

FW: Your Recent Posting

Information <info@churchmilitant.com>

Fri 7/19/2019 10:36 AM

To: Christine Niles

From: John Nienstedt <archbishopjniestedt@xxxxxxxx>

Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2019 4:42 PM

To: Editor <editor@churchmilitant.com>

Cc: Informa on <info@churchmilitant.com>

Subject: Your Recent Posting

Dear Ms. Niles,

Someone forwarded to me your article, which includes many false and derogatory allegations against me. I have already publicly responded through depositions, in the media and other venues to these allegations over the past four years, but I will repeat them once more for you.

1. You wrote: “*Archbishop John Nienstedt, forced to resign in 2015 for protecting a convicted homosexual predator, is openly socializing with Detroit clergy*”.

I was not forced to resign and I have certainly never protected “a convicted homosexual predator”. Making a statement like that is slanderous.

On June 15, 2015, I released a statement regarding my resignation. It is below in its entirety:

“In order to give the Archdiocese a new beginning amidst the many challenges we face, I have submitted my resignation as Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and I have just received word that he has accepted it. The Catholic Church is not our Church, but Christ’s Church, and we are merely stewards for a time. My leadership has unfortunately drawn attention away from the good works of His Church and those who perform them. Thus, my decision to step down.

It has been my privilege the last seven years to serve this local Church. I have come to appreciate deeply the vitality of the 187 parishes that make up the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. I am grateful for the support I have received from priests, deacons, religious men and women and lay leaders, especially those who have collaborated with me in the oversight of this local Church.

I leave with a clear conscience knowing that my team and I have put in place solid protocols to ensure the protection of minors and vulnerable adults.

I ask for continued prayers for the well-being of this Archdiocese and its future leaders. I also ask for your continued prayers for me.”

This statement has been public for four years. The statement addresses why I resigned. To write that I was “*forced to resign in 2015 for protecting a convicted homosexual predator*” is false and should be publicly retracted.

I’m not sure why the words “openly socializing with Detroit clergy” are important to any story. In that situation, I was in the private home at a dinner celebrating a milestone for one of my seminary classmates. In general, as with most priests, most of my friends are priests and I do socialize with them. Having good friends who are supportive is a natural desire for any human being.

2. You wrote: “After a Vatican investigation, Nienstedt was forced to step down in 2015 as archbishop for failing to report allegations of child sex abuse by his [alleged homosexual lover, Fr. Curtis Wehmeyer](#), who wound up serving five years' prison time for his crimes of sexual assault and possession of child pornography.”

I mentioned in point one (above) the reasons for my resignation. To my knowledge, there was never a “Vatican investigation”. Prior to my resignation, I did meet with the Apostolic Nuncio about concerns in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. He offered me his support.

I have never before been accused by anyone of “failing to report allegations of child sex abuse.” To say otherwise is not true. I took any warning about abusive priests very seriously. The only case involving a priest abusing a minor under my watch was the Wehmeyer case, and we called the police as soon as we were made aware of the information.

I never had any sort of relationship with Curtis Wehmeyer, other than one of archbishop to priest. I had three meals with him over the course of three years. Two of these occasions concerned parochial matters, and one was social. The same (having meals with priests) could be said of many of the archdiocesan priests.

Again, calling him my “lover” is not only egregiously untrue, but an outright defamation of my character.

3. You wrote: “Church Militant obtained nearly 1,000 pages of police reports, affidavits, witness interviews and more from the Ramsey County Prosecutor's Office revealing a disturbing picture of homosexual corruption — spearheaded by Nienstedt, who outwardly gave the appearance of orthodoxy while apparently leading a double life.”

I categorically deny all the allegations included in the information you have set forth. The fact of the matter is that in both in Detroit as a priest and an auxiliary bishop, as well as Archbishop in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, I strongly defended the Catholic Church’s teaching on homosexuality, abortion and other issues that caused resentment on the part of some clergy and laity. While I do not want to impugn the motives of the priests who have spoken against me, it is, in fact, a matter of public record that they do not agree with the Church’s teachings on these matters, especially in the area of homosexuality. Again, research would show that I consistently preached, taught and lived what the Church teaches on these issues.

It’s also difficult to defend myself because the allegations are of the “he said, he said” nature. I don’t want to denigrate my accusers. I have always been an honest, if not forthright person and I ask people to listen to my response to these allegations.

4. You wrote “Allegations regarding Abp. Nienstedt (JN) stated in the sworn statements include: JN seen at a gay bar in Windsor, Canada, JN cruising a Detroit park known for such activity; JN seen at a gay video store in Detroit; alleged sexual harassment by JN of a Detroit priest; 3 contemporaneous reports of the alleged sexual harassment by JN of a Detroit priest; allegations of reprisals by JN against a Detroit priest; concerns raised about JN’s interaction with seminarians in Detroit; alleged sexual harassment by JN of a former St. Paul priest; a contemporaneous report of the alleged sexual harassment by JN of a former St. Paul priest; allegations of reprisals by JN against a former St. Paul priest; concerns raised by a college seminary rector and another St Paul priest regarding JN’s interaction with seminarians in St Paul; allegations of excessive drinking by JN.”

Let me address these the best I can:

a. JN seen at a gay bar in Windsor, Canada:

I have never been to a gay bar.

In fact, as I publicly stated years ago, I directed an internal investigation after members of the archdiocesan staff of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis began hearing rumors about me regarding specific interactions with certain priests in the Archdiocese of Detroit more than 35 years prior. These rumors revolved around perceptions of what I had said, places where people believed they saw me, and a gesture someone thought I made. Given the climate of the Church at the time, I had asked that Bishop Lee Piche begin an internal investigation so we would have independent proof that I, in no way, acted immorally, unethically, or illegally. We hired an independent investigator, and I answered all his questions to the best of my ability.

I ordered that the investigation be conducted for the benefit of the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese investigates all allegations of clergy misconduct. It would have been unfair to ignore these allegations simply because I knew them to be false. Since I would have instructed the Archdiocese to investigate similar allegations made against any priest, I ordered the Archdiocese to independently investigate the allegations made against me.

b. JN cruising a Detroit park known for such activity

The allegation was very detailed regarding the date, time and car make and model. I was not in the country at the time and did not own nor have access to the make and model of that particular car.

c. JN seen at a gay video store in Detroit

I have not heard of this allegation. I have never been in such a video store.

d. Allegations of sexual harassment

It's my understanding that many of the allegations actually revolve around a few men and a few incidents (listing them as you have implied that there are many, many accusers and alleged incidents). I categorically deny all of those allegations and I have never used my position to take advantage of anybody.

5. You wrote: "*James Heathcott, a former seminarian, [signed an affidavit](#) stating he was expelled from Detroit's seminary within 72 hours after refusing Nienstedt's sexual advances. Several other priests and seminarians also signed affidavits testifying to Nienstedt's homosexual misconduct.*"

James Heathcott left the seminary voluntary. I never made sexual advances to him or any other seminarian. I always had much respect for those discerning a priestly vocation.

6. You wrote: "*In 2015, Ventline [signed an affidavit](#) claiming he saw Nienstedt in a gay bar in Windsor, Ontario. 'I recall seeing John — and there is no doubt in my mind that it was him based on my prior interactions with him — at the Happy Tap,' Ventline testified. 'He appeared to wave me off as I was coming — and I backed off because I did not want to impose on him.'*"

Please see previous responses.

7. You wrote: "*A separate Vatican investigation confirmed such reprisals.*"

I am unaware of any Vatican investigation, and I am unaware that any investigation confirmed anything, other than a "he said, he said".

8. You wrote: *“Nienstedt denied the claims at the time. He also denies the allegations of homosexual conduct. Asked why a number of people claim he's homosexual, [Nienstedt said in 2014](#), ‘I have no idea.’”*

I still do not know why these allegations have been made, other than most of those who have made them are known to each other. It is a matter of public record that they do not agree with the Church's teachings on homosexuality, and I have consistently preached, taught and lived what the Church teaches on this issue.

9. You wrote: *“Documents also reveal Nienstedt gave Wehmeyer — eventually convicted and imprisoned for child sex abuse — preferential treatment, keeping him in active ministry for years in spite of multiple complaints of Wehmeyer's homosexual predation.”*

I was unaware of any sexual misconduct allegations against him at the time. Otherwise, I would not have promoted him. I knew that the Archdiocese had placed conditions on Rev. Wehmeyer. When I became Archbishop, I made sure that he was complying with those conditions, which included regular counseling, attendance at support group meetings, spiritual direction, and monitoring by the Archdiocesan Promoter of Ministerial Standards.

There were two parishes at the time, both small parishes and only a mile apart. Then Rev. Wehmeyer had successfully been the pastor of one of those parishes, and we had to move the pastor of the second parish to a larger parish. I did not make this decision in a vacuum. I also had a Priest Personnel Board who advised me on such matters and would have played a role in making this decision.

In light of the above, I believe you have a moral obligation to post corrections to your story. I presume that you believe in the truth, but you have not been faithful to that belief in writing this article. I encourage you to contact me in the future if you are going to write anything further about me.

Archbishop John Nienstedt

Re: Your Recent Posting

Christine Niles <christineniles@>

Fri 7/19/2019 12:12 PM

To: archbishopjniestedt@xxxxxxx

Bcc: Michael Voris

Your Excellency,

Thank you for your note. We have clarified several things in our article.

1. We revised the wording in our article to note that you were not "forced" to resign. When we used the term "forced," we meant that the scandal and controversy is what led you to submit your resignation, but as that understanding was unclear, we have revised those portions of the article.
2. We have removed the phrase "Vatican investigation" to make clear it was an archdiocesan investigation, as well as a criminal investigation by the prosecutor's office.
3. We have also included your response to claims you and Wehmeyer had a relationship.
4. As to your other claim about not covering up Wehmeyer's abuse, as you know, canon lawyer Jennifer Haselberger has testified in an affidavit that your office knew about Wehmeyer's sexual misconduct for years and failed to report him to police. Your allegations are also contradicted by abuse victims of Wehmeyer in their lawsuit against you.

As to the rest we are taking it under advisement and making further inquiries now. We will offer a public response soon.

In the meantime, do you have a response to this report's claims that you mishandled the case of Fr. Samuel Ritchey?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MD91GIIDbFo>

Thank you.
