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DIOCESE OF BUFFALO

March 8, 2013

Dear Bishop Malone,

I had the pleasure of attending the Catholic Youth conference weekend with a group from St. Mary of the Lake Parish. The weekend was filled with many enthusiastic Catholic youth. It was invigorating to see. The weekend had an undertone of hyper-ness when dealing with the Virtus code of conduct.

I once again have an unsettling issue to make you aware of about the weekend mentioned. To refresh your memory, I am the principal of St. Mary of the Lake where Fr. Art Smith was pastor for over a year and was removed from for a number of reasons, one for stalking and grooming one of our students.

During the evening of the conference the sacrament of Reconciliation was offered to our young adults. There were 30 priests hearing confessions. Maybe this was meant to happen- everything happens for a reason. One of our youth, [redacted] was directed to a room and when she entered Fr. Art Smith stood up!

[redacted] He talked to her about how no one liked him at St. Mary's that is why he is no longer there. Among other things that he said - as a penance he wanted her to pray for HIS anger.

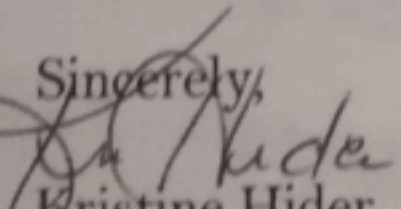
She ran into my arms crying- and she doesn't even "know" what happened and why he is gone (only rumors from kids). I am glad she feels most comfortable talking to me. However, it still is haunting - the reason she didn't leave haunts me because the next child he meets will most likely feel the same way.

Perhaps with Fr. Art Smith's background of stalking and grooming young people he should not have been in that venue! The sacrament itself was compromised by an adult who still has not come to terms with his own demons. Fr. Art is gifted in many ways and he made some positive changes at St. Mary's; however it does not change the events of the past.

It was also ironic, that the weekend itself was so highly policed, we could not walk the opposite gender youth back to their rooms, for a sweater. Yet, a priest that has a history of inappropriate contact with the youth was among the youth ministering the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The blatant disregard for "Protecting God's Children" is mind boggling. I am praying that the right thing will be done for the children's sake.

Sincerely,


Kristine Hider

Cc: Carol Kostyniak