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**MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:**              DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER – DIOCESAN REVIEW BOARD  
**FROM:**          MARK COLLOPY & SUSAN STONE  
**SUBJECT:**      AUDIT OF EXTERNAL PRIEST BACKGROUND AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS  
**DATE:**          NOVEMBER 27, 2013  
**CC:**              REV. RICHARD THOMPSON / DEACON GREGORY MCGINN

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On October 31, 2013, we conducted an audit on the background checks and training compliance for the external priests serving in this diocese. The objective of the audit was to review the policy set within the charter and check for its compliance within its administration. This was a scheduled audit set between us and Reverend Richard Thompson, who serves as the Diocesan Vicar of the Clergy.

We began our audit by sitting down with Father Thompson and discussed the policy and guidelines utilized by his office. Father Thompson indicated that the policy involved is used when a priest assigned to any religious order, or diocese outside of this one, serves in any ministerial capacity within the Diocese of Manchester. This includes all parishes, diocesan parochial schools, and diocesan hospitals. Father Thompson added that these external priests sometimes serve as religious chaplains to non-denominational hospitals and are vetted for those institutions on behalf of this diocese. We both found our interview with Father Thompson to be informative, as well as educational, and that it seemed clear to us that Father Thompson and his office took this policy very seriously.

At the beginning of the audit, Father Thompson provided us with the background files of nine priests who are currently working in various capacities within this diocese. Many of these priests were found to be from dioceses foreign to this country, and in one case involved a retired priest from the Diocese of Portland, Maine. During our discussion with Father Thompson it was brought to our attention that there were some external priests from various religious orders who were also serving as resident priests to diocesan parishes, and in some cases serving as pastors to those parishes. Those files were provided to us at our request. All together, we were provided with 20 files along with a list of active external priests.

In our review of these files we looked for the presence of material documents, as set within the policy. Specifically, we were looking for the presence of letters of suitability by the external priest's bishop or religious superior; criminal background check release forms; documented check of the National Sex Offender Registry; Background Screening Authorization of Clerics; a signed acknowledgement of the Diocese of Manchester Code of Conduct; and completion of or attendance to either the "Protecting God's Children" workshop or the "Not On My Watch" on-line training.

With regards to the child safety training component, we were advised that some religious orders require a similar training through the Presidium program. We were told that this program was considered to be more vigorous and cleric specific, and that the completion of this program would put the priest in compliance with the diocesan child safety guidelines.

Overall, we found the files provided to be complete and within compliance. In a few cases the documented search of the National Sex Offender Registry were missing, but were quickly found

within the office archives and replaced in the files. In one case, the file for an international extern was found to be missing. In search of that file it was found that this particular priest was working on some immigration matters and that the legal counsel for Catholic Charities possessed the file for their temporary use. Deacon McGinn indicated that his office would seek out that file and return it to its proper place. He added that the file would be made available for our review at a later time.

In one other case, an extern's file was found to be incomplete. This particular priest was serving within a parish, yet a letter of suitability was not provided for the file. We were told that this particular priest was a Benedictine Priest from the Abbey of Saint Anselm College, who fell under the supervision of the current religious superior, Abbot Mark Cooper. Aside from the letter, the file was complete and found to be in compliance with policy. From our discussion in this matter the question was raised on whether these priests were to be considered external. Deacon McGinn was unsure and advised that he would seek out the answer to determine what steps, if any, needed to be taken if they were to be classified as external priests.

Finally, we spoke with Father Thompson and Deacon McGinn about those external priests who come to the diocese to perform one ministerial function for only one instance. Specifically, as the policy provides, those priests outside of this diocese who "preside at a single event, such as a wedding, funeral, mission, workshop, or baptism." It also included those priests who "concelebrate Mass or assist at Mass once or twice...serve in a parish or diocesan school for one or two days." In these cases the external priest is only required to provide the diocese with a letter of suitability by their bishop or religious superior, or they are able to provide a current *celebret* to the pastor or school principal.

In our discussion, this is a matter where the Diocese of Manchester must adhere to, albeit, an honor system. In this policy it is incumbent upon the pastors of the diocese to provide the office with the required letters or documentation before the diocese provides the external with the faculties needed to perform their one time ministry. Father Thompson made it clear that the pastors are made aware of this policy, and are expected to adhere to it. Father Thompson added that because it is incumbent upon the pastors to follow through with the policy it is near impossible to assure its compliance from his office. Through continued discussion and review within the pastoral workshops it is hoped that all the pastors within the Diocese of Manchester adhere to this requirement.

This concluded our audit.

On November 21, 2013, Deacon McGinn provided us with some follow-up on two matters we had left him to research. First, was the missing file for one of the international externs. Deacon McGinn told us that he had searched the diocesan offices and the offices for Catholic Charities and could not locate the file. It was decided that a new file would be generated to keep in compliance.

The second matter involved a question on whether the Benedictine Priests from the Abbey of Saint Anselm College would be considered external. As noted in the audit, the file found for this religious order was complete except for having the required letter of suitability from the Abbot. It was determined that since this was a religious order located within the diocese these priests would not be considered external, as defined by policy. This, in turn, did not place these priests under the full requirements of external priests, however; it was our recommendation that all Benedictine Priests utilized within the diocese comply with all youth safety training and background check procedures.