

REV. DONALD R. A. PETERS
[REDACTED]
CASCADE, WI 53011-0198

JULY 29, 2005

His Holiness Benedict XVI
The Vatican
Vatican City State

Your Holiness:

After much prayerful consideration, I now request from you a dispensation from the obligations connected with the priesthood and from celibacy. I ask to be returned to the lay state.

I have been placed on administrative leave by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee for sexual misconduct involving minors. I have had to deal with these allegations since 2002. I have been retired for a number of years now and am 80 years old. The fact that this sexual misconduct has been brought to the attention of both archdiocesan and civil authorities makes it unlikely that I can ever serve in active ministry again. While I do not believe that every aspect of allegations presented by the archdiocese is accurate, I admit that some are.

This request is not a quick solution to a temporary problem. Because of the nature of the allegations made against me there is no hope of ever returning to ministry. I find no alternative but to request laicization.

I am fully aware that my decision to return to lay status, if approved by the Holy See is permanent and final, without hope of eventual re-admittance to priestly ministry.

I do have some health concerns. However, I have been assured by the diocese that they will assist me if needed. I have been assured that my pension will continue.

I solemnly swear to the truth of all the above information.

My curriculum vitae is attached.

Respectfully submitted,



Reverend Donald Peters

Curriculum Vitae

Born: March 30, 1925, Kenosha, WI.
 Baptized: St. Mark, Kenosha, WI.
 Communion & Confirmation: St. Mark, Kenosha, WI.
 Grade School: 8 years, St. Mark, Kenosha, WI
 Middle School: 1 year, Lincoln School, Kenosha, WI
 High School: 1 year, Mary D. Bradford H.S., Kenosha, WI
 High School: 2 years, St. Francis Minor Seminary, St. Francis WI
 College: 2 years St. Francis Minor Seminary, St. Francis, WI(Philosophy)
 Seminary Theology: 4 years St. Francis Major Seminary, St. Francis, WI
 Ordination: May 27, 1950, Cathedral St. John Evangelist, Milwaukee, WI
 Assignments: 1950 - 60 ST. CLEMENT'S, SHEBOYGAN, WI - Assistant
 1960 - 62 ST. MARY, HALES CORNERS, WI - Assistant
 1962 - 67 ST. PATRICK'S, FOND DU LAC, WI - Assistant
 1967 - 69 CATHOLIC MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL, WAUKESHA, WI teach
 FOR SEVERAL SUMMER SCHOOLS AT MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE
 SCHOOL IN GUIDANCE & COUNSELING
 1969 - 71 ST. PATRICK'S, FOND DU LAC, W - Pastor
 1971 - 77 ST. MARY'S, SHEBOYGAN FALLS, WI - Pastor
 1977 - 93 ST. CLEMENT'S, SHEBOYGAN, WI - Pastor
 1993 RETIREMENT

FAMILY: 1958 - Mother Died
 1976 - Dad Died

My 76 year old sister and I are the only family. She left the SSSF and married and now is a widow. She is near Poverty and I am supporting her for many of her needs. When with the nuns they did not have Social Security, she has some of her husbands and thus has medicare, but has to purchase a supplementary Health Insurance program. She has lived in Florida for over 20 years.

My Health: Upper tooth plate, many years ago.
 Lower teeth, five front teeth remain
 Right knee, total replacement
 Diabetes, many years, pills and diet are helping to regulate.
 High Blood Pressure, pills
 Eyes: glasses, both had Cataracts removed
 Ears: hearing aids in both
 Am on Medicare & Archdiocesan Insurance Program


ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

August 8, 2005

Most Reverend Angelo Amato, SDB
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Piazza del S. Uffizio 11
00193 Rome, Italy

Your Excellency:

In accord with the norms of *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, I am submitting for your consideration the case of a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Reverend Donald Peters has been accused of acts of sexual abuse of minors. The summary of these allegations is enclosed. Father Peters has admitted that a number of these acts of sexual assault occurred.

As we have reviewed the various files, it would appear that the original problem would date back to the 1960's and 1970's. While there is record of a formal notification of a problem in 1992, the anonymous nature of the report made it difficult to address. Father was informed of the report but he said he did not know to what it referred.

However, a closer review of correspondence from that period may reveal otherwise. In 1971 Archbishop William Cousins received a letter from Father Peters in which he makes reference to the need for a speedy transfer of assignment as recommended by Auxiliary Bishop Leo Brust as "the prudent way" given circumstances. A second note was sent to Bishop Brust from Father Peters stating that nothing should be committed to writing and no letter sent to those concerned. Archbishop Cousins transferred Father Peters to a new assignment a month later.

From the vantage point of hindsight, it would appear that this correspondence indicates that some inappropriate behavior had occurred at that time. Bishop Brust was the person who handled such matters and the usual response was to quietly see that the priest left his place of assignment.

When confronted with the allegations in 2002, Father Peters spontaneously admitted that there were incidents of sexual contact with minors in his past. He made this declaration to the investigating civil authorities and to the Vicar for Clergy. On that basis, Father was placed under precept not to exercise any public ministry. In 2004, as part of the attempt to bring resolution this situation, again Father Peters admitted that there were two or three others who might come forward. His dating of those incidents of sexual contact corresponds to the letters and mid-year change of assignment in 1971. Given the number of years that Father Peters was actively involved in the Boy Scouts, there is every reason to believe that additional victims may come forward.

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Most Reverend Angelo Amato
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

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In the years since it was first issued, the precept has remained in place. I am of the opinion that the matter needs more concrete resolution. Given his age, I had proposed that Father Peters agree to live a life of prayer and penance while remaining under precept. He has been considering that option but knows that to do so would mean he would not have free reign to travel and live elsewhere in another diocese for six or more months of the year. He would need to remain in the Milwaukee Archdiocese to be monitored. He has been in consultation with two different canon lawyers. He has now concluded that he would rather be free to travel than to remain in the clerical state. He is choosing to seek voluntary laicization and his petition is enclosed. I have been assured by his present canonical advisor that this decision is being made freely and that he has been given sufficient counsel to make such a decision. This has not been a hasty or sudden judgement. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has paid for the services of a canonical advisor for him.

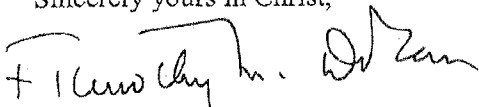
While it would have been my preference that he choose the first option given, a life of prayer and penance, he is unwilling to accept the conditions that would accompany that possibility. Given the legal liabilities, another diocese is not going to agree to monitor a priest for whom they have no responsibility. I regret that Father Peters has chosen as he has but I respect his right to do so.

Father Peters receives his full pension and will continue to do so since it is a qualified self-contributory plan. He owns a home in Wisconsin and one in Florida. Should his petition be granted, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee will establish a fund from which he can draw any resources needed for additional health needs not covered by his insurance.

I look forward to your response in this matter.

With sentiments of deepest esteem, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of Milwaukee

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ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE
METROPOLITAN TRIBUNAL

August 29, 2005

Most Reverend Angelo Amato, SDB
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Piazza del S. Uffizio 11
00193 Rome, Italy

Your Excellency:

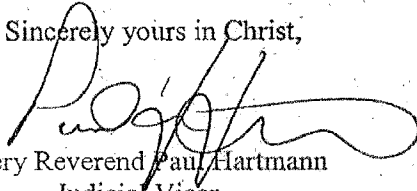
Archbishop Dolan recently prepared for your review a request for voluntary laicization by Reverend Donald Peters. Two additional items for consideration have arisen since the case was submitted. Archbishop Dolan requests that this material be added to the case file.

A copy of the police investigation from July 2002 has been obtained. The minimal admissions that were provided to the Vicar for Clergy at that time are expanded in this report. A copy of the report is enclosed.

While Father Peters denies any sexual contact with minors in the Boy Scouts, we have had a report surface that states the contrary. Mr. [REDACTED] has informed the Archdiocese of Milwaukee that, while he himself was never abused by Father Peters, he observed such abuse of another adolescent at a Boy Scout camp. He came forward to resolve his own guilt at never having reported this abuse and, therefore, having possibly exposed others to abuse. Appropriate pastoral outreach has been offered to Mr. [REDACTED]. He was unable to provide the name of the adolescent male. Since he has no potential for personal gain in coming forward, his report is deemed to be credible and non-suspect.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Very Reverend Paul Hartmann
Judicial Vicar

DIOCESE	Milwaukee
NAME OF ORDINARY	Timothy M. Dolan
CDF PROT. N. (if available)	
NAME OF CLERIC	Donald R. Peters

PERSONAL DETAILS OF THE CLERIC	Date of Birth	March 30, 1925	Age	80
	Ordination	May 27, 1950	Years of ministry	43
ORIGINAL DIOCESE OF INCARDINATION		Milwaukee		
MINISTRY IN/TRANSFER TO OTHER DIOCESE		In retirement, lives 6 months of the year in Florida and had assisted in parishes there until all ministry was restricted and the bishop there informed of his situation		
CONTACT ADDRESS OF THE CLERIC		██████████ Cascade, WI ██████████ Lakeland, FL		
PROCURATOR (include original signed mandate)		He has sought canonical advice from J. Michael Ritty, JCL		
CONTACT ADDRESS OF THE PROCURATOR		██████████		
ASSIGNMENTS				
Year	Parish	Location	Appointment	
1950	St. Michael	Milwaukee	Assistant Pastor	
1950	St. Clement	Sheboygan	Assistant Pastor	
1960	St. Mary	Hales Corners	Assistant Pastor	
1962	St. Patrick	Fond du Lac	Assistant Pastor	
1967	Catholic Memorial High School	Waukesha	Faculty	
1969	St. Paul	Milwaukee	Associate Pastor	
1969	St. Patrick	Fond du Lac	Pastor	
1971	St. Mary	Sheboygan Falls	Pastor	
1977	St. Clement	Sheboygan	Pastor	
1993	Retired			

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ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE CLERIC				
Year	Victim	Age	Imputable Acts	Denunciation
1962	Anonymous call to Sheboygan District Attorney	NA	"Inappropriate behavior"	1992
1963	Anonymous call to Chancery	NA	"Sexual abuse"	1992
1959-1960	[REDACTED]	15-16	Showing pornography and genital fondling	2002
1971	Not given	NA	Not specified	1971
CIVIL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE CLERIC				
Year	Type/Case	Conviction	Sentence (include copies of civil documents)	
2002	Sheriff executed search warrant and seizure of computer; criminal interview with admission of three instances of abuse	Cases all beyond statute of limitations		
MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE DIOCESE				
Year				
1971	Archbishop William Cousins received a letter from Father Peters in which he makes reference to the need for a speedy transfer of assignment as recommended by Auxiliary Bishop Leo Brust as "the prudent way" given circumstances. A second note was sent to Bishop Brust stating that nothing should be committed to writing and no letter sent to those concerned. Archbishop Cousins transferred Father Peters to a new assignment a month later.			
1992	Father Peters informed of anonymous calls. No investigation because of anonymity.			
1993	Father Peters requested and received early retirement.			
1999	Diocese of Orlando informed of allegations from 1992 and ministry there restricted.			
2002	Precept issued restricting public exercise of ministry upon admission of at least three incidents of sexual abuse of minors.			
2004	Father Peters informed that travel to another diocese could not continue due to lack of monitoring possibilities. He requests voluntary laicization rather than limitations on travel. He will be provided with a monetary grant to assist with any health care needs. This proposal was handled by his canonical consultant.			
SUSTENANCE PROVIDED BY THE DIOCESE TO THE CLERIC				
Father Peters receives a monthly pension and will continue to do so if laicized as this is a qualified self-contributory plan. He will be provided with a lump sum to assist in any health care needs he may have beyond social insurance.				

RESPONSE/RECOURSE MADE BY THE CLERIC	
Year	
1971	Brought the matter to the Auxiliary Bishop and sought a transfer.
1992	Said he did not know what the callers were talking about.
2002	Admitted sexual contact with [REDACTED] and wrote letter of apology to him. Stated that the incidents were in the course of sex education. Admitted to Sheboygan sheriff and Vicar for Clergy that there were two or three other cases from his time in Fond du Lac but would not go into more detail.
BISHOP'S VOTUM	
This has been a difficult case to conclude. There is an admission of guilt in the one detailed case and spontaneous admission of two or three other cases with no details. Under other circumstances, Father peters would be asked to live out his life in prayer and penance. This would call for monitoring of his activities which cannot be done if he spends six months of the year in Florida. Given the options available to him, Father Peters has decided that he will choose voluntary laicization rather than restriction on travel.	

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CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Prot. N.: 249/05

Father Donald R. Peters, a presbyter of this Archdiocese, has humbly petitioned for a dispensation from all the obligations connected with sacred ordination.

Our Most Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI

On the 6th day of October, 2007

Having heard the opinion of his Eminence and Most Reverend Prefect of this Congregation, has granted the request of the presbyter for the good of the Church, but with the following provisions:

1. The rescript of the dispensation, being made known by the competent Ordinary to the petitioner as soon as possible:
 - a) *becomes effective from the moment of the notification;*
 - b) *inseparably includes a dispensation from sacred celibacy and, at the same time, loss of the clerical state. The petitioner never has the right to separate those two elements, that is, to accept the first and refuse the second;*
 - c) *if the petitioner is a religious, the rescript also grants a dispensation from the vows.*
 - d) *indeed, further, it carries with it, insofar as it is necessary, absolution from censures.*
2. Notification of the dispensation can be made to the petitioner either personally, or through one delegated by the same Ordinary, or through an ecclesiastical notary, or by "registered mail." The Ordinary ought to retain one copy (of the rescript) duly signed by the petitioner in testimony of his reception of the rescript of the dispensation, and also of his acceptance of its regulations.
3. Notice of the granting of the dispensation is to be inscribed in the baptismal register of the Petitioner's parish.
4. With regard to the celebration of a canonical marriage, the norms set down in The Code of Canon Law must be applied. The Ordinary, however, should take care that the matter be discreetly handled without pomp or external display.
5. The ecclesiastical authority, to whom it belongs to notify the petitioner concerning the rescript, should earnestly exhort him to take part in the life of the People of God, in a manner consonant with his new mode of living, to give edification, and thus to show himself a most loving son of the Church. At the same time, however, he should be informed of the following points:
 - a) *the dispensed presbyter automatically loses the rights proper to the clerical state, as well as ecclesiastical dignities and offices; he is no longer bound by the other obligations connected with the clerical state;*

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- b) *he remains excluded from the exercise of the sacred ministry, with the exception of those functions mentioned in canons 976 and 986, §2, and, as a result, he may not give a homily nor is he able to hold a directive office in the pastoral field nor to exercise the function of parochial administrator;*
- c) *similarly, he may not discharge any function in seminaries and in equivalent institutions. In other institutions of higher studies, which are in any way whatever dependent upon ecclesiastical authority, he may not exercise the function of director;*
- d) *also, in those institutions of higher studies which are not dependent upon ecclesiastical authority, he may not teach any discipline which is properly theological or closely connected with the same;*
- e) *on the other hand, in institutions of lower studies, which are dependent upon ecclesiastical authority, he may not exercise the function of teaching a discipline which is properly theological. A dispensed presbyter is held by the same rule in teaching Religion in an institution of the same kind not dependent upon ecclesiastical authority;*

6. The Ordinary is to take care, as much as possible, lest the dispensed presbyter exhibits scandal to the faithful. Also, if there is present a danger of abuse of minors, the Ordinary after the fact of the dispensation may also publish the canonical cause.

7. At an opportune time, the competent Ordinary is to send a brief report to the Congregation on his completion of the notification, and, finally, if there should be any wonderment on the part of the faithful, he is to provide a prudent explanation.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the Offices of the Congregation, the 6th day of October in the year 2007.

/s/ William Cardinal LEVADA
Prefect

/s/ Angel AMATO, SDB
Titular Archbishop of Silensis
Secretary

Date of notification:

/s/ Signature of petitioner as sign of acceptance /s/ Signature of Ordinary (Delegate)