

May 24, 2013

Dear Parishioners,

I know Fr. H. Robert Harness was very much a part of your parish when he was pastor. Thus, this is the reason for this letter.

You may have heard that I had to temporarily remove Fr. Harness from ministry after receiving a report that he inappropriately touched a minor in about 1990. Following the completion of an extensive month-long investigation by Detective James Sweeney, Sweeney & Associates, the Diocese of Davenport Review Board advised me that he should be restored to ministry. I agree with the Review Board's recommendation and have returned Fr. Harness to ministry as pastor of Holy Family Parish in Davenport.

It was reported that Fr. Harness inappropriately touched a minor during a game that was played at a high school retreat. The game was played in full view of as many as 50 students and 10 adults. None of the witnesses observed nor has anyone else reported any inappropriate behavior by Fr. Harness.

When I receive a report such as this, my concern is to protect the rights of all those involved. I must also comply with the process that the bishops of the United States have put into place to protect these rights. While the investigation proceeded, I was required to remove Fr. Harness from active ministry. No other reports of inappropriate behavior have been received by the Diocese regarding Fr. Harness.

Fr. Harness was very concerned that the people he has served so faithfully would hear directly from me that no sexual abuse of a minor occurred.

As you can imagine, this has been a very difficult time for him and for his mother as well as for the parishioners of Holy Family where he is currently serving. This has been a painful process for everyone involved. I hope that the process that the Diocese follows will restore the dignity of all those who have been harmed. We continue to pray for everyone who has been abused.

Thank you for the many prayers you have offered in support of Fr. Harness. These prayers have helped to sustain him and the parishioners he has served through this process.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. Martin Amos
Bishop of Davenport