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**RE: SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS BY CLERGY OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
NASHVILLE, MEMPHIS AND KNOXVILLE**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing to you as a Catholic, former nun, teacher in Catholic schools, and now wife, mother and grandmother. This background gives a perspective of being part of the church and within the church structure as a teaching nun for 15 years and then a wife, mother and lay teacher in the Catholic school system. I have witnessed the history in the Catholic church both in Tennessee and around the country. I am now an advocate for victims of clergy sexual abuse as a leader in Tennessee of SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests).

After 16 years of advocacy and dealing with the Dioceses of Knoxville, Nashville, and Memphis, it is

apparent that a full investigation is necessary to unearth their corruption and cover-up. This is not said lightly. The recent disclosure of 16 pedophile priests by the Diocese of Nashville produces more questions than answers. Where has the information been hidden about these pedophiles? With this information being decade's old in some cases, why have proper authorities not been notified? Why have children and teens been left vulnerable to abuse by unreported pedophiles? How many more pedophiles are secreted away in Church documents?

One question can be answered with certitude. Why release names? Why now? The answer is that the spotlight is on the cover-up of pedophile clergy by countless bishops across the country. Church officials wish to appear open, honest and transparent to ward off an investigation. We must not be fooled again by this rhetoric and diversion tactics by the bishops. The devastation of pedophile clergy and the prevalence of the abuse is horrifying. All of this is preventable but not until the proper law enforcement officials delve into Catholic diocesan files and find out the truth about the cover-up. This is what we in SNAP are asking: a full-scale investigation by proper law enforcement under the direction of judicial officials of the three dioceses of Tennessee. All three must be included because the whole state was once the diocese of Nashville until subdivided into the Diocese of Memphis in 1971 and the Diocese of Knoxville in 1988. Jurisdiction overlaps among the three as well as files and vital information about the cover-up. No single diocese has all the pieces to this criminal puzzle that they have been engaged in for decades.

SNAP was founded in Tennessee because of the cover-up orchestrated by Bishop Joseph Kurtz and his Chancellor Father James Vann Johnston. The following narrative is an attempt to simplify but clearly expose what we have found out since the institution of SNAP in Tennessee.

I: ORIGINS OF SNAP OF TENNESSEE

I was still a teacher at St. Mary's School in Oak Ridge when Bishop Anthony J. O'Connell admitted in 2002 that he had abused "one, maybe two" young men at St. Thomas Aquinas Preparatory Seminary (high school) in Hannibal, Missouri. Bishop O'Connell had been the first bishop of Knoxville from 1988 until 1998. My home parish of St. Mary's had dedicated a new Family Life Center to Bishop O'Connell in 1998 immediately before his departure to become Bishop of Palm Beach, Florida. Upon finding out about his admission of being an abuser, I stood at a parish meeting and expressed that we now had to take the name off the building which read, "Bishop O'Connell Family Life Center." I reasoned that it was impossible to keep the name of a pedophile on a building where children were present for parochial school classes and sports events or for parish religious education classes for children in public schools.

My recommendation was met with staunch opposition. Finally a year later in February 2003 following intense media coverage starting in December, the name finally was taken down. Bishop Joseph Kurtz never expressed a public opinion about removal of the name. Soon there were narratives being formed about Bishop O'Connell which totally exonerated him in public opinion. Parishioners were adamant that he didn't really do anything wrong. The story was told that it was an indiscretion on O'Connell's part, a mistake in counseling, a youthful "whatever." Several other mothers and I met with Bishop Kurtz and his Chancellor Father James Vann Johnston. They were stoic, not receptive to our message, and did not promise to look into the situation of this false narrative. Indeed, a letter sent to them went unanswered. Nothing was said in any parish in the Diocese of Knoxville to correct the misinformation. Due to the enigmatic behavior of Bishop Kurtz and Father Johnston, SNAP of Tennessee was formed from the certitude that some kind of cover-up was underway in the Diocese of Knoxville.

II. FIRST YEARS OF SNAP OF TENNESSEE

We spent the early years of SNAP attempting to stop the cover-up. Not only had the “re-Oconnellization” been started by Bishop Joseph Kurtz and his Chancellor Father Johnston but it was furthered by keeping portraits of O'Connell in churches and schools across the Diocese. SNAP made a media push to get these images down, but the Diocese proclaimed that the portraits were part of the history of the diocese. SNAP made the counter argument that victims of O'Connell were suppressed into silence and that it sent a pro-pedophile message to our children. Anyone that O'Connell had molested, especially while Bishop of Knoxville (1988-1998), would have been silenced by the adult pro-O'Connell rhetoric. We pointed out that history was not a good reason for keeping pictures around the diocese especially when they did not have “admitted pedophile” added to the nameplate. The pictures remained. The “poor Bishop O'Connell” talk throughout the diocese continued. Our children were silenced.

The most tragic results of the re-Oconnellization cover-up will be felt when victims who would now be of the millennial generation point a guilty finger at adults of the diocese who fell for the cover-up begun by Bishop Kurtz, continued by Bishop Stika and helped by people in authority such as Father Johnston (now bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph) and the vicar general of the Knoxville diocese during O'Connell's tenure, Monsignor Xavier Mankel. Known as a “let-no-scandal-touch-Holy-Mother-Church” priest, Mankel and all the vicars general and chancellors of the dioceses throughout Tennessee should be investigated for their complicity in the cover-up state-wide.

III. SNAP ACROSS THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

Ann Brentwood joined SNAP of Tennessee as an advocate. After retiring as nursing administrator of a 400-bed hospital in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, Ann became an integral leader in the movement to assist survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Ann was a survivor of clergy sexual abuse herself and understood how to help survivors. Ann spent hours on the phone assuring victims of abuse that there was hope and peace ahead of them.

At this juncture, SNAP began branching out across Tennessee to help survivors in all three Catholic dioceses. Efforts included the following:

1. Holding sidewalk press conferences in all three dioceses to raise awareness about clergy sex abuse.
2. Meeting with victims who contacted us. Listening to their stories and offering support.
3. Going with victims to make police reports if the victims chose to do so.
4. Going with victims to the church if they wished.
5. Helping victims to tell their stories to the media if they chose that option.
6. Challenging all three Catholic dioceses to cross-reference their files and tell the people of Tennessee who the pedophile priests were and where and when they were assigned.
7. Speaking with the bishops in the three dioceses about issues of abuse and soliciting cooperation. This was a totally unsuccessful effort.
8. Maintaining a website (Rememberthesurvivors.com) with pertinent information about the situation in Tennessee.

Ann Brentwood and Michael Coode worked tirelessly with legislators to have new laws enacted which eliminated pedophile-friendly statutes of limitation on child sex abuse crimes. Ann stood beside Governor Bredesen in June 2006 when he signed a new law which increased the statutes of limitations

from two years after the age of 18 to 25 years after the age of 18. This positive action has set Tennessee on a trajectory to possibly abolish statutes of limitations on child sex abuse in the next legislative session of 2019.

David Brown, a survivor of abuse of Father Paul Haas, joined our small but determined group. David's voice across Tennessee has been powerful. He is part of a clergy abuse documentary DVD "Sacred Secret" produced by Tennessee's former First Lady, Andre Conte. David was also a part of a special all-male survivor audience on the Oprah show in 2010. He has anchored our efforts in Memphis while also traveling to Nashville and has a unique perspective on both the Catholic church pedophilia crisis and also the non-Catholic side of clergy sexual abuse.

IV. SNAP IN TENNESSEE IN THE PRESENT DAY

SNAP has been working in Tennessee for 16 years. I will provide more detailed information about our work in each diocese in separate letters. This many years of advocacy has created an enormous amount of detailed information which will need much more study to make it usable and understandable in context. Suffice it to say, however, that there are certain principles which are universal in our efforts to help victims of abuse get to the truth. These principles are the following:

1. No Catholic diocese is forthcoming with the truth. Decades and decades of hiding information has led to more entrenched secrecy and cover-up.
2. No bishop wants the truth told. When releasing names of pedophile priests on November 2, 2018, Bishop Mark Spalding of Nashville said that all will be better if the truth is told. Spalding has arrived at that conclusion only by the climate nationwide that demands full accountability and transparency and by the looming possibility of investigations into the Catholic church that have already begun across the country.
3. The attempts by the Catholic church in Tennessee to tell the truth produce more questions than answers.
 - a. Why has it taken decades to look at the secret canonical files and personnel files riddled with crimes of abuse? What is being hidden still by Memphis, Nashville and Knoxville?
 - b. Why were these pedophile priests not turned over to authorities? Why were pedophile priests allowed to return to civilian status, free and with no warning given to anyone?
 - c. Why is the Church guilty of interstate trafficking of pedophile priests? A full 25% of the 16 names recently released by the Diocese of Nashville show this trafficking of pedophile priests to 6 states. This information was not forthcoming from the diocese but rather uncovered by the research of SNAP advocates. As of November 15, 2018, the vague narratives on the diocesan website about these priests does not reveal the truth. Transparency is not going to come from the Catholic dioceses of Tennessee.
 - d. What can we learn of the Church's true intent from the cases of William C. Casey and Edward J. McKeown, both of whom encountered law enforcement, were arrested and are both imprisoned? Were the secret files shared with police and/or prosecutors? Why not?
4. There will be no accountability of the Catholic Church in Tennessee without third party investigation of the files and actions which, we believe, will uncover a statewide coverup and suppression of truth.

IV: CONCLUSION

Contrary to what the Church has told the media and the public, SNAP is fully supportive of the survivors of abuse and seeks only the complete truth about what has transpired and wants to work with the dioceses to adopt meaningful policies so that no one is ever victimized again by the Church. While we are a handful of advocates, we are standing in the place of hundreds of victims of clergy sexual abuse across Tennessee for whom we give voice and presence in this fight for truth. No institution should be able to hide crimes and get away with this. No citizen whether they wear bishop's garb or priestly collars should be exempt from laws that protect children. It is the studied opinion of the leaders of SNAP of Tennessee that an independent investigation of all three of the Catholic dioceses of Tennessee is necessary. A church which will keep the deep dark secrets of the past hidden so successfully cannot be trusted to keep our children safe today or in the future.

Sincerely,

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