

BISHOP'S HIT-AND-RUN TRIAL CONTINUES

PHOENIX (CNS) — The second week of testimony for the prosecution's side at the hit-and-run trial of retired Phoenix Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien concluded Jan. 29 with the judge denying a motion for a mistrial and the bishop's family members describing his mood after the accident.

On June 14, Jim L. Reed, 43, was struck, apparently by two cars, and killed while attempting to cross a busy street in mid-block after dark. Witnesses helped police trace the first car to Bishop O'Brien. The second car has never been found.

Bishop O'Brien was arrested at his home two days after the accident. He resigned as bishop of Phoenix June 18.

OAKLAND, BOSTON REACH SETTLEMENTS

OAKLAND, Calif. (CNS) — The Oakland Diocese has agreed to pay \$3 million to a woman sexually assaulted as a child by her pastor, Msgr. George Francis.

The Oakland settlement with Jennifer Chapin, 31, was reached Jan. 23. It was believed to be the largest single settlement of an abuse case by a California diocese since the clergy abuse crisis broke out two years ago.

The Boston Archdiocese announced a settlement for an undisclosed amount with the family of the late Rita Perry, who had two children fathered by a Boston priest, Father James D. Foley.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Sun., Feb. 8: Isaiah 6:1-2A, 3-8; Psalms 138:1-5, 7-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or 15:3-8, 11; Luke 5:1-11.

Mon., Feb. 9: 1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13; Psalms 132:6-10; Mark 6:53-56.

Tue., Feb. 10: 1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Psalms 84:3-5, 10-11; Mark 7:1-13.

Wed., Feb. 11: 1 Kings 10:1-10; Psalms 37:5-6, 30-31, 39-40; Mark 7:14-23.

Thu., Feb. 12: 1 Kings 11:4-13; Psalms 106:3-4, 35-37, 40; Mark 7:24-30.

Fri., Feb. 13: 1 Kings 11:29-32, 12:19; Psalms 81:10-15; Mark 7:31-37.

Sat., Feb. 14: 1 Kings 12:26-32, 13:33-34; Psalms 106:6-7, 19-22; Mark 8:1-10.

Bishop responds to letter

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has issued a response to an open letter in which diocesan priests called for greater compassion toward gays and lesbians. The full text of his response is printed below.

A Jan. 28 story in the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* reported that a number of diocesan priests were backing the efforts of 23 priests from the Chicago Archdiocese who in December 2003 issued an open letter to the Vatican. The 23 Chicago priests also sent their letter to Cardinal Francis George, archbishop of Chicago.

The Chicago priests' letter protested language used in recent Vatican documents denouncing efforts to legitimize gay unions, saying the documents' language was "violent and abusive." The letter also expressed concern that Vatican stances are driving gay and lesbian Catholics from the church.

According to the *Democrat and Chronicle* story, priests organizing the letter campaign in Rochester were collecting the signatures of other diocesan priests through Jan. 31. Local organizers did not respond to the *Catholic Courier's* requests for comment.

Diocesan officials said the letter, which was received Feb. 4, carried the signatures of 35 diocesan priests and did not vary from the text of the Chicago letter.

— Mike Latona

BISHOP CLARK'S LETTER

Today I received for the first time a copy of the open letter I have been reading about for some time in the local newspaper. I understand that it is essentially a letter drafted by a group of priests in Chicago and circulated locally by priest members of Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry, requesting the endorsement of the local clergy. The copy I received had your name affixed.

Since the text is that of the Chicago priests, I think it appropriate for me to respond with the letter that Cardinal Francis George sent to its original drafters. He expresses well my own sentiments in this matter. Please find the text enclosed.



File photo

According to the CGLFM mission published in our diocesan directory, "this ministry "advocates for and facilitates pastoral care for Catholic gay and lesbian persons, their families/households, and their friends, on behalf of the Diocese of Rochester." I am more than a little surprised that this ministry has circulated this letter on behalf of the diocese without ever seeking my input. I am sure it will take greater care to do so in the future.

Nevertheless, because I know you to care deeply about all of God's people and are concerned that none be harmed by any misunderstood word or action, I am happy to meet with you at any time to discuss further the substance of your letter.

Asking God's blessings on you and the people you love and serve, I am

Your brother in Christ,

† Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester

Excerpt from Cardinal Francis George's Dec. 19, 2003, letter to 23 Chicago Archdiocesan priests

"Your concern that language can make it difficult to welcome people is one I share. The Church speaks, in moral and doctrinal issues, a philosophical and theological language in a society that understands, at best, only psychological and political terms. Our language is exact, but it

does not help us in welcoming men and women of homosexual orientation. It can seem lacking in respect. This is a pastoral problem and a source of anxiety for me as it is for you. It would be good to discuss it together.

"Pastoring any group of people, however, means more than welcoming them. It also means calling them to conversion in Christ. This dimension of the pastoral life is absent from your letter. God is all-loving and all-forgiving; but he knows the difference between right and wrong, and he expects us to know it, to live accordingly and, as ordained priests, to preach the demands of the Gospel with integrity to every group and all people on their journey to holiness.

"Pastors have to mediate the tension between welcoming people and calling them to change, to repent and convert and live according to Christ's teaching transmitted by the Church. That tension is often resolved in practice by a pastor's love for his people. I thank you for loving your people. If, however, you cannot resolve that tension between welcoming people as they are and still calling them to leave their sinfulness and become saints, or if you yourself do not accept the Church's moral teaching on the moral use of the gift of sexuality, it would be all the more important for us to talk."

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