



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

*Cardinal Rigali Center
20 Archbishop May Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63119*

Office of Marketing
and Mission Awareness
p) 314.792.7557
gabeyones@archstl.org

The Archdiocese of St. Louis's Press Release

Today the Archdiocese of St. Louis and the sole plaintiff, a female known as Jane Doe 92, agreed to settle her lawsuit. A protective order in the case has precluded the Archdiocese from commenting on this matter until now. By the terms of the settlement agreement, other than this statement, the Archdiocese will not make any further statements or comments regarding this matter. At the request of the Plaintiff, the terms of the settlement agreement are confidential.

The Archdiocese has vigorously defended this case because it believes Jane Doe 92's claims and allegations are false. Specifically, the Archdiocese denies that Jane Doe 92 was ever abused by Joseph Ross, a priest who was removed from ministry in 2002. We do not say this lightly. Jane Doe 92 made allegations in this case that her own family members dispute. She said her father witnessed the abuse by Ross and did nothing to stop it; her father denied this allegation under oath. In addition, Jane Doe 92 has been diagnosed, by her own treating doctors, with a medical condition that causes her to falsify claims, exaggerate symptoms and make inconsistent statements. Her own doctors and expert witnesses voiced doubts about her allegations and noted that they contained multiple inconsistencies. We simply do not believe her allegations are true.

In addition, as documented in public records, Jane Doe 92's criminal charges against Father Ross were dropped by the government because the prosecution believed it could not prove her case. Father Ross was not the only person Jane Doe 92 has accused of rape. She previously alleged she was raped by another person. The government declined to prosecute charges against that person as well due to lack of evidence.

The purpose of a trial is to determine the truth. To allow the jury in this case to determine the truth, the Archdiocese actively sought to have Jane Doe 92's treating doctors testify at trial because the Archdiocese believed the treating doctors would support the Archdiocese's position that the abuse of Jane Doe 92 did not happen. Plaintiff took the highly unusual step of trying to block those doctors from testifying at trial.

Dozens of witnesses, including a highly-respected judge and a former police officer, were prepared to offer testimony that would make clear that Jane Doe 92's allegations of abuse could not have occurred.

While the Archdiocese does not believe that Jane Doe 92 was abused by Joseph Ross, it has publicly acknowledged that this man abused other boys in the 1970's and 80's. The Archdiocese publicly announced in 2002 that it was removing Joseph Ross from ministry based on his 1988 guilty plea to a misdemeanor based on touching a young boy on the buttocks and kissing him. After that guilty plea in 1988, Ross was sent by the Archdiocese for in-patient treatment at a highly respected medical facility.

The doctors who treated Ross confirmed he was not attracted to children, was not a pedophile, and recommended his return to ministry. The Archdiocese relied on those doctors when it returned him to ministry in 1989. Other than Plaintiff, no other person has alleged they were abused by Ross since his treatment ended in 1989. Although no other allegations of abuse were made against Ross between 1988 and 2002, Ross was removed from ministry under “zero tolerance” standards adopted by the Archdiocese in 2002 in the wake of clear changes in society’s and the medical community’s views on the ability to treat child abusers. When Ross’ removal from ministry was announced publicly in 2002, then-Bishop Dolan and then-Archbishop Rigali repeatedly and publicly implored any victims to come forward. Five young men did come forward in 2002 in response to these public requests, alleging that they were abused by Ross in the 1970’s.

To be clear, the Archdiocese is not defending Ross. He is a known abuser, which is illegal, wrong and shameful. The Archdiocese does, however, have an obligation to defend itself against claims it believes are false, and instead use its money for charitable work and to heal all legitimate victims of sexual abuse.

The Archdiocese has agreed to today’s settlement in order to allow the Archdiocese and Jane Doe 92 to move on from this difficult point. We strongly believe there is no healing that can come from three weeks of trial dwelling on Fr. Ross’ bad history, or Jane Doe 92’s very personal issues. The settlement is obviously also intended to allow the Church to move past this matter – a costly legal fight which is not good for the Church, its parishioners, or the community as a whole. It is time for all parties to move forward.

The Archdiocese is fully committed to caring for all victims of abuse and strongly believes that assistance must be offered to all victims throughout society, regardless of whether those victims were abused by perpetrators in religious organizations, service clubs, public schools or family members. The Archdiocese and Archbishop Robert Carlson remain committed to eradicating the terrible and inherent societal evil of child abuse. Therefore, consistent with its long-standing practices, the Archdiocese will continue to support victims of abuse and to help heal the injuries suffered by legitimate victims of these decades-old issues.