

The challenges of transparency

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Staff Reports

A commitment to transparency has raised new challenges. Some parishioners are questioning why public announcements are being made about sexual abuse allegations involving priests that have not been substantiated or fully investigated by law enforcement.

Former and current parishioners have spoken in a few media reports saying that public announcements of these allegations are a rush to judgment.

The Diocese of Greensburg's policy is to the contact PA ChildLine within 24 hours of receiving an allegation and contact the appropriate district attorney. The priest is also removed from his place of ministry and not permitted to function in active ministry pending the results of the investigation. A credible allegation is one that has a believable narrative that fits the details of person, place, date and time. There are specifics that make it impossible to disregard. It's something that any reasonable person would say is plausible.

Bishop Edward C. Malesic said, "Protecting children is a top priority. We know how important our actions and level of transparency are to survivors, parishioners and clergy. That is why we are making these public announcements. I understand how difficult dimensions

of this policy can be, but this is the reality of 'zero tolerance.'"

The Diocese of Pittsburgh said they received an allegation of sexual misconduct involving a young woman from 50 years ago. The allegation was made against then Msgr. Anthony G. Bosco, who later served as Bishop of the Diocese of Greensburg from 1987-2004. It was the first and only allegation of misconduct against Bishop Bosco received by either Diocese.

In the last two weeks, Msgr. Michael W. Matusak and Father Joseph E. Bonafed were removed from active ministry and the allegations were publicized.

A 20-year old allegation against Msgr. Matusak was made in mid-August. It was the first and only allegation the Diocese received against him.

One week later, a 28-year-old allegation was made against Father Bonafed. In a statement, the Diocese said, "A credible allegation does not mean it has been substantiated or proven. This announcement in no way implies Father Bonafed is guilty." That same statement was made of Msgr. Matusak.

Bishop Malesic said, "The protection of children is a top

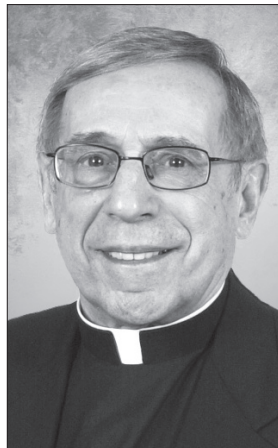
priority of the Church. So, in the event of any credible allegation we will continue to follow our policy."

Bishop Malesic said that if an investigation into a clergy sexual abuse allegation is found to be unsubstantiated, the Diocese is committed to announcing those findings and restoring the cleric to ministry. "I will do all within my power to ensure that there is restoration of that person's

good name and his continued ministry in the priesthood and the Diocese," he said.

In the case of Bishop Bosco, Bishop Malesic said he was deeply shocked upon hearing of the allegation. He said he supports an investigation.

"I believe Bishop Bosco would have understood why the Diocese of Pittsburgh made the report and publicized the allegation for the sake of seeking justice," Bishop Malesic said.



Bishop Anthony G. Bosco

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