

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Cardinal



Post Office Box 1979  
Chicago, Illinois 60690-1979

July 14, 2006

COPY



Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

Yours is one of many letters I have received regarding the future of Father Joseph Bennett, Pastor of Holy Ghost Parish. Each letter contained very personal testimony to the effective ministry of Father Bennett and concern about his being returned to pastor your parish. I am grateful for these letters and for the witness to the effectiveness of Father Bennett's ministry.

As you may know, the Archdiocese of Chicago follows the national protocols for investigating an allegation of sexual abuse against a priest. The allegation against Father Bennett was made about two and one-half years ago, and the investigation has taken an extraordinarily long period of time because of its complexity. Normally, the investigation is finished and a decision has been made before the future of a priest is decided. In the case of Father Bennett, because the investigation had taken so long and there were external pressures, he was asked to step down from active ministry until the investigation could be completed. The examination of all the material by the Archdiocesan Review Board has taken place, and they still believe that some form of sexual abuse took place.

With you, I hope that Father Bennett is innocent of these allegations. The Review Board does careful work, but, should the Holy See find that he is innocent of these charges, he will be returned to active ministry, unless there are other charges to be investigated.

Again, thank you for your concern for Father Bennett and for the life of faith which continues to unite you to him in prayer. You and Holy Ghost Parish are in my prayers, and I ask for yours in return. God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.  
Archbishop of Chicago

P.S. We have no choice but to send the case to the Holy See for review - that is the regulation for every case. Of course, I hope Fr. Bennett is innocent - who would not? Rather than with me, I suggest you talk to his accusers.

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