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Bishop Burbidge addresses outcome of investigation regarding Fr. Ronald Escalante

On Saturday, September 28, 2019, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of the Diocese of Arlington issued the following letter to parishioners of Saint Francis de Sales Parish in Purcellville, Virginia regarding the outcome of the investigation related to Father Ronald Escalante.



DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

Office of the Bishop

200 North Glebe Road, Suite 914 • Arlington, Virginia 22203 • (703) 841-2511 • Fax (703) 524-5028

September 28, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For many months, the Diocese of Arlington has investigated allegations of sexual misconduct and boundary violations brought against Father Ronald Escalante by adults and a minor, from both inside and outside St. Francis de Sales Parish. During our investigation, Father Escalante was placed on administrative leave and the allegations related to the minor were immediately reported to law enforcement officials, who elected not to pursue criminal charges.

I have taken seriously and investigated thoroughly the allegations of sexual misconduct that have been brought to my attention. In this investigation, I have been assisted by professionals with extensive experience in law



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARLINGTON

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independent witnesses, Father Escalante freely admitted to conduct unbecoming and foreign to the clerical state involving two adults. In consultation with his canonical advocate and spiritual director, and after prayerful consideration, Father Escalante has freely offered his resignation of the office of Pastor of St. Francis de Sales Church for the spiritual good of the parish. I have accepted his resignation and he is on a leave of absence at this time. It is my hope and Father Escalante's that his resignation will allow the parish to heal and move forward.

The Diocesan Review Board assessed the allegations of boundary violations between Father Escalante and a minor. The Board found the minor to be believable, but determined that the actions of Father Escalante, as alleged, did not fall within the definition of "sexual abuse" under Canon Law and the Diocesan child protection policies.

As I have stated throughout this process, the Diocese encourages anyone who knows of any misconduct or abuse on the part of any cleric or employee of the Diocese to report it to the Virginia Attorney General hotline (VirginiaClergyHotline.com), and also to contact the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator at (703) 841-2530.

I express my heartfelt regret to those who may have been harmed by Father Escalante's actions. Pastoral care and counseling have been extended to them through our Victim Assistance Coordinator. I pray that the conclusion of this process will help bring true healing in their lives.

I realize that this information is difficult for many parishioners to receive. This decision, while prudent and necessary, also brings me sadness as I know the impact it has on your community. These steps have been taken after much prayer and reflection.

In the near future, I will appoint a new pastor for your parish community. I will also work with Father Michael Taylor to schedule a time to fulfill my promise to make a pastoral visit and celebrate a Mass of unity and healing.

Please be assured that you will continue to be in my daily prayers. Through the intercession of Mary our Mother and St. Francis de Sales, may Our Lord Jesus bless you and your parish community and fill you with His peace.

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Sincerely in Christ,



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

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MOST REVEREND MICHAEL F. BURBIDGE

Bishop of Arlington

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Catholic Diocese of Arlington