



**Statement of Donna M. Morrissey, Spokeswoman, Archdiocese of Boston Concerning Fr. Bourgault - 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 Ronald L. Bourgault, Pastor of Saint Zepherin Parish in Wayland, 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 Review Board and notification to proper legal authorities within forty-eight hours in cases such as this.

The allegation made against Reverend Bourgault was recently reported for the first time to the Archdiocese of Boston regarding an incident that occurred over thirty years ago. Following our policy it was determined that the allegation had enough substance to warrant further investigation by the Archdiocese of Boston and law enforcement authorities and met the criteria to place Father Bourgault on administrative leave. Pastoral and counseling support has been offered to both the person making the allegation and the accused priest.

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 Bourgault 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 parish staff of St. Zepherin's. Efforts are at present being made to inform the people of the parish regarding this situation. Bishop Richard Lennon, Regional Bishop-West Region of the Archdiocese of Boston, will attend the weekend Masses to inform 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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