

FROM THE BASILIAN FATHERS OF TORONTO

We have received a request from you to engage in an interview process focused on what you have described as looking into allegations of historical childhood sexual abuse by certain Basilian priests. Despite the fact you have not provided us with all of the information you have collected, as you indicated you would do, we will do our best to answer your list of questions that relate to historical childhood sexual abuse. Our response must be quoted in full.

There has never been any doubt or misunderstanding that sexual abuse of a child is, and always has been, wrong. Where there has been historical misunderstanding by professionals, the Basilians included, is with respect to the impact of the sexual abuse upon a child. Everyone reacts differently, of course, and the impact is unique, as each and every human being is unique. Some of the things historically not known, misunderstood, or understood wrongly, include:

- (a) children's memories were such that they would not remember abuse, and would not be impacted by it;
- (b) effects of sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult on a minor were benign (except in the rare instances where the abuse involved the addition of severe physical abuse);
- (c) lack of knowledge or understanding about paraphilia;
- (d) over use or abuse of alcohol led to sexually abusive behaviour (stop the consumption of alcohol and the abuse would stop);
- (e) the criminal justice system could not pursue uncorroborated complaints of children;
- (f) such abuse was a moral failing, and could be addressed by deeper spiritual focus and commitment;
- (g) treatment providers often treated those against whom allegations of sexual abuse had been made and, believing them to be cured, cleared them to return to work.

We do not feel it is appropriate to answer your questions about specific individuals or events, other than to confirm that you know from Fr. Fallona that he denies he abused Brenda Brunelle. We trust you will provide his statement or Open Letter as part of your reporting.

Releasing the names of these "credibly accused" of having abused children, is a very complex topic as you can, hopefully, appreciate. Many things need to be taken into consideration, including:

- absent a criminal conviction, or some other admission by a perpetrator abuse has occurred, or substantial objective evidence that abuse has occurred, who determines (and how) what is a "credible allegation", especially if the perpetrator is deceased and never had an opportunity to address the allegations.
- settlement of a civil case, or settlement of a report of abuse that has not gone through the judicial system, does not equate to objective evidence of a credible allegation.

- there are victims who do not wish to see their perpetrator's name in the public forum as either (a) a public reminder of their abuse or (b) possibly leading to the victim's identity becoming public. Many victims do not wish to have information about a named perpetrator made public, they do not wish to be "outed", they wish to have their privacy respected.
- we know that some experts, on behalf of victims, feel strongly about and support the right to privacy of those victims who wish to retain their privacy, so as to avoid the perceived stigma, humiliation, shame and guilt associated with the abuse; publishing the name of a perpetrator can lead to speculation about who is or may be a victim, and lead right back to a victim who wishes to protect their identity.
- publication of names is a very live issue in the United States, given the fact that various States have removed the barricade of limitations for victims to be able to pursue claims against historical predators. Publication is necessary to ensure victims are aware of their new rights to pursue compensation. That of course is not the same in Canada. Publication of names of perpetrators has been quite widespread across Canada since the Superior Court of Canada more than 20 years ago effectively did away with limitation periods and changed the law with respect to vicarious liability.
- should consideration be shown to the families or relatives of an alleged perpetrator, who is deceased, and who had no opportunity to address the allegations.
- where is there a cut off, in terms of types of abuse, or ages of victims.

We respect the privacy of any victim who wishes to have their privacy maintained. If there were to be a current report of abuse of a child (we take that to be up to the age of 18) we would automatically report that to the appropriate CAS office and in conjunction with that office, have it reported to the police. For reports of historical abuse, by an adult, for whom a perpetrator might be alive, we respect the victim's right to report that abuse to the police, or not. If their choice is to report to the police, we would be fully supportive. If their choice is not to report the matter to the police, we will not do so, nor would the police even accept a report from us in such a situation.

You wondered about what, if anything, has been done by the Basilian Fathers of Toronto to reflect today's better awareness and understanding of this historical problem:

1. We, along with all other organizations involved in working with children or vulnerable adults, have adopted policies and changes that reduce or negate opportunities for potential abuse. Just a few more obvious examples:
 - (a) not being alone with children or vulnerable individuals in private settings;
 - (b) no one-on-one trips;
 - (c) vulnerable sector checks are done and updated.
2. Our policies in relation to abuse are updated regularly and our members attend information sessions on best practices.
3. Our website provides information to victims.
4. We offer payment of counselling costs for victims who come forward.

5. Our admission to formation of the men who wish to become members of the Basilian Fathers is much more rigorous than it was years ago. There is better screening of candidates including psychological assessments, before proceeding to vows.
6. Ongoing classes and instruction on boundaries; questionable conduct; perceptions of others about one's conduct. These classes are, and this training is, given throughout and after initial formation.
7. Since 2006 we have been audited on a regular basis by a third party, objective organization, Praesidium, to make sure we are child safe and vulnerable adult safe environments. As quoted from their website:

"Praesidium was started more than 20 years ago in response to a request from a youth serving organization that was reeling from an incident of child sexual abuse. At that time, little was known about how abuse occurred in organizations and what could be done to stop it.

Praesidium's Safety Equation® identifies eight organizational operations that provide opportunities to decrease the risk of abuse by employees, volunteers or other program participants. Using current research and root-cause analysis of thousands of cases of abuse across a diverse range of organizations. Praesidium has identified best practices in each operation and created products and services that help organizations implement these practices."