

Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Diocese responds to press conference held today

Following a press conference held today by Matthew Bojanowski, the Diocese of Buffalo would like to respond to several issues that were raised.

By way of background:

- Steven Halter, the Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility, is investigating matters regarding Mr. Bojanowski. The investigation included interviews with Mr. Bojanowski and his mother in March of this year. Mr. Halter also spoke with Mr. Bojanowski earlier this month.
- Mr. Halter advised Mr. Bojanowski on both occasions to report any improper conduct to police and/or his current employer. As far as the Diocese knows, Mr. Bojanowski never did.
- To be clear, Mr. Bojanowski in his original complaint did not allege any sexual abuse on the part of Fr. Jeffrey Nowak towards himself.

Today's press conference/comparisons to child complaints:

- At today's press conference, there was a lot of comparison between Mr. Bojanowski's complaints and the complaints made regarding children or other adults alleging to have been abused by a priest. Mr. Bojanowski's case is very different. Mr. Bojanowski's interactions with Fr. Nowak occurred when he was an adult in his thirties, not when he was a minor.
- Mr. Bojanowski does claim that he received unwanted attention from Fr. Nowak. Mr. Halter has conducted a number of interviews with Fr. Nowak about Mr. Bojanowski's claims. Mr. Halter has also interviewed other individuals besides Mr. Bojanowski, his mother, and Fr. Nowak.
- This is a very complex matter and many interviews are still to be conducted. We want to be fair to everyone as these are important issues. Investigations can take a very long time due to many variables.

Investigation of Fr. Nowak:

- Regarding Fr. Nowak, the diocese announced several months ago that it was investigating Fr. Nowak. Fr. Nowak has been asked to undergo evaluation and has been informed that he is on leave from his parish assignment.

Comments about Mr. Halter:

- We do want to respond to Mr. Bojanowski's criticism of Mr. Halter's investigation. Mr. Halter spoke to Mr. Bojanowski just moments before the press conference began today. Mr. Bojanowski's attorney was standing near him. Mr. Halter offered to meet with Mr. Bojanowski again if he had any more information he wanted to share with him. Mr. Bojanowski's attorney advised that he would be in touch with Mr. Halter.

- Mr. Halter has 28 years of experience as a federal investigator. When he took his position as Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility, he told Bishop Malone that he intended to conduct his investigations at the Diocese in the same way he did in his previous career. Mr. Halter has made it clear on several occasions that he is not at the Diocese to protect Bishop Malone, but rather that he is at the Diocese to get to the truth. Mr. Halter has stated that he follows evidence no matter where it leads, and then makes his report to the Review Board. His investigations have resulted in priests being removed from ministry and the claims being substantiated by the Review Board and ultimately the Bishop. To affirm, it is Mr Halter's job to get to the truth and report it and he has vowed to continue to do that to the best of his ability.

Regarding the seal of the confessional:

- Investigative information has been provided to a canon lawyer for the Diocese of Buffalo.
- Given the information we have today, and after review by a canon lawyer, Mr. Bojanowski has not provided any specific evidence to support his claim that the seal of the confessional has been broken.
- The allegation that a priest violated the seal of confession is one of the most serious accusations anyone can make; it is not taken lightly.
- Mr. Bojanowski or his attorney is free to call Mr. Halter anytime about this issue.
- Fr. Nowak denied violating the seal of confession related to Mr. Bojanowski when interviewed by Mr. Halter. In order to investigate this complaint, specific evidence needs to be known. Until all the information is uncovered, no definitive determination can be made.
- Mr. Halter has been trying to contact Mr. Bojanowski, both directly and indirectly, in recent weeks concerning his claim. Mr. Bojanowski has not responded and is now represented by counsel. Mr. Bojanowski's initial accusation was vague and when he was interviewed as part of the larger investigation about Fr. Nowak, he did not provide any specifics. Mr. Halter will continue to try and gather the facts and will turn them over to a canon lawyer when appropriate.

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