

Response to WCCO report April 29, 2011

To the Saint John's and Saint Benedict's Communities,

I was disheartened to watch the WCCO report last night regarding allegations of sexual misconduct by members of the abbey and see the very negative image it tried to portray of Saint John's. Building on the work of Abbots Jerome and Timothy, since I was elected abbot in 2000 I have worked very hard to ensure that the abbey is dealing appropriately with the issues of sexual misconduct by monks of Saint John's.

Regarding the WCCO report, I want you to know there were credible allegations against John Kelly and Fran Hoefgen for sexual misconduct prior to 1986. Neither has lived at Saint John's Abbey for at least seven years. They do not have any clerical standing nor do they do any ministry on behalf of the abbey or the church. I do not have control over these individuals' lives because they are in transition to lay life.

As members of these communities, I also want you to know about our ongoing efforts.

- Our approach to survivors has been guided first and foremost by a strong pastoral response – listening carefully to discern their needs, apologizing, and working toward healing and settlement.
- For the accused monks living at the monastery, the abbey has developed safety plans with supervision. With an external, professional risk assessment, each of these monks has been determined to be at the lowest level of risk to re-offend. The safety plans are designed to provide a safe environment for all who live, study and work at Saint John's. They are reviewed each year by an external review board.
- I have provided to these communities and the public the names of those monks against whom we have received credible allegations. We have not tried to keep these a secret as some have implied. All of the names of monks released in the letter to Saint John's Prep alumni (except for two named in the January 2011 mediation) have been named previously in media reports. Some have been named many times, with broad reporting across the region. Since 2002, the abbey has routinely made public the names of accused monks when credible allegations have come forward.
- The abbey has been accredited by Praesidium Religious Services, benchmarked to twenty five national standards related to prevention, response, and supervision. This accreditation includes an on-site visit from two professional evaluators, present for 3-4 days of interviews.

I want to assure you that I am doing everything I possibly can to be open and transparent and to be sure that the actions and remedies we undertake provide the optimal safety for our community.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support.

Abbot John Klassen, OSB