

November 30, 2022

Apostolic Visitation Team in the Diocese of Knoxville, Tennessee, USA  
Bishop Michael Burbidge, Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, USA  
Bishop Barry Knestout, Diocese of Richmond, Virginia

To Bishop Burbige and Bishop Knestout:

As the Apostolic Visitation team investigating the Bishop of Knoxville, Tennessee, Bishop Richard F. Stika, I am sending the following complaints and concerns. Although I have 20 years of advocacy work for victims of clergy sexual abuse and adult sexual exploitation by clergy across Tennessee, I will put forward the most recent unresolved issues with Bishop Stika.

1. Violation of the Dallas Charter Article 3 concerning silencing of victims of sex abuse. Bishop Knestout, your predecessor on the USCCB committee for Child and Youth Protection, Bishop James Johnston, Jr, a Knoxville native, failed to act on Bishop Stika's violation. I have attached communication to the USCCB, always ignored by the bishops and only marginally followed up by the National Review Board.  
<https://www.rememberthesurvivors.com/updated20complaint-Gomez-Johnston-3-parts-sept-2021-composite.pdf>
  - a. All bishops of Tennessee, including Bishop Stika, have silenced victims since 2002 in complete violation of the USCCB directives in the Dallas Charter of 2002, article 3.
  - b. Bishop Stika did so to Mr. Michael Boyd in 2019 with the help of diocesan lawyer, Gino Marchetti.
  - c. The complaint outlines in detail the steps we wished implemented by Bishop Stika, to no avail.
  - d. The USCCB ignored our pleas for help, thereby upholding these policy violations by Bishop Stika and others.
  - e. Pope Francis has called for transparency in the investigation of bishops. Will this issue receive the attention that it must in order to stop the blatant failure of bishops, starting with Bishop Stika?
2. Bishop Stika has publicly as well as privately told anyone who will listen that I, Susan Vance, advocacy leader in SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) am to blame for his current lawsuit regarding the seminarian and the young man raped by this Knoxville seminarian.
  - a. Bishop Stika says, "Susan Vance made it up."
  - b. Bishop Stika claims, after making it up, I gave the fabrication to a national Catholic website..
  - c. Bishop Stika states that the lawsuit of John Doe v the Catholic Diocese of Knoxville and Bishop Richard F. Stika is based on the lies he says I told.
  - d. This defamation of me will not go unchallenged.

- e. Bishop Stika also claims that once the rape victim is made to re-file his case using his name instead of “John Doe,” this victim of rape by a seminarian will be too embarrassed to do so and the lawsuit will “go away.” This is also a lie. Although Bishop Stika directed his lawyers to make a court motion to demand that this rape victim reveal his name, Plaintiff lawyers state that the case moves forward..
- f. The question is whether a bishop who would so egregiously defame a parishioner of his diocese and an advocate for sex abuse victims should remain a bishop of the Catholic Church. The answer is no.
- g. The question is whether a bishop who would badger a rape victim into re-filing his case identifying himself publicly should remain a bishop of the Catholic church. The answer is no.
- h. By accusing an advocate of “making up” a lawsuit, Bishop Stika yet again defames the rape victim. All victims are re-victimized by Bishop Stika when he makes any claims that the abuse account is “made up.” .
- i. As the active lawsuit of Jane Doe in Gatlinburg and John Doe in Knoxville move forward, evidentiary findings will prove Bishop Stika wrong and his intent evil.
- j. I, as a SNAP advocate and a member of this diocese, will not allow my defamation by Bishop Richard Stika to go by quietly. I will not allow Bishop Stika to intimidate and retaliate against any victim of clergy sexual abuse or adult sexual exploitation by clergy.

Bishop Stika has serious legal trouble in Knoxville. Both the John Doe case and the Jane Doe case in Gatlinburg have shown an evil side to Bishop Stika. Intimidation and retaliation are the hallmarks of his time in Knoxville.

Bishop Richard Stika must be removed from the Diocese of Knoxville, Tennessee, and not be allowed to serve as a bishop again.

I ask that you take my complaint into consideration when making your decision.

Sincerely,

Susan Vance

SNAP of Tennessee (Survivors Network of those abused by Priests)

Parishioner of the Diocese of Knoxville (St. Mary’s Church, Oak Ridge, Tennessee)

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[Rememberthesurvivors.com](http://Rememberthesurvivors.com)