

Fr. Brian's Comments Regarding Fr. Shawn for the Weekend of November 10

I'd like to take a few minutes today to speak with you about Fr. Shawn and developments since I last spoke to you on this subject. Since one of my goals is to bring everyone up to speed, including newer parishioners, I will be repeating some information that was provided this past summer, and will provide additional information to bring everyone up to date.

In May of 2017, the Archdiocese received a report alleging that Fr. Shawn had engaged in behaviors with an adult woman that violated professional boundaries. In response, Fr. Shawn took a leave of absence and the Archdiocese initiated an investigation that was conducted by a professional investigator with law enforcement background. This investigation concluded what Fr. Shawn had already acknowledged: that he compromised professional boundaries and that he used poor judgment in his response to the situation. However, the investigation did not substantiate any criminal wrongdoing. Fr. Shawn underwent an evaluation and participated in counseling and a 30 day retreat before returning to priestly ministry here at St. Michael's.

More recently, in June of this year, this same adult woman reported the incident as a sexual assault to the Linn County Sheriff's Department, which then began its own investigation. From the beginning, Fr. Shawn denied the allegation. Nevertheless, he voluntarily withdrew from pastoral ministry and priestly service, and he cooperated with the authorities in Linn County.

The Linn County Sheriff's Department has now completed its investigation, finding that there was no evidence of a crime, and no probable cause to support the filing of any charges against Fr. Shawn. Fr. Shawn is no longer the subject of any investigation, and the matter is now closed. In other words, the investigation by Linn County authorities reached the same conclusion as our own investigation back in May of 2017.

There has been no other similar complaint against Fr. Shawn. As I explained in June, the Archdiocese takes with great seriousness any allegation of misconduct, and it will continue to do so.

At this point, it has been determined that in the case of Father Shawn, a return to ministry is appropriate. I am sure each of you can understand the cloud that has hung over Fr. Shawn and the concern he's had to face each day since the criminal allegation was lodged against him in June.

Today, I'm happy to welcome him back to priestly ministry. Our plan is to have Fr. Shawn remain in residence and minister here at St. Michael's under my supervision. He will also provide ministry to other parishes in the Archdiocese on the weekends as needed, and will continue to engage in a continuing care plan.

Thank you for welcoming him back here to St. Michael. Fr. Shawn was my associate back in Topeka for 3 years and I've known him for 15 years. He is a good priest and has many gifts and talents to offer the church. Welcome back, Fr. Shawn.