

ACCUSED PRIEST EXONERATED

On March 17, Bill Donohue wrote a news release titled, "Fr. Leo Riley Also Has Rights." Donohue gave four reasons why he believed that this priest was innocent of accusations made against him. A few weeks ago, he was cleared of all charges of wrongdoing by an independent investigative unit.

Donohue has never met, nor has he ever corresponded with, this Naples, Florida priest, but he felt from the beginning that Fr. Riley was innocent. Here's why.

First, Donohue wondered why it would take 30 years to elapse before an accusation of sexual assault would be made; others may want to delude themselves into thinking that "repressed memories" are real, but Donohue is not among them. Second, if Father Riley were truly guilty it is likely that others would have made accusations against him—he is 58—yet the record shows that this was the first and only time anyone charged him with abuse.

Third, Donohue mentioned the fact that "there are many Father Rileys all over the nation who have had their reputations smeared by vindictive men looking to take advantage of the hostile climate that exists against priests." Fourth, Donohue emphasized that he was entitled to a presumption of innocence.

Father Riley denied the allegations from the get-go and even offered to take a polygraph test; he passed with flying colors. The investigation, which was triggered by the Archdiocese of Dubuque (Father Riley was in ministry there when the alleged offenses took place), was conducted by a former FBI agent. It should be noted that Archbishop Michael Jackels was under no legal obligation to do anything—the case was beyond the statute of limitations.

Officials at the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) took the occasion to condemn Father Riley again. They

should instead apologize for their maliciousness.

Please keep Father Riley and all priests in your prayers.