

ARCHDIOCESE OF OTTAWA
1247 Kilborn Place, Ottawa ON K1H 6K9
Tel 613-738-5025 Fax 613-738-0130
www.CatholicOttawa.ca



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ARCHDIOCESE COMMENTS ON LEGAL ACTION CONCERNING THE
LATE JEAN GRAVEL**

In recent days, new reports have circulated with respect to a law suit against the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa with respect to allegations of sexual abuse committed by a former priest of the Archdiocese, the late Jean Gravel.

In the absence of Archbishop Terrence Prendergast who is currently on spiritual retreat with the English-language priests of the archdiocese, the Vicar General, Monsignor Kevin Beach, issued the following statement:

“John’s painful story is a reminder that most sexual abuse against a minor is committed by a family member, or a close family friend. By the facts known to us, it appears that the late Jean Gravel had access to John, not by virtue of his role as a priest or pastor, but by reason of his being a member of the Gravel family.

Jean Gravel’s story is tragic as it is scandalous. Ordained a priest in 1950, he exhibited behavioural problems which required diocesan authorities of the time to intervene, seeking his correction and rehabilitation. After criminal charges and a trial leading to Gravel’s conviction in the late 1960’s, the Archbishop of Ottawa of the time, the late Joseph-Aurèle Plourde, successfully petitioned the Vatican to have Gravel dismissed from the clerical state (“laicized”) in 1970.

In my conversations with John, I learned that Jean Gravel took his own life in 1980.

As John mentioned in his public statement, we listened to his painful story with a sympathetic ear. That is more than three years ago. Since that time, on the basis of pastoral care and not on the basis of legal liability, we have assisted John in his search for healing. In the resolution of any claim of abuse, we ask victims to seek independent legal advice. It appears that John, with the advice of his lawyer, has decided to sue the Archdiocese rather than settle the matter without litigation. We will engage in the process, seeking a just solution that addresses John’s circumstances.

In conclusion, I note what Archbishop Prendergast has said on previous occasions: 'Our diocese is committed to creating a safe environment in the Church for minors and other vulnerable persons.'"

As this matter is before the courts, no other comment will be made at this time.

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Media contact: **Sarah Du Broy**
Communications Officer
613-738-5025, ext. 238
sdubroy@archottawa.ca