

Statement to Media

I am a husband and father of seven children, a parishioner of Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Hamburg, and was employed as the Parish's Business Manager.

Late in 2005, I reported the facts of what I had accidentally discovered regarding Father William Thomas' private activity involving youth homosexual internet pornography to officials at the Catholic Diocese of Lansing. I was obligated to report this to Monsignor Michael Murphy, Diocesan Moderator of the Curia in mandatory compliance with the Diocese' own published policy and procedures regarding sexual misconduct. Father Thomas was called to appear before the Bishop. According to the attorney for the Diocese, Michael Murray, Bishop Mengeling told Father to return to the parish, get all that material off the computer and behave properly and do not retaliate against the whistle-blower.

I perceived a real and grossly neglected danger for the youth of the parish. Subsequently, I obtained legal counsel and approached the Bishop. I offered the Diocese a choice. Either they remove Father Thomas from ministry and protect the children within 48 hours, or do nothing, in which case I will go public with my discovery of Father's activities. Father was removed within the timeframe requested (October 5, 2005). Father immediately went on the defense as he departed in proclaiming his innocence and slandered me to fellow parishioners, yet told a couple of others that what he did may have been immoral, but was not illegal. In another contradiction, when faced with the Bishop, he said he was doing research after previously denying knowledge of any sexual content on his computer.

According to a parishioner, several days before his departure, Father expressed an intent to bring his computer to Ave Maria (he did not specify which entity) and have the hard drive erased.

In the days that followed, the staff of the parish was visited by Father David Howell, Judicial Vicar for our region of the Diocese. Father Howell instructed us to tell people that Father Thomas' departure and leave of absence was of his own choosing which was not true. A day later, Father Steven Makranyi arrived to serve as temporary Canonical Administrator of Holy Spirit Parish.

A criminal investigation ensued involving the Livingston County Prosecutor's office, the Attorney General's office and the Michigan State Police. I was interviewed by Robert Peplinski of the Attorney General's office and I submitted to him the evidence of my discovery. A report of the investigation which ultimately ended up under the jurisdiction of the State Police is now public record.

In December, my wife and I met at the Diocese with Monsignor Michael Murphy, and Diocesan attorney, Michael Murray in an effort to plead for an official of the Diocese to formally address our devastated parish to comfort and assure them. The diocese refused to do this. To this date, the Diocese of Lansing has been silent regarding Father Thomas.

This silence permitted rumors and insinuations to further tear our faith community apart and leave my position vulnerable to defamation by those loyal to Father Thomas.

In the ensuing 19 months since the incident, I have endured relentless and documented harassment, slander and libel from the few zealous supporters that Father has in the parish including members of the Parish Council and the Finance Council. False rumors and contrived stories were disseminated continually to attack my credibility, character and abilities. Despite repeated appeals, this harassment was minimized and shockingly ignored by the Diocesan leadership and Father Makranyi.

On May 29, 2007, I was abruptly terminated. The reason given was the dissolution of the position for “budgetary” reasons. I was treated like a criminal, told to leave immediately and my personal property was to be gathered by others and returned to me at a later time. I was offered a severance package contingent upon my signing a release. The release waives any and all rights now or in the future for action or disclosure for addressing this injustice, including the sealing of the details of the release itself. A letter of recommendation as well as health insurance for my family would only be given if I sign this release. This is both shameful and outrageous. I believe this could appropriately be called “hush money”.

It is somewhat ironic that a stressed budget is stated as the reason for my dismissal. Father Thomas is sitting up in his cottage in Bear Lake collecting full pay and benefits from the Parish while still bearing the title, Pastor after what he has done. And I who, for the welfare of the children of the church, did only what was right, am harassed, insulted and ultimately terminated without a source of income to support my wife and seven children.

Is it any wonder why people won't do the right thing when they consider the cost? Is it any wonder why the men of Church leadership globally are suspect and lack credibility?

Patrick Flynn