

September 26, 2013
Year of Faith

Dear friends in the Lord:

How saddened I am whenever I have to bring difficult news to a parish. How much sadder I am when that news pertains to something as serious as the abuse of minors. You've let us know that, when there is bad news, you prefer to hear it from me, not someone else.

I am aware that Holy Name of Mary Parish has already been through much pain and suffering, having had two pastors removed and dismissed from the priesthood for this reason. Now, I must come to you to announce that Deacon Al Mazza has been removed from ministry based on credible and substantiated allegations of the abuse of minors.

Several months ago, the archdiocese received allegations from the Westchester district attorney's office that Deacon Mazza had many years ago engaged in immoral and illegal conduct with minors. I thank the victims for their courage in coming forward with their somber stories. The allegations had been carefully investigated by the Croton-on-Hudson police department and the district attorney which concluded that, though the allegations were credible, state law precludes a criminal charge. The district attorney referred the matter to the archdiocese for further action. We are grateful to the Westchester district attorney and the Croton-on-Hudson police department for notifying the archdiocese of this matter and their diligence and professional assistance. Immediately after having received the victim's complaint this summer, Deacon Mazza was placed on administrative leave while the matter was investigated. The matter was then referred to our archdiocesan review board which, late last week, came to the same conclusion, recommending that Deacon Mazza be permanently removed from ministry.

I have accepted the board's recommendation, and asked Monsignor Edward Weber, our director of priest personnel, to read this letter at the Sunday Masses this weekend so as to assure you that the archdiocese acts promptly, definitively, firmly, and openly whenever a horrific instance of the abuse of a minor is brought to our attention.

As you know, the Church learned a painful lesson in not communicating the abuse of minors to the faithful as soon as it became aware of it. Now, the Church leads the way with action and transparency, with this sad situation here at this parish serving as an example.

To be fair to Deacon Mazza, he will have the opportunity to seek canonical advice, should he desire it, in responding to the allegations made against him and my petition to the Holy Father that he be permanently dismissed from ministry.

Again, I am so very sorry to have to bring this sad matter to your attention, especially given that this parish has suffered so terribly in the past for the same reason.

Please keep the victims in your prayers in a very special way, and please pray for Deacon Mazza as well.

Finally, should anyone have anything to report in this regard, please contact one of our victims' assistance coordinators, Sister Eileen Clifford, O.P. at 212-371-1000 x2949, or Deacon George J. Coppola at 917-861-1762. If you call your pastor, Father Brian Brennan, he can give you these numbers again.

With prayerful best wishes, I am,

Faithfully in Christ,

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York