

ACCUSED PRIEST EXONERATED



Bill Donohue comments on the exoneration of Father Leo Riley:

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

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

First, I 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 I am 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, I 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, I 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.