COLUMBUS BISHOP PLACES PRIEST ON ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

COLUMBUS – As part of a diocesan investigation of an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, the Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan, Bishop of Columbus, has placed diocesan priest Father Kevin F. Lutz, 69, on administrative leave, effective September 11, 2019.

This action and announcement are made in accordance with the Catholic Church’s *Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the Diocese’s published *Policies for Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Response to Allegations Thereof*.

Father Lutz recently announced his retirement from priestly ministry at St. Mary Parish, Columbus, which was effective September 8, 2019. The next day, September 9, an accusation of sexual abuse of a minor, allegedly occurring during Father Lutz’s tenure at St. Christopher Parish, Columbus, from 1983-1986, was reported to the Diocesan Chancery office. The same day, Diocesan officials had the allegation reported to Columbus Police and notified Father Lutz of the allegation. On September 11, the details of the allegation were reviewed with Father Lutz, he was formally placed on leave, and he was advised about the steps the Church would follow as a result of the allegation. As was explained to Father Lutz, his placement on administrative leave was not an indication that the Diocese had determined that the allegation is credible. Rather, the preliminary investigation into the allegation has just begun.

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A meeting of the Diocesan Board of Review for the Protection of Children will be convened in the near future to assess the results of the preliminary investigation and advise the Bishop as to whether or not it appears to be credible. If an allegation is determined to be credible, the Diocese of Columbus will execute the necessary judicial and administrative processes. A determination of credibility is never to be considered proof of guilt.

Plans are underway to set up outreach in the Diocese, and once that effort is set up, more information will be provided to parishioners in the Diocese.

Priests on administrative leave are prohibited from the public exercise of their priestly ministry. They cannot publicly celebrate sacraments, wear clerical attire, be housed at any parish or on diocesan property, or identify themselves as a member of the clergy.

Father Lutz has been a priest of the Diocese of Columbus since 1978. His assignments have included: Diaconate, St. Matthew Parish, Gahanna (1978); Associate Pastor, St. Agatha Parish, Columbus (1978-1982); Teacher, Bishop Hartley High School, Columbus (1978); Teacher, Bishop Watterson High School, Columbus (1978-82); Associate Pastor, St. Mary Parish, Marion (1982-1983); Associate Pastor, St. Christopher Parish, Columbus (1983-1986); Associate Pastor, St. Mary Parish, Lancaster (1986-1988); Administrator pro-temp, Sacred Heart Parish, New Philadelphia (1988); Associate Pastor, St. Pius X Parish, Reynoldsburg (1988-1989); Associate Pastor, Christ the King Parish, Columbus (1989-1991); Pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Plain City and Sacred Heart Mission, Milford (1991-1997); Pastor, Holy Family Parish, Columbus (1997-2013); Pastor; St. Mary, Corpus Christi, and St. Ladislas parishes, Columbus (2013-17); and Pastor, St. Mary Parish, Columbus (2017-2019).

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The Diocese of Columbus encourages anyone who may have claims of abuse by clergy or others associated with the Church to notify law enforcement immediately and also the Diocesan Victim’s Assistance Coordinator at 614-224-2251, 866-448-0217, or helpisavailable@columbuscatholic.org. Forms for reporting abuse are available in Catholic parish and school offices and can be accessed from the diocesan website, www.columbuscatholic.org.

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