



JEAN PETERS BAKER  
Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney

May 4, 2015

Dear Members of Christ the King Parish,

The recent letter sent by your pastor laid out misinformation regarding *State of Missouri vs. Robert Finn*. This letter is to address some of those misstatements.

I was raised in the Catholic faith and attended catholic schools. My education was guided by Catholic nuns who ran a disciplined school in a four-room schoolhouse for grades one through eight. These extraordinary women led with unmatched educational standards, too few resources and an unquestionable faith. They guided students by their own demonstration of accountability and commitment to our education. As you might imagine, I did not always share their focus on my education, but I am grateful for their commitment now. My church parish was blessed with many talented priests, but the notion that no one is above the law was infused in me by these strong women. I wish I could personally thank each of them today.

As for the assertion that this prosecution was politically motivated, you will be the judge. I run this office as a prosecutor, not a politician and I have sought convictions for those who have harmed our community. My service as a prosecutor began in 1998 and I acknowledge strong ties to the community who cares for abused children. I have prosecuted other cases that some deem controversial, like cases against mothers who failed to protect their children from abuse by a boyfriend. Sometimes, our inaction has consequences.

The letter you received further stated that your former bishop, Robert Finn, pled no contest to the charges leveled against him by my office. That is factually inaccurate. On September 6, 2012, a Jackson County Judge heard the facts of the case and found him guilty of that charge. You should also be aware that on September 12, 2013, Shawn Ratigan, a former priest, was sentenced to fifty (50) years in prison for related photographic images of children.

A special duty is owed to children. Children cannot speak for themselves. They are our most vulnerable victims. Many of them do not yet possess the skills to dial 911, make a plea for help or even understand the abuse inflicted upon them. Most rely entirely upon their abusers for food, shelter, and other basic needs. And these children rely entirely on



the community to be their voice when their caregivers fail. They rely entirely on you to have the courage to actually protect them, rather than make public pronouncements regarding our intolerance of abuse. In fact, they rely on us to take active steps, like report suspicion of abuse and to inquire about behavior that may be harmful to them. This is our moral duty.

While each of us has a moral duty to guide our conscience, others, because of special roles, are governed also by a legal duty. It is important to understand that duty. The duty to report, simply report, suspected child abuse is governed by Missouri law, RSMo 210.115. The law recognizes that children are defenseless and that some actors have a special duty, such as nurses, doctors, teachers, and ministers (which is defined), to protect them. Mandated reporters play a crucial role in stopping abuse and providing help to families by getting them important resources.

Having the courage to stand up to those in power and hold dangerous criminals accountable for their behavior is a necessary component of the position of prosecutor. No position of power comes without critique, nor should it. As your prosecutor, I am guided by this truth:

*No one is above the law, no matter our position or title.*

Children especially need this to be true and abused children's lives may depend upon it.

Sincerely,



Jean Peters Baker  
Prosecutor for Jackson County