

Response to media reports

April 11, 2011

Dear Members of the Saint John's Communities,

Over the past years, I have been very aware of the fact that it is not only the monks who feel the impact of allegations of misconduct by members of our monastic community. All of you, our students, our faculty, staff, and administration, both here and at Saint Ben's, feel the impact of these past events. I am deeply sorry for the harm done to survivors, and also for the pain it causes you now.

Just over two weeks ago these issues were in the media once again when the Jeffrey Anderson law firm held a press conference to discuss recent settlements regarding allegations of sexual misconduct by members of Saint John's Abbey. The cases we were dealing with occurred between 1962 and 1986. There was significant coverage of the news conference and many issues of past misconduct were revisited.

During the press conference on Monday, March 28, it became clear that there was a misunderstanding about the way one part of the settlement would be implemented. The Abbey thought that we would be posting a letter on our website with a list of monk offenders on it; the Anderson firm and survivors thought that a letter was going to be sent to the prep school alums. On April 1 the parties came to a mutual understanding of what that process would be.

This sequence of events was difficult to communicate because of ongoing discussions during the week. The Abbey did not wish to make any public statements until that issue was resolved for fear of adding to the confusion. It is clear to me now that we were in error by being silent during that time. A letter to the community should have been shared immediately following the resolution of the misunderstanding.

Some of you may be asking why the issue of abuse keeps coming back in the media. The cases that we settled are not for recent misconduct. Individuals come forward when they are ready to deal with the impact of the misconduct.

Regarding concerns raised about the safety of the Saint John's community by psychologist Renee Fredrickson (*The Record*, "Sex abuse scandal kept quiet," April 8, 2011), it is important to know that we have carried out professional risk assessments for each monk offender and created individual safety plans based on that information. An external supervisor meets regularly with these monks and they are under regular supervision. For a full account of all the specific steps the Abbey has taken, please see <http://www.saintjohnsabbey.org/news/official.html>. If an allegation regarding a minor comes forward today, make no mistake, we will call local law enforcement immediately.

I also want you to know that funding for the abbey misconduct settlements comes from abbey earnings and does not come from any part of student tuition.

We have worked very hard over many years to insure the safety of our schools, our parishes, our campus, and all who work for and benefit from the work of Saint John's Abbey. I

pledge my efforts to continue to respond promptly and thoughtfully to issues of safety and appropriate conduct on the part of all of the Saint John's Community.

Sincerely, Abbot John Klassen, OSB