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ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE PREPARES FOR TRIAL IN CASE OF SPOKANE PRIEST

After more than 20 years as a national leader in programs for the prevention of child sexual abuse and responding to victims of past abuse, the Archdiocese of Seattle is preparing for what would be its first trial in a clergy sexual abuse case slated to begin in King County Superior Court today.

The trial involves the case of Patrick O'Donnell, formerly a priest of the Spokane Diocese. The abuse occurred in the late 1970s, when O'Donnell was living in Seattle and enrolled in graduate studies at the University of Washington.

The current lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Seattle is unique because it originally involved four victims previously compensated for this same abuse in a settlement with the Spokane Diocese. Two of the four men have reached agreement with the Archdiocese of Seattle on settlements.

"I have a long-standing commitment to addressing the problem of child sexual abuse in the church and society and responding to victims of past abuse in a fair and just manner," Archbishop Alex J. Brunett said. "It is disappointing that the two remaining victims have not agreed to the settlement offered to them, but the archdiocese is prepared to tell its story in court."

All individuals who bring allegations of clergy sexual abuse to the Archdiocese of Seattle, including those who have filed lawsuits against the church, are offered counseling at no charge and the opportunity to meet privately with the archbishop.

"I deeply regret the abuse these victims endured," said Archbishop Brunett. "Our goal and our consistent practice are to offer fair and just settlements and to provide psychological and pastoral care for victims of clergy sexual abuse, and whatever support we can reasonably provide in the healing process.

"I have met personally with dozens of victims in the past," he said, "and in every case the meetings have been helpful in the healing process. I had hoped we would reach that point in this case, and I remain open to meeting with these victims should they so desire."

Anyone who has knowledge of sexual abuse or misconduct by a member of the clergy, an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Seattle is urged to call the archdiocesan hotline at 1-800-446-7762.

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