



July 5, 2019  
*St. Anthony Zaccaria*

TO: Priests, Deacons & Chancery Personnel

FROM: Harrison H. Garlick  
Chancellor & In-House Counsel

RE: Priest on Administrative Leave

### MEMORANDUM

As the head of the Diocese of Tulsa & Eastern Oklahoma (“Diocese”), Bishop Konderla is fully committed to the *Policies & Procedures for the Protection of Children & Young People* (“Policies”). As part of that commitment, Bishop Konderla has placed **Father Joe Townsend**, a priest of the Diocese, on administrative leave due to a non-frivolous allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor.

In adherence to the Policies, the Diocese is committed to a process that is both victim-centered and respectful of the rights of the accused. Father Joe Townsend is presumed innocent, he is fully cooperating with the investigation, and he denies all allegations of misconduct. A priest being placed on administrative leave is a prudential step in the procedures of addressing an allegation of sexual misconduct. It permits the Diocese to conduct an open, thorough, and fair investigation. As the Church reminds us, we must always avoid gossip and rash judgement and seek whatever is true and whatever is just (CCC n. 2477).

There are several procedural safeguards that ensure diocesan accountability on investigating a claim of sexual misconduct. First, the Chancery, in dialogue with the Tulsa County District Attorney’s Office and local law enforcement, pledges to be transparent and cooperative with all civil authorities. Second, the internal investigation is conducted by professional third-party investigators. Third, lay involvement is an integral part of the process, as a board of lay persons, the Diocesan Review Board, will review the case and submit a final recommendation to Bishop Konderla.

The Diocese is asking anyone with knowledge or concerns to come forward at this time. Persons are invited to contact local law enforcement and call the diocesan Pastoral Hotline at (918) 307-4970. Callers to the Hotline will be greeted by an automated message and may leave messages anonymously, if preferred.

Bishop Konderla stated, “I ask the Church in Eastern Oklahoma to join me in praying for the patience and prudence necessary to see this matter carried out with justice and integrity.”

Out of respect for the accused and the alleged victim, no further details will be shared until the investigation is complete.

End of the Memo