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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP  
DIOCESE OF KNOXVILLE

July 19, 2019

Dear Priests, Deacons, School Leaders, and Chancery Staff,

On Thursday, July 18, the Diocese of Knoxville was named as a defendant in a lawsuit filed by Mr. Michael Boyd who has made allegations of sexual abuse by a now-deceased priest of the diocese, Monsignor Xavier Mankel.

When first presented with the allegations almost a year ago, the Diocese of Knoxville immediately contacted state authorities and encouraged Mr. Boyd to file a report with law enforcement. Additionally, the diocese turned over all materials made available by Mr. Boyd to an independent investigator. The result of that independent investigation concluded there was no finding of credible evidence to support the allegations.

In reviewing the recently filed lawsuit, the Diocese of Knoxville was made aware of additional information, including the name of an employee of the diocese, not part of the original allegations made by Mr. Boyd.

As a result, and with respect to a presumption of his innocence, the Diocese of Knoxville is obligated to suspend Mr. William Lovelace from his position as a music teacher at two of our schools until allegations against him, and others mentioned in the lawsuit, can be thoroughly and independently investigated.

The Diocese of Knoxville remains committed to a safe environment in our parishes and our schools, and we will continue to abide by the rigorous standards for reporting and protection set forth by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Richard F. Stika  
Bishop of Knoxville