

"Listening Sessions" held in parishes following public announcement in August of lawsuit against a deceased priest of the diocese

New Ulm, MN - On August 1, 2003, the Diocese of New Ulm publicly disclosed that there were two cases filed in Brown County against David A. Roney, a deceased priest of the diocese, alleging sexual misconduct with two minor females. The Diocese of New Ulm has also been named in the lawsuits against Roney. The charges relate to sexual misconduct alleged to have taken place while Roney was pastor of the Church of St. Mary in Willmar, MN (1967-1980). The Church of St. Mary, Willmar, MN is also mentioned in the summons and complaints.

Allegations of sexual misconduct by Roney were first brought to the attention of the New Ulm Diocese in 1987. As a result of these allegations, Roney underwent psychological evaluation and continued to receive psycho-therapy for the next two years.

In April 2002, The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt, the new bishop of New Ulm, and the Diocesan Review Board for Sexual Misconduct reviewed the case of Roney. They recommended that Roney's pastoral duties be terminated and no further assignment to active ministry be given. That same month, Bishop Nienstedt issued a decree placing Roney on administrative leave without faculties.

Following the diocese's public announcement of the Roney lawsuits a Diocesan Response Team, headed by Bishop John C. Nienstedt, conducted "listening sessions" at the five parishes where Roney had served during his active ministry: Church of St. John-Assumption, Faxon Township, 1957-1958; Church of St. Paul, Walnut Grove, 1958-1963; Church of St. Francis, Benson, 1963-1967; Church of St. Mary, Willmar, 1967-1980; Church of St. Gregory the Great, Lafayette, 1980-1993. The listening sessions had three primary goals: 1) to assure the parish of Bishop Nienstedt's support and assistance; 2) to offer a process whereby parish sexual misconduct issues can be voiced and discussed; and 3) to allow other victims of sexual misconduct on the part of clergy of the Diocese of New Ulm the opportunity to come forward and receive assistance and healing.

In addressing the concerns of the parishioners attending the parish meetings, Bishop John C. Nienstedt commented, "Every victim of clerical sexual abuse is a sister or brother who has been wronged, tragically wronged. He or she deserves our compassion, our understanding, our sympathy and our support. In the name of the Church, I express my heartfelt apology to anyone who has been victimized and I promise to do all that I can to assist the process of healing."

Roney retired from active ministry in 1993 and resided in San Lucas Toliman, Guatemala since 1994. He died January 27, 2003 at the age of 82.