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Statement of the Fall River Diocese on the Removal of a Fall River Pastor

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FALL RIVER – At the conclusion of Masses this weekend (May 25-26, 2019), parishioners of Holy Trinity Parish in Fall River were informed that their pastor, Father Bruce Neylon, has been removed from active priestly ministry because of a credible allegation of misconduct that is inconsistent with standards of ministerial behavior and in direct violation of the Code of Conduct for priests in the Fall River Diocese and the U.S. Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

Fall River Bishop Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., made the decision to remove Father Neylon after an investigation into an allegation from an individual who said that Father Neylon had sexual contact with him on numerous occasions in the early 1980s when he, the complainant, was approximately 14 to 15 years old. The Diocese has never received any other allegations against Father Neylon.

As is procedure, the Diocese engaged the services of a former Massachusetts State Trooper to conduct an independent investigation. A report of the investigator's findings was provided to the Fall River Diocesan Review Board, which followed with its own review of the facts. The Review Board, which includes nine lay and clerical members with legal, judicial, law enforcement, and social work backgrounds as well as a victim of abuse, met several times on this difficult matter. After serious consideration of all relevant information, including Father Neylon's denial of the allegation, the Board determined the allegation to be credible, warranting his removal. In cases like this, both diocesan policy and the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* require that the accused cleric be removed from ministry.

The matter has also been referred to the Bristol County District Attorney's Office.

"I know this is distressing information, first and foremost to Holy Trinity Parish, but also to the wider diocesan community of faith, and I want to assure all that my prayers are with them," Bishop da Cunha said. "At the same time, I wish to extend my prayers to this individual who came forward and to all survivors who have endured abuse," he said.

Father Neylon's removal took effect immediately. A priest who is removed from active ministry is not permitted to exercise public ministry nor present himself as a priest in public settings.

Background: Father Neylon’s Assignments:

Ordained 1975

1975 Assigned Parochial Vicar (or Assistant), Holy Name Parish, Fall River

1982 Assigned Parochial Vicar, St. Patrick Parish, Wareham

1985 Assigned to Pastoral Care, Sturdy Memorial Hospital, Attleboro

1993 Assigned Pastor, St. Mary Parish, Seekonk

2002 Assigned Pastor, St. Stanislaus Parish, Fall River

2012 Assigned Pastor, Holy Trinity Parish, Fall River

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