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Safe Environment

A Message from Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B.

More than three decades ago when Saint John's Abbey first learned of allegations of inappropriate sexual behavior by some of our monks, emotions within the community ranged from shock, rage and bewilderment to immense pain and embarrassment. This community and I share a deep compassion and concern for those persons who were victims and are now survivors.

As a community we hold any form of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation to be morally reprehensible and a violation of our vow to a celibate and chaste life committed to mutual respect among all persons. This commitment was central to our task as we acted quickly to develop policies and procedures to respond responsibly in a manner that included a pastoral focus.

I believe we have been faithful over the years in our determination to do all we can to help survivors of abuse to achieve healing and reconciliation. Some have suggested that we turn the page, move ahead and not look back. While we are determined to move ahead, we know that we must also continue to look back. Sinful things happened

in our midst and people were profoundly hurt. It is not enough simply to acknowledge what occurred as a result of our flawed human nature, or as a reminder of our frailty and vulnerability. We will continue to address the wrongs that were done.

Life, work and prayer continue at the Abbey. As we pursue important work in many areas, I am determined that this ugly stain become a permanent part of our collective memory so that we are ever mindful of our commitment to do everything possible to assure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. We will continue to learn from our experience and use that learning for healing, renewal and reconciliation. We must continue to do all we can for survivors of abuse by Saint John's monks even as we deal with our own healing.

This section of the Abbey's website continues our commitment to honesty and transparency. I invite all visitors to these pages to join the monastic community in its continuing prayers for all survivors of sexual abuse.

+Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B.

Release of Names of Current and Former Monks Likely to Have Offended Against Minors (12/9/13)

Official Statement of December 9, 2013

Saint John's Abbey voluntarily is releasing the names of current and former monks who likely have offended against minors. Most of the names previously have been made public. The list includes 18 names: nine monks who are living at Saint John's Abbey under supervised safety plans, seven monks who are deceased and two men who have been dispensed from their religious vows and no longer are connected to the Abbey.

The claims against each of those named were reviewed either by the Abbey's External Review Board or by the Abbot himself. In each case, it was determined that there was sufficient evidence to include the person on the list. In some cases, however, all the facts could not be completely substantiated. Claims against some of those named on the list, for example, were not brought to the Abbey's attention for decades after the

accused monk's death. It is in several of these cases where the Abbot made the determination to include the name of the monk on the list despite the lack of corroborating evidence.

The External Review Board was created in 2003. The seven-member panel includes those who have expertise in the treatment of sexual abuse of minors, judges, attorneys and current and former members of law enforcement. In addition, the Board consistently has included a survivor of sexual abuse. The Board is charged with evaluating allegations of sexual abuse against members of the Abbey and making recommendations for action to the Abbot, as well as conducting annual reviews of individual monks' safety plans.

"This list reflects our best efforts to identify those who likely have offended against minors," said Brother Aelred Senna, OSB, spokesperson for the Abbey. "That task often is complicated by the passage of time, the deaths of some of those involved and sometimes incomplete accounts of the past. Even so, we are including all 18 names to provide as complete of a list as we can to acknowledge the pain suffered by victims. This list underscores our commitment to being transparent in our policies and procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse.

"Our commitment is reflected in the policies and procedures implemented over the past decade, particularly the External Review Board. This Board gives victims the assurance that allegations of abuse against minors will be investigated objectively, sensitively and thoroughly," said Brother Aelred.

Bik, Michael

Bennett, Andre†

Eckroth, Richard

Blumeyer, Robert†

Gillespie, Thomas

Dahlheimer, Cosmas†

Maiers, Brennan

Hoefgen, Francis*

McDonald, Finian

Hohmann, Othmar†

Moorse, Dunstan

Keller, Dominic†

Phillips, James

Kelly, John*

Schulte, Francisco

Wendt, Pirmin†

Tarlton, Allen

Wollmering, Bruce†

† = deceased

* = no longer a monk of Saint John's

For more information on Saint John's Abbey's policies and procedures regarding response to sexual abuse, see the Safe Environment (<http://www.saintjohnsabbey.org/info/abbey-response-sexual-abuse-allegations/>) section of this web site.

Saint John's Abbey Response to Lawsuit Filed November 19, 2013

Abbey Response to Sexual Abuse Allegations

Benedict's Rule for Monasteries Recognized Human Strength . . . and Frailty

Evolution of Psychotherapy

Prompt and Ongoing Response

External Review Board

Screening, Training Candidates for Monastic Life

Support for Survivors

Safety Plans for Those Credibly Charged

John Jay Report Explores Abuse Causes

Invitation to Survivors

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