

Accusations surface in Burlington against Benedictines from 1960s

Last weekend the names of two priests who once served St. John parish in Burlington were publicly linked to sexual misconduct with minors. Both are members of the Benedictine Order which served St. John's until 1990, when priests of the Davenport diocese assumed pastoral care for the parish.

Father Donald Redmond, OSB, was accused of sexual abuse and removed from a parish in Sabetha, Kansas, where he had been pastor, and returned to St. Benedict Abbey

in Atchison, Kan.

The allegation against Fr. Redmond while he was in Burlington in the 1960s came from a former St. John's parishioner who does not wish to be identified. He informed the parish's current pastor, Msgr. John Hyland, who reported the allegation to Abbott Barnabas Senecal at St. Benedict's.

Msgr. Hyland told *The Hawk Eye* of Burlington that he was told Fr. Redmond "will not be assigned (See **BURLINGTON** on Page 10)

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Burlington told of second abuse case from the 1960s

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to parish ministry now or in the future.”

In February, prior to the accusation against Fr. Redmond, Msgr. Hyland told parishioners that an allegation of sexual misconduct had been made against a priest who had once served the parish but is now dead. At the time, neither the accused priest nor the person making that charge was publicly identified.

LAST WEEKEND David Waldorf of Burlington came forward in a letter to the *Quad-City Times* in Davenport and in speaking to *The Hawk Eye* and *The Catholic Messenger*. Waldorf, now 55, said he was molested one night in 1963 by Father Placidus Kieffer, OSB.

Waldorf, 16 years old at the time, said he had left his home that night while his father was in a violent, drunken rage and gone to St. John's rectory seeking help. As he sat on the rectory steps talking with a priest, Waldorf said the priest put his hand inside Waldorf's pants and fondled him for an extended time.

He knew this was wrong, but because of the way priests were revered, Waldorf said he felt there was no place he could go with his story.

THE EXPERIENCE sent him away from the Catholic Church until the fall of 2000, when he joined a group of alienated Catholics who had responded to an invitation to look at the Church again and discuss any “issues” they had.

“I started going to the homecoming group, and this pedophilia thing turned up as an issue for me,” he said.

Waldorf said he had not realized earlier how much he wanted to know whether he was alone in his experience or not. “I wanted to see if how I've felt all my life is normal.”

And he said he wanted to “see if I would be able to come back to the Church... was it safe to come back.” Would the Church make things right?

AFTER WALDORF raised the issue with his experience, a separate support group was formed by the parish to support anyone who might be a survivor of clergy sexual abuse.

This group was “very supportive,” he said. “They say, ‘do we just sit here on our hands or do we do something?’”

He said he believes it is important to make public the names of priests who may have been removed in the past for sexual misconduct. He said he wants “the secrecy lifted so some of these men who had the same experience I did can come forward.”

Waldorf also said “People are struggling with a sense of betrayal when they learn how close these guys came to them in their lives when they didn't know the danger.”

At Masses in Burlington last weekend, Msgr. Hyland told about the multiple allegations made regarding Fr. Redmond here and in Kansas. “We are deeply saddened and want to tend to the pastoral needs of anyone who may have been hurt,” he said.

He asked people to come to him or to diocesan officials. “Any of us will do our very best to be of assistance. We pray for healing in our Church and count heavily on the Lord to strengthen us in the days ahead.”

Waldorf said he has had “long talks” with Msgr. Hyland and has met with Bishop William Franklin and hopes that the diocese “will let the parishes know what they need to know.”

A social worker and addictions counselor with the Burlington school district, Waldorf said “I'm getting pretty tired of dealing with this every week.”