

Statement Regarding Rev. Michael W. O'Connell, Pastor of St. Alphonsus Parish

Rev. Michael W. O'Connell has agreed to step aside from St. Alphonsus Parish in Chicago, following receipt earlier this week by the Archdiocese of Chicago, of an allegation that he engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor almost 20 years ago while at his previous parish. Fr. O'Connell has agreed to take this action at the request of Cardinal George and is doing so out of pastoral concern for the safety of children.

The allegation was received by the Archdiocesan Office for Child Abuse Investigations and Review and reported to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Cook County State's Attorney. In compliance with the requirements of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Archdiocese has also begun its investigation of this matter.

This action is not a judgment of guilt. Fr. O'Connell remains, according to church law, the pastor of St. Alphonsus Parish; however, he has agreed to reside away from the parish until the investigation is concluded.

The abuse of any child is a crime and a sin. As always, the safety of children is of paramount importance. The Archdiocese of Chicago takes all allegations of sexual misconduct seriously and encourages anyone who feels they have been sexually abused by a priest, deacon, religious or lay employee, to come forward. Complete information about reporting clerical sexual abuse can be found on the Archdiocesan web site at www.archchicago.org.