



April 19, 2021

To all Diocesan and Religious Priests:

In the summer of 2016, allegations of a serious nature, against **Father Fred Olds**, were brought to the attention of the Archdiocese. The allegations involved repeated and ongoing acts of sexual abuse of young men, though not minors, in the context of counselling. As the Archdiocese takes such accusations very seriously, a preliminary investigation was made by an independent psychologist. This investigation uncovered information which indicated the allegations bore the semblance of truth. Thereupon, as per our diocesan protocol, by way of an administrative measure (decree), I temporarily suspended Fr. Olds from all forms of ministry.

To view the message that I gave to the parishioners (at that time) of St. Bernadette Parish, please click on the following link: https://cacr-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/bureaumgr_archsaintboniface_ca/Eblrb5nl43FNlaxJeOGbyRcBICzTOObSgrH4KAEUs8RXfg?e=16fToz

To view my message to the priests (at that time): https://cacr-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/bureaumgr_archsaintboniface_ca/EYSiWUgygfdDvN3L96bcf_sBDbY-2ozSMRf30ICWCBsNQg?e=zmYc0e

To view the Press Release (at that time): https://cacr-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/bureaumgr_archsaintboniface_ca/EUjROgU0qUhAudPIpS4gQY0BJZ76l_FUeBB8sSRoTCZ_IQ?e=Fn0KFj

I then turned to the Offices of the Apostolic See, at the Vatican, for guidance and direction. Firstly, I inquired at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which has jurisdiction over cases of sexual abuse of minors, but also of vulnerable adults. After considering the dossier, they directed me to address myself, instead, to the Congregation for the Clergy, which deals with the ministry and life of the clergy.

The Congregation for the Clergy instructed me to undertake a formal canonical trial, or a Penal Administrative Process according to Canon Law (the body of ecclesiastical laws of the Roman Catholic Church), and, more specifically, those canons which apply in such situations. To carry this out, a Case-Instructor (or director), for this Penal Administrative Process was hired, namely, a priest and professor of Canon Law, from another diocese,

with the required qualifications and experience in such matters. This was to make sure that all steps were properly taken according to the laws of the Church, to assure the discovery of the full facts, and to ensure that the rights of Fr. Olds would be protected. From the very beginning of this process, Fr. Olds engaged the services of a professional canon lawyer as his canonical advocate. Additionally, he was advised to seek the services of a civil lawyer.

Overall, the Case-Instructor interviewed 15 witnesses, and organized all the materials, according to the mandate of the Congregation for the Clergy, in order that they might reach a just judgment. Throughout the entire process, by means of his canonical advocate, Fr. Olds was given the opportunity to respond, and was apprised of the various steps of the process. However, he chose not to be interviewed, by the Case-Instructor, or to name any witnesses on his behalf. Subsequently, the entire case file was reviewed by two priest-assessors from another diocese, renowned for their counsel. Then, the documentation (*acta*) was sent to the Congregation for the Clergy for their judgement on November 30, 2018. The Congregation replied, on March 8, 2019, asking for further clarification and information. All in all, the entire process took far longer than was expected or desired, in that further persons were interviewed, and additional documentation collected in 2019.

Again, in July 2020, the same two priest-assessors were consulted for their advice on the case. Finally, in November 2020, the documentation containing the supplementary elements requested was sent to the Congregation for the Clergy, for their judgement, both upon the case, and upon my petition to the Holy Father, that he impose upon Fr Olds the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state, as foreseen by canons 1395, §1 and 1399 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*.

On February 27, 2021, a “Supreme Decision admitting of no possibility of appeal and subject to no recourse of any type whatsoever” was made by the Congregation for the Clergy, acting on behalf of the Holy Father. In summary their judgement is the following:

Fr. Olds is dismissed from the clerical state, together with the related dispensation from priestly obligations, including celibacy.... The Congregation reached moral certitude that he engaged in grooming of young men, who were struggling with, or recovering from, drug or alcohol addiction by attempting to become a father-figure to them ... becoming increasingly overly tactile in counselling situations.... There is established a clear pattern of grooming young men, struggling with addictions, to eventually engage in sexual behaviour.

Based upon the above-mentioned judgement, a legal document (rescript) was issued, whereby Fr. Olds was dismissed, by Pope Francis, from the clerical state, together with the related dispensation from priestly obligations including celibacy. In common

parlance, Fr. Olds has been returned to the lay state by the Holy Father.

The meaning and effects of this dismissal from the clerical state are:

- 1) Fred Olds may, when properly disposed, continue to receive the Sacraments of the Church, as any other lay person;
- 2) However, he may no longer celebrate or concelebrate the Eucharist (Mass), publicly or privately, nor may he administer the other Sacraments of the Church; he may not distribute Holy Communion to Christ's faithful as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist.

I realize that the shock, and all the attendant emotions people will have upon receiving this information, will be very strong. Firstly, I ask all to acknowledge and hold deeply in their hearts, the pain and lasting wounds of the several victims. Along the way, as we could, and as it was requested, we have sought to support the victims and their families, in their journey of healing.

Additionally, I ask all the priests in our diocese to consider anew the responsibilities they received upon their ordination, and the commitment, which is theirs, as evidenced by their having undertaken to live out their priestly obligations, as required by ecclesiastical law, and as clarified in the elements of the *Code of Conduct of Priests of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface*.

And finally, I ask all to pray, to entrust all of these matters, and the life of the Church into the hands of God. Let us pray for the individuals who were wounded and for their families and friends. Let us pray, also, for Fred Olds. Let us pray for the clergy and the lay faithful of the whole diocese, that we will do everything to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all who approach the Lord and His Church.

Out of respect for, and the protection of, the privacy and wellbeing of the victims, no further details of the incidents will be given. That having been said, if there are further victims of Fred Olds' actions, beyond those already identified, who wish to approach the Church with their story, I invite them, or their family members to contact Sophia Ali, Bishop's Delegate, registered social worker and member of our Diocesan Advisory Committee for a Safe Church Environment. She has been mandated to this effect, i.e., to be the Intake Officer receiving allegations and ensuring that these accounts are brought to the proper authorities including the Diocesan Advisory Committee for follow-up. She can be reached at reportabuse@archsaintboniface.ca or at 204-594-0300. The Archdiocese commits itself to listen to, and aid, as best it can, all who have been hurt by those acting in the name of the Church.

However, wishing to give an opportunity for the priests, and, following that, for the members of St. Bernadette's and St. Timothy's Parishes, who have questions of the process that was followed, I will make myself available through

Zoom meetings. Presently, we cannot have indoor gatherings with more than five people. Nevertheless, I reiterate that no further details will be divulged about the incidents already reported, verified, and documented in the materials that were submitted to the Congregation for the Clergy at the Vatican.

One of my purposes in meeting people in this manner is to explain, in a fuller way, the steps taken in this matter, so as to allay fears of a lack of transparency. However, I especially wish to discuss together how best to protect the vulnerable, and to ensure a safe environment in our parish communities, and throughout the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface. Abuse and harassment of any kind have no place in the life of our Church.

In closing, I entrust the Archdiocese and all within it, to the intercession and the protection of Saint Joseph, the principal patron of the Catholic Church in Canada.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Albert LeGatt

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Archbishop of Saint Boniface