Charges Against Priest Found to Be Credible

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio has announced that allegations of sexual misconduct with minors made against a priest of the Diocese of Brooklyn were found to be credible.

In separate letters concerning Father Joseph P. Byrne at the Masses last weekend (June 3-4), at St. Rose of Lima, Church, Parksville, and St. Anastasia’s Church, Douglaston, the bishop said he based his announcement on investigative conduct by the Queens District Attorney’s Office and the Diocese’s new board.

Father Byrne had served in both parishes, recently as pastor at St. Rose of Lima in 2009 as a parish vicar at St. Anastasia’s.

Two brothers, Robert and Father Teddy Lantieri, said that as youths living in the Douglaston parish they were abused by Father Byrne. They also confirmed the allegations to the diocese.

The diocesan representatives who listened to the charges took them seriously, Bishop DiMarzio wrote in his letter to St. Anastasia’s parishioners, paraphrasing Father Byrne’s own defense, insisting, emphatically and repeatedly, that the charges were false.

At the same time, one of the persons who made the claims were equally insistent about the truthfulness of their allegations. The diocesan representatives, after examining the matter over an extended period of time, found it extremely difficult to determine where the truth lay in a complex matter.

The bishop said that when the discrete attorney’s report was received, he had reverted to the idea that the case was in conflict.

Several years ago, the individual who had gone through radiation and the initial chemo treatments saying, OK, God, whatever you want, I’ll go with it.

Mind you, I’ve since learned that a very typical reaction to learning you’re in remission is clinical depression. For while remission seems like an end, there’s a lot of recuperation needed afterwards, without the benefit of any immediate target; you’re just hoping to be, as Chicago once sang, ‘feelin’ stranger every day’.

Would that the process would be so linear; in real life every day is a new adventure and a new assessment of how things are. Your body, being beaten to a pulp for months to gain victory over the cancer, is not only weakened, but continues to generate ‘fight or flight’ hormones with no current opponent in sight.

So there are biochemical reasons for post-remission depression. But it’s also clear that the event has taken root only because I stubbornly tried once again to impose my will on reality rather than doing my best within the flow that God had in mind for me.

As for New York, it turned out that, no matter how much I enjoyed the music pouring out of every doorway, I had overstayed my welcome. As a diabetic with lowered resistance, I had become dehydrated strolling the hot, humid streets of the French Quarter. The doctors termed that “good news,” since it wasn’t a cancerous recurrence, but because of the timing, it sure took me awhile to see it that way.

Perhaps that was God’s plan. Perhaps He allowed the dehydration episode to happen immediately to remind me of how vulnerable I continue to be as a diabetic cancer survivor in particular, and as a human being in general. After all, nobody’s health is guaranteed. Perhaps this was His way of clearly sending an important message: there’s never a good time to get sick.

Lesson learned — and now I feel much better, thanks.

Roger Payne

New Auxiliary Bishops For Archdiocese

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope John Paul II has appointed two new auxiliary bishops for the Archdiocese of New York.

Mgr. Gerald T. Walsh, pastor of St. Elizabeth parish in Manhattan, and Msgr. John Sullivan, pastor of St. John and Paul parish in Larchmont, were named as auxiliary bishops of the New York Archdiocese.

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