June 8, 2016

Most Rev. Archbishop Blase Cupich

Archdiocese of Chicago

835 N Rush St

Chicago, IL

Very Rev. Rosendo Urrabazo, CMF, Provincial Superior

Claretian Missionaries, USA

205 W. Monroe Street

Chicago, IL

Dear Archbishop Cupich and Rev. Urrabazo:

My name is Eric Johnson. As you know, I am the man who was sexually abused by Rev. Bruce Wellems CMF when I was seven years old and Wellems was 15.

I have repeatedly attempted to get answers from both of you about Wellems, his status, and other allegations. For more than 20 years, you have refused.

Below are 15 questions about Wellems that you must answer. Not just for me, but for the Chicago public, Catholics, the Back of the Yards community, and the parents who may not know that their children are at risk.

I look forward to your immediate and public response to these questions.

Sincerely,

Eric Johnson

1) Why are there different standards in Chicago and Los Angeles about the meaning of Zero Tolerance? Why was Wellems banned from Los Angeles, but allowed to minister in Chicago? What does Zero Tolerance mean?

2) Doesn’t your obligation to protect children require you to publicly announce the removal of a priest’s faculties, regardless of whether he is an order priest or a diocesan priest?

3) Aren't the Archdiocese and the Claretians obligated to inform the Back of the Yards community about all of the facts they have discovered regarding Bruce Wellems, so that the community can adequately assess the risk that Wellems presents?

4) Why was the review board’s decision withheld for two months from the victim, Eric Johnson, and the public at large?

5) When Eric reported in 1995, he was told by both the Archdiocese and the Claretians that Wellems:

- Underwent a rigorous psychological evaluation,

- Would not minister alone with children, and

- There were no other allegations against him.

Wellems has since denied that he ever underwent a rigorous psychological evaluation. We know that he has ministered alone with children. Recent events suggest that there may be other victims. Please explain these inconsistencies.

6) The Archdiocese and the Claretians have consistently said since 1995 that there have been no additional reports of any sexual misconduct by Wellems. Is this true?

7) In 1995, Eric reported his abuse, which Wellems admitted. Yet, the Archdiocese and the Claretians took no action for 20 years. It was not until the spring of 2015 when an advocate reported the same information you had about Wellems to DCFS, that he was temporarily removed.  Why did it take a report to DCFS to force your hand? Why didn’t you publicly announce that Wellems was being temporarily removed?

8) What changed? What new information resulted in Cupich accepting the review board’s recommendation to remove Wellems in March of 2016?

9) Has either the Archdiocese of Chicago or the Claretians made any formal of informal settlements with other victims (minors or adults) of Bruce Wellems? How many?

10) Why did the Claretians and/or the Archdiocese of Chicago allow Wellems to travel with children after he had been removed from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles?

11) What is Wellems status now? Where is he living? Is he being monitored?

12) Was Wellems ever told that he was temporality removed pending an investigation? What restrictions was he informed of? Why—after information surfaced that he continued to act as a priest in public—was no action taken by the Archdiocese and the Claretians?

13) Explain why Rosendo Urrabazo instructed Claretian priests in 2014 to “disregard and delete” his email informing the community that Wellems had resigned from the San Gabriel Mission because of inappropriate sexual conduct.

14) How many other clerics with credible allegations and admissions of sexual abuse of a child or an adult (before or during priesthood) are currently working in the Archdiocese of Chicago?

15) How many other priests have had credible allegations of sexual misconduct in the past 5 years? How many of those were not publicly announced? How many priests have "voluntarily resigned" or “retired" in the midst of an investigation of sexual misconduct in the past 5 years? How many of those were not publicly announced?