



Diocese of Davenport

WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

News

For Immediate Release

DATE: November 3, 2008
TO: Media
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Msgr. Drake Shafer has been found not guilty of sexually abusing a minor by an independent three-judge panel of canon (Church) lawyers and confirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican. Msgr Shafer has been restored to active ministry and is awaiting assignment from Most. Rev. Martin Amos, Bishop of Davenport. The Diocese of Davenport will make every attempt to ensure that Msgr. Shafer's good reputation is restored in accordance with article 5 of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. "If the allegation is not proven, every step possible is to be taken to restore his good name, should it have been harmed."

Bishop Amos said, "I am pleased the Holy See has brought this case to a conclusion. I welcome Msgr. Shafer back into ministry after his long absence. I will review assignment options with Msgr. Shafer and the Priest Personnel Board in the near future."

In 2003, Msgr. Shafer requested a leave of absence from his diocesan position as Vicar General following the filing of a lawsuit against him and the Diocese of Davenport in Lee County, Iowa, until the civil litigation and the canonical process was resolved. He denied the allegation of abuse. The claimant alleged abuse that occurred more than 30 years ago. The claim against the Diocese was settled in 2004 as part of a settlement of 37 claims against the Diocese. The lawsuit against Msgr. Shafer was settled out of court in 2005 when Msgr. Shafer agreed to pay a nominal amount to the claimant without admitting guilt. Neither settlement included a finding of guilt or innocence of Msgr. Shafer.

At the conclusion of the civil process, Msgr. Shafer requested to return to active ministry. According to the guidelines and norms issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002, Bishop William Franklin consulted with the Diocesan Review Board, which functions as an advisory and consultative group to the bishop. The regularly constituted Review Board of the Diocese of Davenport recused themselves from this role due to their personal relationships with Msgr. Shafer. The Diocese contacted the Review Boards of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the Archdiocese of Omaha and the Diocese of Peoria and invited them to participate in a substitute Review Board.

The substitute Review Board began their deliberations on November 5, 2005, to review the allegations in light of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. On June 6, 2006, the Board advised Bishop Franklin that the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* had been violated. Bishop Franklin sent the case to the Vatican in compliance with the law of the Church.

Msgr. Shafer exercised his right to an ecclesiastical trial and the Vatican instructed the Diocese to conduct an ecclesiastical trial. A three judge panel was constituted from canon lawyers from outside of the Diocese. If the judges had found him guilty, he would have been permanently



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dismissed from priestly ministry. The ecclesiastical court interviewed witnesses and reviewed numerous documents including civil court testimony and the email correspondence between Msgr. Shafer and his accuser. The ecclesiastical court found Msgr. Shafer not guilty of sexual abuse. The Vatican concurred with the finding of the ecclesiastical court. The decision of the Vatican is final and binding. No other reports of sexual abuse of minors by Msgr. Shafer have been made despite intensive media coverage of the accusation against Msgr. Shafer.

Msgr. Shafer served at St. Mary of the Assumption Church of Fort Madison; Sacred Heart, Clinton; and St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa, before being named vicar general in July of 2000.