

May 8, 2011

Bishop W. Francis Malooly
Chancery Office
Catholic Diocese of Wilmington
1925 Delaware Avenue
Wilmington, DE 19806

Dear Bishop Malooly,

On Sunday, May 01, 2011, along with two other women and one man, I stood on the public pavement outside St. Ann's Parish Church in Wilmington, Delaware at the corner of Gilpin and Union. We were there with handouts asking parishioners to take the pledge - a pledge to protect children, and to sign a petition attesting to the same:

www.pledgetoprotectchildren.org

With papers in hand, we stood equally spaced one from another in front of the church waiting for Sunday's 9:30 A.M. Mass to conclude.

As the parishioners started to exit the church and make their way down the walk in our direction curbside, we said, "Good Morning, would you like to take the pledge to protect children? There is a website on-line which will give you more information about the pledge."

The parishioners were invariably polite and responsive, taking a flyer and moving on while talking to other parishioners on a glorious spring morning.

Shortly after Mass goers started exiting the church, Msgr. Thomas Cini, presently Moderator of the Curia for the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington as well as the pastor of St. Ann parish, came round the corner of Gilpin Avenue, presumably from the rectory, and appeared to be on a course heading directly for us.

Msgr. Cini first worked his way to each of the other women before coming to me.

He was confrontational with all of us, demanding to know who we were. To one he said, "Oh, you're that SNAP woman," referring to the group, Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. Then he stood directly in front of me with his face inches from mine and in an aggressive and demanding voice said, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm Sister Maureen as you well know." Cini then told me to call the next time to get his permission before coming and distributing anything at his church. I told him I didn't need his permission and he said, "Yes, you do." I repeated, "No, I don't." He then threatened to call the police which I suggested he do as he walked to the gentleman to my right, the fourth person of our little band of senior citizens.

Msgr. Cini never did ask the subject matter of the papers in my hand.

I mention this very public confrontation for a number of reasons --

As I thought about what had happened, the feelings I had experienced when Msgr. Thomas Cini confronted me began to wash over me again – his aggressive manner and stance, the invasion of my personal space with his face inches from mine, his provocative and bullying attitude. I felt the same adrenaline coursing through me and I realized that Msgr. Cini's entire body language was telling me

that I was close to being physically assaulted. He was harassing and attempting to intimidate me and his rant told me that he was that close to losing control.

I wonder how many others advocates, adult victims of childhood sexual abuse and members of their families have been verbally assaulted and harassed by church officials or diocesan clergy while doing nothing more than standing outside their own parish churches and attempting to bring attention to the sexual assaults and violations they have endured whether ten, twenty or fifty years ago or when trying to bring attention to their adult sons or daughters who had attempted or committed suicide as a result of sodomy and rape in childhood.

One member of our fearless little band was married in the very church we now stood before. Her seven children were baptized, received the other sacraments and graduated from St. Ann as she herself did along with her sister, brother and uncles. Yet she was made to endure the verbal abuse and harassment by Msgr. Thomas Cini for taking a position, in all good conscience, regarding the sexual abuse of children.

How unbelievable is that?

I am forced to ask, "Is such behavior by our priests the exception or the norm?" Has all that much really changed since 2002?

We know from the 2011 Grand Jury Report that not much had changed in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia between its release and the 2005 release of a previous Grand Jury Report.

We also know that the sexual exploitation of individuals, especially women and children, is far from being adequately addressed in society as a whole, by religious denominations generally or by the institutional Roman Catholic Church in particular.

Is it really any different in the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware?

Bishop Malooly, are you aware of the kind of behavior Msgr. Thomas Cini exhibited? Is it to be tolerated? Are there others like him? One has to wonder whether Msgr. Cini has a history of such boorish, crude and harassing behavior in regard to individuals be they women, including nuns, or men?

It certainly would behoove you as bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington to look into this matter.

In any case, the four of us deserve an apology.

Sincerely,

Sister Maureen Paul Turlish SNDdeN

Cc: Monsignor Thomas Cini, Moderator of the Curia
Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Apostolic Nuncio