



SNAP



Fourth KC whistleblower speaks

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We commend Larry Probst of Kansas City, who – until a few months ago – worked in the diocesan headquarters here (until he reported a co-worker’s alleged sexual misconduct and was let go). He recently spoke publicly for the first time, disclosing

--the “hostile work environment” and sexual harassment he suffered in there,

--the “offensive, sexually oriented material that was often open and obvious to any passer-by” in the diocese headquarters, and

--the response of church supervisors to his concerns (“indifference, defense, protection and resentment” and threats of “losing my job”).

Larry is the fourth former church headquarters staffer to break ranks and speak out in recent months.

In October, a woman who was the diocesan grant-writer (Margaret Mata) said she was fired after offering to help Finn address the abuse and cover up crisis.

<http://www.courthousenews.com/2011/10/14/40611.htm>

In November, a nun who was the diocesan “victims assistance coordinator” for four years (Sr. Jean Christensen), also spoke out against Finn.

<http://www.kmbc.com/r/29714778/detail.html>

And in June, a former diocesan communications staffer (Pat O’Neill) blasted Finn

over the Ratigan case. .

<http://jimmysays.com/2011/06/21/a-news-story-and-an-opinion-piece-push-bishop-finn-back-on-the-defensive/>

Below is Larry's eloquent statement:

Larry Probst

This Sunday, November 20 2011, my Faith Tradition, the Catholic Church, and many mainline traditions observe a solemnity, Christ the King, exalting Jesus as Prophet - who spoke out,

as Priest - who offered Himself selflessly and completely,

as King - whose "...reign is a reign for all ages..."(Ps 145:13), and whose kingdom "...is among you..." (Lk 17:21.)

Today, Thursday, November 17 2011 I am *speaking out* as a *member* of the Body of Christ - the Church. It is regarding a grave matter, relating to the institutional Catholic Church I love, and in particular this Local Church, this Diocese. I believe it eminently appropriate to have an expectation of a far greater and much more honest accountability than has been heretofore *individually* or *institutionally* manifest.

It is my hope "...and hope does not disappoint..." (Romans 5:5) that this institution I love be whole and safe. Safe for everyone - not merely as a dominion for those seeking after and clinging to status and prestige, power and position, privilege and entitlement, self- preservation above all else.

Yet such hope cannot be realized without a fundamental correction of the apparent institutional mind-set of *self-preservation at any cost*. There rightfully exists an expectation of common decency that the institutional diocese abide by the same limits and restraints - for the common good - as the rest of ordered society. This is a reasonable, moral expectation from *stewards* of material resources and *shepherds* of souls.

I have been a loyal, practical Catholic all my life. I have lived a generally simple existence. I have lived my faith within the Church through volunteer service in my Parish and in the Diocese and though proclaiming the scriptures at worship services in my Parish and in the Diocese.

In 2007, I became employed by the Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph, working

in Chancery Archives. This afforded a unique perspective of some of the personalities and dynamics within the Diocese. I incurred directly the consequence of misguided allegiance to *personality over principle* and the sanctioning and protection of inappropriate conduct that would be *patently unacceptable* in any work environment.

During the last year of my employment at the Diocesan Archives, I was unwillingly subjected to a sexually hostile work environment by some co-workers and priests. This hostile environment included but was not limited to internal misuse of diocesan resources and the supervisory cover-up and *protection* of the misuse.

Beginning in 2010 and continuing into March 2011, I reported the matter to diocesan officials at several progressive levels.

I reported the repeated incidents, and expected the miscreant conduct to be dealt with.

I reported to prevent the Department and the Diocese from embarrassment and shame, should someone external to our staff notice the overtly offensive, sexually oriented material that was too often open and available to any passer-by to readily notice.

I believe my concerns were received internally with dismissiveness, indifference, defense, protection and resentment. A high-level official made appeal to my sense of compassion and forgiveness. Failing that to disregard what I had repeatedly incurred, I was *threatened* with losing my job. At the end of June 2011, I did lose my job.

Extending such orchestrated, intentional, pro-active and collaborated cover-up of this reprobate conduct at this level - in the workplace - to the greater current *diocesan* picture, it seems to me that some of the public and some of the public officials, stand to seriously mis-read the spin presented to them by these self-serving individuals and therefore grossly underestimate how widespread the other misdeeds in the diocese can be.

I worked there,

I saw it

It happened to me

It must stop - not for *my* sake but for the *institution's* sake

There was once a time when I was skeptical, and even cynical, of the amount of clergy abuse claims. Having since personally met some of the victims, I now wish

to express my sincere apology for my mindset. It was reflective of the same mindset so prevalent in the church. And that mindset facilitates the continuation of abuse.

Some of my former work colleagues were also my contemporaries in high school. Each Compline - Night Prayer - began with a short blessing and then was followed by this verse from the first letter of Peter chapter 5 verse 8:

"Be Sober, be watchful, for your adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him steadfast in the faith."

This statement of mine today is a call to an *elevated* mind-set. An exhortation to seriously inquire about and scrutinize the *persons* and *systemic mechanisms* that contributed to the flawed reporting of a serious child endangerment situation that institutionally facilitated and enabled the victimization of the most innocent. For myself, to remain silent is to collaborate in their victimization.

The scriptural readings for the Solemnity of Christ the King this Sunday include Psalm 23.

Here is the first stanza: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

I thank you all for your time.

COMMENTS



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