



September 9, 2002 Statement of Donna M. Morrissey, Spokeswoman, Archdiocese of Boston

The Archdiocese of Boston announces in accordance with its policy for handling allegations of sexual misconduct with minors by members of the clergy today placed Father Leonard E. Pelletier, Pastor of Saint Louis de France Parish in Lowell, Massachusetts on administrative leave and removed him from all assignments pending further review of allegations made against him. This policy calls for a thorough investigation by the Delegate's Office and our agreement with civil authorities calls for notification to the Attorney General's office within forty-eight hours in cases such as this.

The complaint made against Father Pelletier was recently reported for the first time to the Archdiocese of Boston regarding allegations that would have occurred over twenty years ago. Pastoral and counseling support has been offered to both the person making the allegation and the accused priest.

The first priority of the Archdiocese of Boston is the protection of children. The rights of the alleged victim and the accused priest are to be respected and any action taken in the course of an investigation should not be construed as implication of guilt of the accused cleric. Our obligation as representatives of the Church and as a community, legally and morally, is 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 authorities is complete, Father Pelletier will receive a salary and medical benefits but he will not have permission to perform any public ministry in the Church. If the allegations prove to be groundless, efforts will be made to restore the priest's reputation.

Representatives of the Archdiocese of Boston have met with the parish staff of St. Louis de France Parish and an announcement is planned to be made to the parish community during this evening's Mass. Efforts are at present being made to inform the people of the parish regarding this situation. A Regional Bishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, a clinical social worker, and other support staff will be present during the weekend Masses to inform parishioners and provide assistance during this upsetting time for the parish community.

Our prayers continue to be with victims and their families, the faithful of the Archdiocese, the priests, deacons, men and women religious, and all those who have been affected by instances of child abuse by members of the clergy.

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