



## The Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix

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### COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

#### **Rev. John D. Spaulding Suspension of Faculties**

*Note: Diocesan officials will be available for comment today at 4:30 p.m. at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 400 E. Monroe St., Phoenix.*

PHOENIX (June 24, 2011) — On Friday, June 24, 2011, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted suspended the faculties of Fr. John Spaulding, pastor of St. Timothy parish in Mesa, Ariz., and placed Fr. Spaulding on administrative leave. This followed a determination by the Diocesan Review Board on Thursday evening that an allegation against Fr. Spaulding of sexual misconduct with a minor was credible. Bishop Olmsted accepted the Review Board's determination, and the case will be referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome for further proceedings.

It is important to remember that a finding of credibility does not determine that a person is guilty or innocent of an allegation. It simply means that, following a preliminary investigation, the allegation has a semblance of truth to it, and that further canonical proceedings are necessary to determine if the cleric has committed the alleged ecclesiastical crime.

The sexual misconduct claim involved actions that allegedly occurred over 25 years ago when Fr. Spaulding was the pastor of St. Maria Goretti parish in Scottsdale. In accordance with its normal practice, and in compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, and the Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons, or Other Church Personnel, as published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese retained a former FBI agent to conduct an independent investigation into the allegation. The agent collected various documents and interviewed several witnesses, including Fr. Spaulding. Fr. Spaulding denies the allegation, and is fully cooperating with the investigation.



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The Diocesan Review Board is comprised of a canon lawyer, civil lawyer/judge, doctor, law enforcement officer, licensed child psychologist, retired teacher and early childhood specialist, two members of the clergy, and the Director of the Office of Child and Youth Protection at the Diocese. The Review Board's task, upon receiving an allegation of sexual misconduct and after reviewing any evidence that is collected in connection with that allegation, is to determine if the allegation is credible; that is, to determine if the allegation has a "semblance of truth." Further information regarding the Review Board and the procedures that the Diocese follows when an allegation of sexual misconduct is received can be found in the Diocese's Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Minors, Articles 14, 16, 17 and 18.

<http://www.diocesephoenix.org/uploads/docs/PolicyAndProcedureEng10.pdf>.

It should be noted that Fr. Spaulding resigned from his position as pastor of St. Timothy parish earlier this week, with his resignation to be effective on July 4. That resignation came after a separate investigation by the Diocese into concerns that the parish had failed to follow certain financial and human resources policies and procedures. Bishop Olmsted had accepted Fr. Spaulding's resignation and had been consulting with Diocesan officials regarding the transition to new leadership at St. Timothy. Several days after he accepted Fr. Spaulding's resignation, however, Bishop Olmsted received the findings and recommendations of the Review Board concerning the sexual misconduct allegation. At that point, and pursuant to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Bishop Olmsted removed Fr. Spaulding from public ministry and suspended his faculties.

The Diocese of Phoenix would like to assure the faithful of St. Timothy that there was no finding of embezzlement or other such financial crime or impropriety on the part of Fr. Spaulding or the parish staff. Fr. Spaulding's resignation on Monday from his position as pastor was based upon his recognition that a change of leadership was necessary at the parish.

To date, the Diocese of Phoenix has not received any other credible allegation of sexual abuse or misconduct against Fr. Spaulding.

As always, Bishop Olmsted and the Diocese of Phoenix encourage anyone who has experienced sexual misconduct or abuse by a member of the clergy or by any employee or volunteer of the Church to contact the Maricopa County Attorney's Office at 602-506-3411 and/or Paul Pfaffenberger at the Diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection at 602-354-2396.

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