



Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence Office of Communications

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Investigation Initiated by Diocese Results in Arrest of Deacon

(PROVIDENCE, R.I.)-In mid June, following an allegation of inappropriate behavior regarding a Deacon at St. Joseph Parish in West Warwick, the diocese immediately launched an internal investigation. The West Warwick Police Department and the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families were also consulted. Both entities agreed that the original allegation was not criminal in nature and therefore decided not to pursue the matter.

While the preliminary investigation did not yield any acts of criminal activity, the conduct of this individual was unacceptable for a representative of the Church. On June 18, Deacon Laurence Gagnon submitted his letter of resignation to the parish, which was also accepted by the Diocese. After receiving this information, Bishop Tobin initiated Canonical action against the Deacon in conformity with Church law. As of that date, he no longer served as a Deacon in the parish or teacher at St. Joseph School.

After the original investigation launched by the Diocese, additional information was made available to the West Warwick Police Department who today informed the Diocese that Deacon Gagnon was arrested on three counts of child molestation. The Diocese continues to fully cooperate with the investigation.

In February of 2009, Deacon Gagnon underwent and cleared a Bureau of Criminal Identification check in which the Attorney General's Office informed the diocese that he did not have any disqualifying information in his file within the State of Rhode Island. All diocesan, parish and school employees and volunteers are required to submit to and pass such a check every three years.

Inquiries relative to this matter should be directed to the West Warwick Police Department.

The Diocese of Providence has in place one of the strongest child protection programs in the United States and urges anyone who has been the victim of abuse or with credible knowledge of such abuse by any member of the Church to report the information to local law enforcement or the Diocesan Office of Education and Compliance at 401/941-0760. A pastoral response program exists for alleged victims, providing non-prejudicial psychological counseling. Information on this program may be obtained from the Office of Education and Compliance.