

Third Party Privacy Rights

[REDACTED]
November 9, 1992

Most Reverend Roger Mahony
Cardinal Archbishop of Los Angeles
Archdiocese of Los Angeles
1531 West Ninth Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015-1194

Dear Cardinal Mahony:

You have not met us, declining our offer to meet with you in 1989, referring us instead to your auxiliary, Bishop Patrick Ziemann. Our names and our story should be familiar to you. You should remember that in September of 1989, Fr. Phillip Mark Wolfe, O.F.M. was convicted of felony sexual molestation of [REDACTED]. He admitted of like activity with [REDACTED]. Since the [REDACTED] was by then 21 years of age, the statute of limitations had already run out. Therefore, there was no legal punishment for more than three years of very serious on going sexual molestation under threat to maintain his silence.

What you must know is that in December of 1991, we learned that [REDACTED] had also been sexually molested when he was around the age of 10 by Fr. Robert Van Handel, O.F.M., founder of the Santa Barbara Boys' Choir, faculty member and sometime Rector of Saint Anthony's Seminary in Santa Barbara. A criminal complaint has been filed with the Santa Barbara Police Department.

You denied jurisdiction in the earlier cases because the priest perpetrator was a Franciscan. Once again we beg to differ with that posture, knowing that no priest can function in the archdiocese without archdiocesan permission.

The circle of pain, distrust and damage caused by these men is

growing and becoming increasingly known in our community. This is despite years and months respectively of public Church silence.

The destruction to young lives is impossible to measure or even estimate. The pain of parents, family members and other community members cannot be described in just a few words, as we consider the betrayal and manipulation by our dearly loved and trusted priests.

It is time for the official Church to publicly address this source of pain and destruction. It refuses to go away. It intrudes and weighs down all the other moments of our lives. We are attempting to continue our lives in the shadow of our children's suffering and our own pain of betrayal and loss.

We spoke of these matters with your Episcopal Vicar, Reverend Monsignor John Rohde. We asked that you be personally informed of these tragic developments and our requests for further action by you. Your support staff was not satisfied with the verbal requests as conveyed by Monsignor Rohde. They asked that we put our challenges in writing. So, once again we are writing to you hoping that you will take a more proactive approach this time. Now that this is being put in written form you will note that the letter is being shared with interested members of the community.

Cardinal Mahony, we challenge you as spiritual leader of this archdiocese, as shepherd of a wounded and wandering flock to address this horror, the destruction of our children's lives by sexual abuse by clergy. We challenge you to make a public statement regarding this matter.

Further, we challenge you to form an independent committee to formulate a policy for education, prevention, and response to this evil that includes proper reporting to civil authorities. If such a policy exists, it should be reviewed especially as it pertains to outreach and care of victims and family members. It should define a response to those molested by Order priests, who receive their permission to work in the area from the Archdiocese.

Finally, we challenge you to implement age-appropriate programs of education to teach children in Kindergarten through High School to protect themselves from all forms of sexual abuse. These programs should be in place and operational in one year. If adequately and

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sensitively educated, the children are their own best first line of defense. There needs to be concurrent seminars for parents to educate them and foster knowledge so that the children may turn to their parents and to other adults in safety, knowing that they will be believed and threats cannot be made good to enforce their silence.

These three items can be accomplished without great difficulty or expense. They do require a firm commitment to the safety and health of our children and young people. Implementation of these measures would go a long way toward lessening the heart rending, soul slaying anguish of the horror of clerical sexual abuse.

We are ready to meet with you at any time to discuss these three items and any related matters.

You must know that the good works and ministry of the archdiocese have been undermined by this horrendous evil. No ministry has any value if its price is paid with the life of one child. The archdiocese can remain silent no longer in this matter.

Sincerely yours,



cc: Bishop Patrick Ziemann

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Rev. Tom West, O.F.M.

Rev. Msgr. John Rohde

Editor Los Angeles Times

Editor National Catholic Reporter

President of Call to Action

President of V.O.C.A.L. (Victims of Clergy Abuse Link Up)

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