

STATEMENT OF FR. TOM EUTENEUER: SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

January 31, 2011

It is with great sadness, but also with a certain measure of relief, that I can now respond to the many inquiries about my departure as president of Human Life International (HLI) at the end of August 2010. It has been painful for me to remain silent in light of the ongoing speculation, particularly when much of it assigned blame to those who were, in fact, blameless. I am thankful to be able to set the record straight so that speculation can stop and blame can be placed right where it belongs – with me.

The circumstances that led to my departure from HLI were related exclusively to my own decisions and conduct within the ministry of exorcism that I carried out independently from my responsibilities at HLI. The vast majority of my decisions and conduct, both personally and in this ministry, were morally sound and consistent with all standards of pastoral care of persons. Moreover, they were all motivated exclusively by my desire to give priestly assistance to people in great spiritual distress. I must acknowledge, however, that one particularly complex situation clouded my judgment and led me to imprudent decisions with harmful consequences, the worst of which was violating the boundaries of chastity with an adult female who was under my spiritual care.

I take full responsibility for my own poor judgment, my weakness and my sinful conduct that resulted from it. I offer no excuse for my professional or moral failures, nor do I shift the blame to anyone else. I state without reserve that I am deeply sorry for my actions. I have personally apologized, where possible, to anyone I have harmed. I am saddened beyond words for my fall, not only because of the harm done to my priesthood and my family, but also because of the harm done to all others who are affected, to the faith of those who placed so much trust in me and our Church, and to the pro-life movement so populated with heroic, faithful people. I must face and make amends for the disappointment I have caused. I have, of course, asked for God's forgiveness and I have confidence in his boundless mercy. I am now grateful to be able to publicly ask for all of yours as well.

As to my departure from HLI, Church officials are completely without blame, having dealt in a timely and appropriate manner with a crisis that was not of their making. I offer this statement as a matter of justice to vindicate Church officials who have been unjustly criticized by those writing and speaking in ignorance of the facts.

While I would much prefer to allow this public act of contrition to stand alone, I regret having to address the malicious falsehoods that were published this past week on various internet sites. I can only say that I am shocked to the depths of my being at the malicious efforts by supposedly faithful Catholics to destroy a priest who has served the Church faithfully for 22 years. The campaigners have made intolerable attempts to contact my family, to defame innocent co-workers and even to solicit and to persuade others with whom I have prayed that they are victims despite their unequivocal statements to the contrary. Some have even claimed falsely and maliciously that there is a possessed person living in my family's home. No one should have to endure such malevolence or such treatment of innocent family members. Despite the rhetoric of

justice and truth-seeking, the sinful campaign has not made one single positive contribution to the resolution of this difficult situation that has *already been handled appropriately* by Church authorities for nearly six months.

While I would otherwise willingly suffer calumnies in silence to atone for my sins, and knowing how pointless it is to respond to every crackpot with a website, I cannot remain silent when such falsehoods threaten to damage the Church, the priesthood, and other innocent persons and organizations that are or have been linked to me. I therefore affirm and will never deviate from my affirmation that the following are true:

- My violations of chastity were limited to *one person only*, an adult woman;
- The violations of chastity happened due to human weakness but did not involve the sexual act;
- The accusation that I “targeted” vulnerable women or otherwise sought them out for spiritual direction is utterly false and a serious defamation of my character and ministry;
- With rare exceptions, my exorcism/prayer ministry was always conducted with prayer helpers (third parties) present; situations where prayer or pastoral care occurred without helpers present were exceptional situations where I believed it was necessary for me to act quickly in order to help the afflicted person; while not proper protocol, these departures from the norm were never done with a motive to be alone with vulnerable women;
- I repudiate any allegations of financial impropriety in conducting my prayer/exorcism ministry; I never, under any circumstances, solicited money for the ministry other than travel-related reimbursements, nor did I use HLI donor funds to carry out this work; any gifts offered to me were unsolicited and only accepted so as not to offend the giver and in most cases immediately given to those more needy than myself;
- I have no knowledge of any persons who received any financial settlement in this matter, nor have I asked for that to be given.

I pray that my two decades of faithful priestly ministry and my efforts in the defense of life will be seen in the light of the good fruits they have produced and not denigrated because of my moments of weakness in a most challenging ministry. I also wish to state that I have never entertained even the slightest thought of leaving the holy priesthood or the Roman Catholic Church as a result of my failings. Currently I am under obedience to my bishop who has allowed me to make this statement and in whose hands I leave all questions of continuing priestly ministry. I conclude with an expression of deepest gratitude for the prayers of the many generous supporters of my priesthood and of the prolife movement.