No other law enforcement contact was made to the Diocese. The report states, among other things, that there were no complaints from any children and no evidence of improper activity that could amount to a crime despite Father Umberger's complete cooperation including a consented search of his car, his person and the restroom in question. The report did not allege any interaction or suspicious activity with children-in or outside the restroom. The only thing the Diocese knew at the time was that there was mere suspicion but no evidence of any crime or other wrong doing.

The Diocese specifically was not aware that Father Umberger had contact with any children or that he had been placed on any watch list by Noah's Ark.

The report further specifically indicated that the matter was referred to the Onalaska Police Department and the Wisconsin Dells Police Department for follow-up. By policy and practice, the Diocese refers and defers to law enforcement. It steps back and waits for law enforcement to complete its investigation. There was no cover up. The information came from law enforcement. Previously, the Diocese was criticized for not referring to law enforcement and conducting its own investigation which might interfere with the police investigation.

Upon receipt of the report, the Diocese immediately contacted Father Umberger and questioned him about the matter. The Diocese had no knowledge of any prior complaints. An investigation was made to verify Father Umberger's explanation and it was confirmed.

The Diocese had no knowledge of and did not learn of Father Umberger's access to any pornography, attraction to children or other moral infractions.

Subsequently, the Diocese received no information of any conduct of a sexual nature until his arrest on July 14, 2010. Records previously requested and first produced from law enforcement on July 29, 2010 (one year and seven days after the Lake Delton incident), now reveal that law enforcement was revisiting the Lake Delton matter in April of 2010. No one contacted or alerted the Diocese to that effect.

The Diocese was shocked and saddened to learn on July 14, 2010 of Father Umberger's arrest and charge of possession of child pornography, of his reported statements of improper attraction to children and other moral infractions.

The Diocese followed its protocols, deferred to law enforcement and acted upon the information it was provided.