



ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

Office of Communication & Mission Promotion

PRESS RELEASE

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Archdiocese responds to Fr. Drew being placed on a leave of absence

Review of Fr. Drew's Assignments - Handout

- Music Minister at St. Jude Parish - 1984-1999
- Music Teacher at Elder High School - 1988-1991
- Mount St. Mary's Seminary of the West - 1999-2004
- Internship year at St. Anthony, Madisonville - 2001-02
- Ordained a priest of the Archdiocese - May 2004
- Parochial Vicar at St. Luke, Beavercreek - July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005
- Pastor of St. Rita, Dayton - July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2009
- Pastor of St. Maximilian Kolbe, Liberty Township - July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2018
- Pastor of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Cincinnati - appointed July 1, 2018

Archbishop Schnurr Quote:

"It's obvious that in this matter we have handled things very, very poorly, made serious mistakes. And for that I am deeply, deeply apologetic. I'm deeply sorry. I'm sorry for the pain that this has caused so many people."

"I want to assure everybody that we have learned from this experience and that we are making necessary procedural and personnel changes that are, indeed, necessary to not repeat it."

"To the people who have been impacted by this, I express my deep sorrow and my deep apologies."

Details

- In 2013 and again in 2015, the central office of the archdiocese received concerns from St. Maximilian Kolbe parishioners regarding Fr. Drew's behavior. The alleged behavior involved a pattern of such things as uninvited bear hugs, shoulder massages, patting of the leg above the knee, and

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inappropriate sexual comments about one's body or appearance, directed at teenage boys. This behavior naturally made these boys uncomfortable. In addition, there was a report of Fr. Drew texting some of the boys "teasing them about girlfriends."

- The concerns reported to the central office were promptly forwarded to the Butler County Prosecutor's Office and Butler County Children's Services. The investigation by the Prosecutor's Office found no evidence of criminal behavior. **Having received notice that the Prosecutor's Office had concluded its investigation, we should have investigated either on our own or through a third party. We failed by not doing so.** (Note: Conducting a third-party investigation in such a circumstance has been our standard operating procedure for the past year.)
- Bishop Binzer, in his role as Director of Priest Personnel, addressed Fr. Drew's behavior with him on two separate occasions prior to 2018. Fr. Drew said that he was unaware of the concerns of the parishioners and said that he would change his behavior.
- The central offices of the archdiocese received no complaints about Fr. Drew from October 2015 until August 2018.
- With the departure of Fr. St. George as pastor, St. Ignatius became what is known as "open listed." That is, the Priest Personnel Board advertised the open position to the priests of the archdiocese and invited indications of interest. Fr. Drew indicated to the Board that he would like to be considered. Fr. Drew said that his mother lives close to the parish and he would like to move closer to her. **He was not asked to leave St. Max.** Under our policy, he could have stayed at St. Max for an additional 3 years.
- In August 2018, the month after Fr. Drew was assigned as pastor of St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish, the central office received a complaint via letter from a St. Maximilian Kolbe parishioner essentially reiterating the 2015 and earlier concerns. This letter was turned over to the Butler County Prosecutor's Office for investigation.
- In September 2018, at the recommendation of the Butler County Prosecutor, Fr. Drew was asked to restrict his involvement with the school during the investigation and was assigned a "monitor" – essentially for accountability – with whom to regularly meet. **Our acceptance of this recommendation, combined with inadequate oversight, was obviously ineffective and a mistake, and we will not repeat it.**

- In October 2018, Bishop Binzer received a letter from a St. Ignatius parishioner describing her son-in-law's very negative reaction to Fr. Drew dating back to his experiences with then-Mr. Geoff Drew at Elder High School. The son-in-law stated that Fr. Drew inappropriately touched his leg and made him feel very uncomfortable. This letter was promptly forwarded to the Butler County Prosecutor to inform their investigation which was in progress.
- Fr. Angi received the Butler County Prosecutor's investigation report in early February 2019. The Prosecutor's Office again found no evidence of criminal behavior.
- Because the allegations involved possible violations of the *Decree on Child Protection*, Fr. Angi commissioned Strategic HR – an independent investigation firm used by many organizations and major corporations – to investigate. This investigation began in February 2019. Fr. Drew was asked to continue to restrict his involvement with the school during this investigation.
- In May 2019, Fr. Angi received the investigation report from Strategic HR. The investigation uncovered no criminal behavior, but recommended that Fr. Drew be provided professional and targeted counseling surrounding his emotional IQ and how he interacts with people in the way he communicates and physical interactions. Fr. Drew began attending counseling sessions with a psychologist in June 2019.
- In June 2019, while Fr. Drew was in counseling, a complaint was received by the central office from a St. Ignatius family alleging that Fr. Drew had texted their teenage son. This complaint was immediately turned over to the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office. Their investigation confirmed the texting – which is a violation of the *Decree on Child Protection* – but revealed no criminal behavior on the part of Fr. Drew. The content of the messages was innocuous.
- Given the pattern of behavior in contradiction to the *Decree on Child Protection*, Archbishop Schnurr removed Fr. Drew as pastor of St. Ignatius on July 23, placing him on a leave of absence and ordering him sent for comprehensive physical, psychological and spiritual evaluation at an independent in-patient treatment facility.
- On July 31, 2019, Deacon Tim Helmick was named Temporary Administrator of St. Ignatius parish.
- We obviously made serious mistakes in our handling of this matter, including:

- In 2013 and 2015, we should have launched an independent third-party investigation of Fr. Drew and not relied solely on the criminal investigations.
- In 2018, when we put restrictions on Fr. Drew's interaction with the children of St. Ignatius, we should have put much stronger verification in place, including telling certain St. Ignatius parish and school leaders.

Moving Forward -

- Moving forward, **we will not have any monitored or restricted priests**. If there are serious concerns that have the semblance of truth, the priest will be put on leave pending investigation and will be subject to appropriate action based on the results of the investigation and other circumstances. This is consistent with how we treat serious allegations against lay staff members today. **There must be one consistent standard of conduct whether one is a priest or a lay person.**
- We are also working on **personnel and procedural changes** to be announced in the very near future to ensure that every member of the Priest Personnel Board has complete insight into a priest's background and profile before an assignment is made. These changes include adding lay people to the Board.
- At my request, Fr. Angi will be commissioning Strategic HR to conduct an independent investigation of Fr. Drew back to his employment as music minister at St. Jude parish. This includes Fr. Drew's employment at Elder High School.

We ask that the media to share the following:

Please report suspicious or criminal allegations to:

Mr. Mark Piepmeier
Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office
mark.piepmeier@hcpros.org
513.946.3078

Ms. Teresa Maley
Coordinator of Ministry to Survivors of Abuse, Archdiocese of Cincinnati
tmaley@catholiccincinnati.org

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513.263.6623 or 1.800.686.2724 ext. 6623

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati is the 44th largest Catholic diocese in the country, with more than 450,000 Catholics, and has the fifth largest Catholic school system in terms of enrollment with more than 40,000 students. The 19-county territory includes 211 parishes and 111 Catholic primary and secondary schools.

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