



Statement of Donna M. Morrissey, Spokeswoman, Archdiocese of Boston Concerning Fr. Nyhan - June 26, 2002

The Archdiocese of Boston in accordance with our policy for handling allegations of sexual misconduct with minors by members of the clergy today placed Reverend W. James Nyhan, Pastor of Saint Mary Parish in Billerica, Massachusetts on administrative leave and removed him from all assignments pending further review of an allegation made against him. The policy of the Archdiocese of Boston calls for a thorough investigation by the Delegate's Office and notification to proper legal authorities.

A previous allegation was made against Reverend Nyhan several years ago but the person making the allegation recanted with an apology. Upon recommendation of a review board the Archdiocese closed the investigation. The present allegation is one the Archdiocese received for the first time yesterday and involves an alleged incident that occurred a number of years ago. The Office of the Delegate is continuing its investigation into the matter working with all parties involved.

Our first priority is the protection of children. We respect and are mindful of the rights of victims and accused priests and any action taken in the course of an investigation should not be construed as implication of guilt of the accused cleric. It is our obligation as representatives of the Church and as a community, legally and morally, to fully investigate all past allegations of abuse of a minor. Until the resolution of the investigation by representatives of the Church and by the proper legal authorities is complete, Father Nyhan will continue to receive his salary and medical benefits but he will not have permission to perform public ministry in the Church. Should the allegation prove to be groundless, efforts will be made to restore the priest's reputation.

Representatives of the Archdiocese of Boston have already met with the St. Mary's parish staff. Efforts are at present being made to inform the people of the parish regarding this situation. Pastoral and counseling support will continue to be provided to Saint Mary's Parish. A representative of the Archdiocese of Boston will attend the weekend Masses to speak with parishioners and provide assistance during this upsetting time for the parish community. A clinical social worker will also be available to provide assistance at the parish.

This is a distressing and painful time and our prayers are with victims and their families, the faithful of the Archdiocese, and all those who have been effected by instances of child abuse by members of the clergy.

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