

Dear Brothers

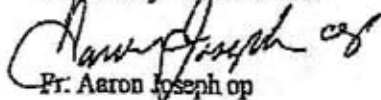
On November 23, 2009 I took the State of Maryland's deal to end the case against me which has been raging on for six years. It was the most difficult decision I have had to make in my entire life because, even though I am innocent of these allegations, the deal would require me to allow the State to find me guilty of them ... with out ever proving there case against me. In fact, I would not be allowed to say anything when the State read the allegations in court. I will, however, be allowed to refute them in writing and have my comments included in my file. I will be given a suspended sentence and five years of supervised probation and five years of unsupervised probation.

So, if I am innocent, why would I accept this deal? Simple, the case came down to my word against Rain's word. There is no evidence to prove it one way or the other. The simple fact, my lawyer said, is that "even though your intentions and actions with Rain's were innocent and harmless, it would look suspicious to a jury and in today's climate, they most probably would not believe you." One has to also assume that a jury will be more inclined to sympathize with the kid and not with you, given the history of priests facing these allegations in the news these days. You also have to assume, that during the 3 or 4 days of trial, SNAP will be controlling the newspapers and television in the area with negative information about you and the jury will have heard or read there version of this case. It will be difficult to win and if not all 12 jury members come back saying your innocent, the judge will call a mistrial and we will start all over again with a new trial.

This is the way it has been from the beginning. The law says you are innocent until proven guilty, but in these cases that simply is not true ... you are guilty until proven innocent. SNAP is a vigilantly group that uses the newspapers and the internet to convict every priest facing these kinds of allegations in the court of public opinion. I have remained quiet over this time because I would have preferred to have the law practiced in the courts and not from the gutter, trying to sway public opinion. As I came to learn ... in these kinds of cases... in today's climate... It's not about the truth, its about perceptions and SNAP has done an excellent job of painting negative perception's of me. So I had already been found guilty of this crime before I ever got a single day in court.

I took the deal because I was not going to go to jail for a crime I did not commit. I took the deal to avoid a public trial which would have given SNAP another chance to create a media circus which would serve no purpose but to embarrass the Church, the Order and my family. This drug addict has destroyed my life and my ministry. I am now facing the task of trying to rebuild what is left of it.

Prayerfully in St. Dominic



Fr. Aaron Joseph OP