



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Communications • *The Long Island Catholic* • *Fe Fuerza Vida*

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STATEMENT

DATE: March 10, 2020

RE: SNAP Statement and Press Conference

FROM: Sean P. Dolan, Director of Communications

The Diocese of Rockville Centre does not agree with the assertions in SNAP's March 9, 2020, statement "Survivors Call for Transparency from Church Officials in Rockville Centre," which is materially inaccurate in many regards.

SNAP's characterization of the handling of the Lonergan matter is wholly misleading. As the documents produced by the Allentown Diocese showed, not only did law enforcement find the initial report against Lonergan to be unfounded but the Diocese of Allentown conducted its own investigation that concluded that the report was unsubstantiated. The lay Diocesan Review Board then urged that Lonergan, who had been removed from ministry as soon as the report was made, be placed back in ministry as soon as possible. It did so because there was no evidence of wrongdoing. Any "scrutiny" of Bishop Barres regarding the Lonergan matter has been addressed with the facts.

Equally misleading are SNAP's statements regarding child safety and protection in the Diocese of Rockville Centre. The safety of children is the highest priority for the Diocese of Rockville Centre and it has taken significant and concrete steps, such as extensive and mandatory background screening and abuse-awareness training, to prevent sexual abuse. The Diocese has reported to the relevant civil authorities the names of all clergy, volunteers and employees known to the Diocese who have been accused of sexual abuse of minors.

The Diocese undergoes an annual independent audit to evaluate compliance with required child protection practices. Since the inception of audit reviews in 2003, the Diocese has participated in 14 audits (conducted by The Gavin Group and StoneBridge Business Partners) and has been found to be in compliance with standards as outlined in the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People for each and every audit period.

The Diocese continuously works to strengthen its efforts towards child protection, abuse prevention and pastoral outreach to survivors.

Regarding the release of names of persons accused of child abuse, it is imperative to be aware of the fact that the Diocese of Rockville Centre has, as a longstanding practice, been working closely with law enforcement to make certain that all accusations of child sexual abuse against clergy, volunteers and employees, credible or not, of which the Diocese is aware, are reported.

In addition, we have implemented the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program (IRCP) to offer the opportunity for some measure of healing and justice to those who were abused by diocesan and religious order clergy.