

November 16, 2015

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci
Diocese of Manchester
153 Ash Street
Manchester, NH 03104

Re: 2015 Diocesan Review Board Audit

Dear Bishop Libasci:

The Diocese of Manchester's *Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal* Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People (Policy) provides that on a regular basis, the Diocesan Review Board (DRB) will conduct an audit of the Office for Ministerial Conduct.

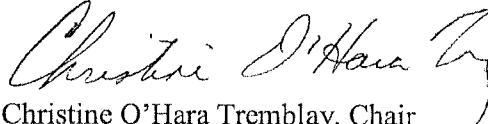
For its most recent audit, the DRB decided to review the procedures currently in place for the oversight of those diocesan priests who are currently serving a life of prayer and penance due to sexual abuse of minors. In particular, the objective of this audit was to verify that the diocese is providing care and oversight to these priests in accordance with the *Promise to Protect* Policy.

On behalf of the DRB, I am pleased to present you with the enclosed report. Our findings included the determination that priests who are serving a life of prayer and penance are being provided with regular contact from assigned staff as well as opportunities for spiritual growth. The enclosed report includes some recommendations regarding documentation of contacts and the development of a written protocol.

The DRB wishes to thank Deacon Richard Shannon, Rev. Richard Thompson, and members of the Office for Ministerial Conduct for their assistance in conducting this audit.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the audit report or recommendations, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Christine O'Hara Tremblay, Chair
Diocesan Review Board

DIOCESAN REVIEW BOARD AUDIT REPORT OCTOBER 2015

In accordance with the *Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal* Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People, in 2015, the Diocesan Review Board conducted an audit of the Diocese of Manchester Office for Ministerial Conduct. The Diocesan Review Board determined that the focus of its annual audit in 2015 was to review the procedures currently in place for the oversight of those diocesan priests who are currently serving a “life of prayer and penance”¹ due to sexual abuse of minors. In particular, the objective of this audit was to verify that the diocese is providing care and oversight to these priests in accordance with the *Promise to Protect* Policy, which states, “the cleric will be offered appropriate professional assistance for his own healing and well-being as well as for the prevention of further abusive conduct.” (Policy, page 6)

Audit Procedure

The following steps were taken by a subcommittee of the Diocesan Review Board consisting of Rev. Michael Gendron and Lisa Jobin, LCMHC in order to determine and verify what type of care and oversight is provided to priests who are serving a life of prayer and penance:

- The auditors reviewed quarterly reports pertaining to each priest who is serving a life of prayer and penance;
- The auditors interviewed Deacon Richard Shannon, M.S.W., and were provided with his position description as Social Worker for Restricted Priests;
- Fr. Gendron interviewed Rev. Richard Thompson, Co-Vicar for Clergy, who supervises Deacon Shannon and who also provides pastoral care and support to the restricted priests. (Please note that Rev. Mark Dollard, Co-Vicar for Clergy, is now assigned this responsibility).

Findings

Our findings were as follows:

There are currently seven (7) diocesan priests serving a life of prayer and penance. Of these, five (5) reside in assisted care facilities (four in New Hampshire and one in a state outside of NH), and two (2) live in private residences in New Hampshire. The social worker for restricted priests meets weekly with each of the four priests who reside in the New Hampshire assisted living facility. In respect to the other three, two regularly receive phone calls and/or pastoral visits from the social worker for restricted priests and one receives pastoral care from another member of the clergy. The majority of the priests who are currently serving a life of prayer and penance are elderly.

Each priest’s file contains written reports which summarize the pastoral support visits/contacts that have taken place for that particular priest. Some of the reports were undated or the dates on

¹ When a cleric is required to lead a life of prayer and penance, he is not be permitted to celebrate Mass publicly, to wear clerical garb, or to present himself publicly as a priest or deacon.

which visits took place were not clear. It was difficult to determine if these reports are being completed on a quarterly basis, as is the established procedure. However, after speaking with Deacon Shannon and Father Thompson, we are confident that visits and other contacts to restricted priests are being completed. Those living in the assisted living facility in New Hampshire receive a high level of care and oversight, while those living on their own or outside of New Hampshire receive a lesser amount of contact. It was stated that a standard series of questions are covered during each formal visit from the social worker for restricted priests, in order to determine whether they need additional care, follow-up, or monitoring.

Priests who are serving a life of prayer and penance are meant to continually work on their spiritual formation. They are given the opportunity to attend retreats and participate in Masses that are closed to the public.

Recommendations

1. While it is clear that the Policy is being followed and that the restricted priests are being provided with care and regular contact, we recommend that the diocese establish an internal, written protocol that sets forth the steps that are taken to monitor and support priests who are serving a life of prayer and penance. This protocol can serve as a guideline should a priest be assigned to a life of prayer and penance in the future. It is suggested that this protocol address the frequency of pastoral care visits or contacts, which may vary depending upon the priest's circumstances and place of residence. The protocol should also reference the questions that should be addressed during the contact visits. We also recommend that the protocol state who is responsible for reviewing the social worker's quarterly reports, so that follow-up can take place, as needed.
2. We recommend that quarterly reports be more standardized and include information such as: the date that the priest entered a life of prayer and penance; dates of pastoral visits/contacts; date of the report; and the priest's responses to standardized questions.