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Crosiers respond to Star Tribune article

November 27, 2002 Message From:

Thomas R. Carkhuff, osc

Prior Provincial

I want to assure you that the article in Sunday, November 24, 2002 edition of the Minneapolis Star Tribune does not present a fair characterization of Crosier response to sexual misconduct or the current relationship between the Crosiers and the parish of St. Odilia. I want to set the record straight.

Our foremost concern is for victims of sexual misconduct, their families and their healing. To them, we continue to offer our profound apologies for the pain and suffering they endure. We are absolutely committed to dealing with sexual misconduct in a forthright and accountable manner. Sexual misconduct simply will not be tolerated by our organization.

We are deeply troubled by the Star Tribune's November 24 article, which misleads readers and falsely characterizes the order as trying to cover up sexual misconduct. As the Star Tribune reporters were preparing their story, we responded to nearly 50 questions they asked us. They chose to ignore responses to questions that did not support their story line. The Crosiers have taken unprecedented steps to shed light on sexual misconduct and deal with the issue in an open and forthright manner. Every reasonable action has been taken to ensure the safety of the people the order serves and ensure public accountability. These actions include publicly naming all Crosiers who have been found to have committed sexual abuse of a minor and permanently removing them from public ministry.

As evidence of our commitment to deal with sexual misconduct in a forthright manner, we commissioned the law firm of Faegre & Benson to investigate every allegation of sexual misconduct reported to the Crosiers—even in cases where an initial investigation found no wrongdoing. Faegre & Benson had full access to all Crosier files and records, and investigated every reported allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, some of which dated back to the late 1940s. At the conclusion of the investigation, we publicly released an investigation report and named all of those who had been found to have committed sexual abuse of a minor.

While the Star Tribune article criticized us for not providing details about the number of incidents each offender was involved in, our position is that one incident is deplorable and warrants that an offender be publicly named and permanently removed from public ministry. We have taken this step as part of our commitment to ensuring the safety of the people we serve. In addition, there are

details about past instances of sexual misconduct that we will not, and cannot, discuss because many victims have asked us to keep their names and details confidential. Maintaining this confidentiality assures privacy to those who may yet be considering reporting sexual misconduct.

The Star Tribune's article also suggested that the Crosier relationship with the parish of St. Odilia is seriously threatened, based on comments from two lay parish leaders. I regret the messages that were conveyed by the two parish trustees that challenged the validity of our third-party investigation

and the reporting we provided. I want to make it clear that the Crosiers are very committed to working with parish leaders to resolve the issues that have caused tension in the relationship. At a meeting we had with parish leaders last Friday evening, I believe we made positive steps toward that result.

We invite the public to judge for themselves the actions we have taken in response to sexual misconduct. The investigation report and additional measures we have taken are available on this Crosier Web site.

In addition to the investigation, the Crosiers:

- Strengthened their sexual misconduct policy.
- Are expanding their Personnel Board, which is responsible for the housing and ministry assignments of all Crosiers, to include non-Crosiers who have expertise in fields including psychology, sociology and law. The Personnel Board will also review and evaluate the results of all investigations of sexual misconduct and provide advice to the Crosier Provincial.
- Are assembling an advisory panel to assist the Provincial in making difficult decisions. The Provincial has consulted with victims in identifying members of the panel, which will include non-Crosiers.
- Are creating a "First Contact Team," comprised of men and women, clergy and lay persons, Catholics and non-Catholics, who will receive reports of sexual misconduct from victims.
- Will voluntarily report to review boards of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.

We Crosiers are committed to being open and accountable to the public and recognize the important role the media plays in that process. However, we firmly believe the Star Tribune article was misleading, inaccurate and unbalanced. We are considering a number of responses to this article.



Crosier Fathers and Brothers