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FR. OLIVER SMALLS, JR., REMOVED FROM DUTIES IN BELIZE

Headline — 20 February 2019— by Rowland A. Parks



The Roman Catholic Bishop of Belize, Most Rev. Lawrence Sydney Nicasio, said that this was because of “credible allegations of sexual abuse of minors” from the Diocese of Richmond in Virginia (USA).

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Feb. 18, 2019– The Roman Catholic Bishop of Belize, Most Rev. Lawrence Sydney Nicasio, issued a press release today, Monday, February 18, dropping a bombshell, saying that “Fr. Oliver Smalls, Jr., of the Diocese of Belize City-Belmopan, has been named by the Diocese of Richmond in Virginia (USA) as one of the priests who have ‘credible allegations of sexual abuse of minors.’”

“On February 13, 2019 the Diocese of Richmond in Virginia (USA) released the names of priests who have credible allegations of sexual abuse of minors. Fr. Oliver Smalls, Jr. of the Diocese of Belize City-Belmopan was named as one of the abusers,” the Roman Catholic Chancery Office press release said.

The release added: “It is important to note that this credible allegation judgment was made by the Diocese of Richmond. A credible allegation finding requires that I forward Fr. Smalls’ case to the appropriate Vatican office, which is the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.”

“I have removed Fr. Smalls from ministry, and he will no longer serve in public ministry in the Diocese of Belize City-Belmopan,” Bishop Nicasio went on to announce in the release.

“The Diocese remains committed to the care, safety and protection of minors in our schools and parishes”, said Bishop Nicasio.

Father Oliver Smalls, Jr., took the offensive later today, through his attorney, Leroy Banner, from the law firm of Myles and Banner, who, through a press release, denied the allegations of abuse mentioned in the release from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Belize.

“Our client, Father Oliver Smalls, Jr., issues this response to an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor in Richmond Virginia, USA in 1970, almost 50 years ago,” the release states in its opening paragraph.

“Our client vehemently denied, and continues to deny the allegations, and in an effect to prove his innocence, took and passed a polygraph test in relation to the allegation against him. The test confirms that our client was being truthful and that the allegation is baseless, and remains unproven.

“The Catholic Church in Belize is aware that the allegations remain unproven and has made no efforts to make any assertion otherwise. Our client expresses great disappointment in the press release from Bishop Nicasio,” stated the release from Banner.

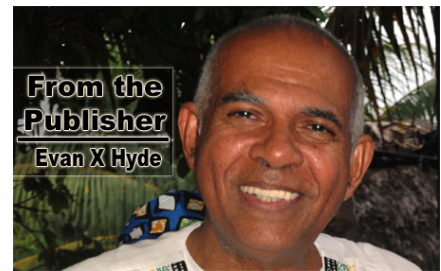
Banner’s release further said, “Our client continues to maintain his innocence and good reputation. We anticipate that the Catholic Church in Belize will appreciate the negative effect which its press release has had on our client and hope that immediate steps be taken to rectify and retract the press release which has called our client’s reputation [of the past 55 years] into question.”

Fr. Smalls’ attorney also announced in the release, “A formal demand letter was addressed to Bishop Nicasio on 15th February demanding that the Church refrains from issuing baseless publications.

“Our client is now in the process of determining legal recourse to maintain his good name and serve in public ministry in the Diocese.”

The UK Guardian, in an article today, Monday, February 18, captioned: “Credibility of Catholic church at stake in sexual abuse summit,” says in its opening paragraph, “More than 100 senior Roman Catholic bishops from around

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the world will gather in Rome this week for a summit Pope Francis has called to address clerical sexual abuse – the most serious crisis in the church since the Reformation, according to a Catholic historian.”

The Roman Catholic Church in the United States and elsewhere has been in the public spotlight for some time now as the church continues to be rocked by sexual abuse scandals, some of which have been settled at a cost of many millions of dollars.

Bishop Nicasio says in his release that “I have explained to Fr. Smalls that his credible allegation findings has been forwarded to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith for further disposition, and that an investigation concerning this matter will continue in this Diocese.”

Fr. Smalls has reportedly left the country on Sunday, and is not expected to return.

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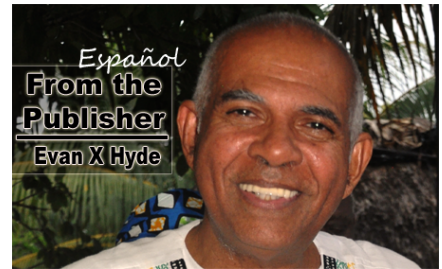
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