

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 28, 2019

Updated Statement on the Sanctity of Life

The Associated Press news story naturally leads the reader to assume certain things about the priest and his intentions. However, we are learning a very different reality was at work. We looked into this and can confirm that the priest who did the blessing did not know about Mr. Fuller's intentions. The priest was a visiting priest who happened to be at St. Therese that particular Sunday when the pastor was celebrating Mass at his second parish. The blessing was done after Mass by the priest whose interest was to bring comfort to someone he learned was dying. The priest was not aware of any news photographer, although he was aware people were taking pictures.

While it is clear that some of Mr. Fuller's friends at the parish knew of his intentions, the pastor at St. Therese initially did not. Mr. Fuller eventually approached the pastor to ask to plan his own funeral. The pastor discussed the gift of life and tried to convince him to change his mind. He made it clear that neither he nor the parish could support his plan to take his own life. Once it was clear that Mr. Fuller was not going to change his mind, the pastor reached out to his leadership to discuss the situation.

Archbishop Sartain agreed that it is the church's responsibility to pastorally care for those who mourn. With this in mind, he gave permission for the funeral with certain conditions to ensure there was no endorsement or other perceived support for the way in which Mr. Fuller ended his life. The purpose of the funeral was to pray for his soul and bring comfort and consolation to those who mourned.

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