

June 14, 2021

Most Reverend Thomas J. Rodi
Metropolitan See of Alabama
Diocese of Mobile
400 Government St.
Mobile, AL 36602

Dear Archbishop Rodi:

Under the guidelines of Vos Estis Lux Mundi, I am respectively submitting a formal case against Bishop Steven Raica who is now the Bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham, AL. At the time of his abuse of power, he was the Bishop of the Gaylord Diocese in MI. The evidence in this document clearly demonstrates he should no longer hold the position of bishop within the Catholic Church.

1. From a period of 2015 through 2020 Bishop Raica continued to ignore signs of sexual abuse within the Diocese of Gaylord, Michigan, to wit:
 - a. In 2015, he allowed Father Dennis Stillwell, the then Vicar General to hire his friend Jim Holtz, a defrocked priest because of past sexual abuse charges, to become the Diocesan Lay minister of Youth at St. Francis Xavier Church in Petoskey. Personal knowledge of Bishop Hebda admitting he knew Holtz was serving at St. Francis can be produced. In addition, Fr. Cowan also made these facts known to Bishop Raica in person and in writing but Bishop Raica did nothing until the situation became public.
 - b. Because of Jim Holtz's known sexual abuse activities, Bishop Raica clearly violated his own diocese guidelines.
 - c. It was not until February 2019 when the Michigan Attorney General brought criminal action against Mr. Holtz that Bishop Raica finally came forward to acknowledge these wrong doings. His action at this time was way too little and way too late for a shepherd who is charged by God to watch over his flock.
 - d. During Bishop Raica's presentation to the parish on Jan 15, 2019, he stated,
 - i. "Emails going around with issues he wanted addressed, but they were sent everywhere else, but not to me", and "Father Matthew has my phone number. He never called. He has my text # and never called me".
 - e. According to documentation these are both blatant lies to the parishioners as there are many emails in evidence from Father Cowan to Bishop Raica and Father Cowan has strongly objected to both Father Stillwell's advances and Jim Holtz's hiring in person and on the phone and in writing on more that one occasion over several years to Bishop Raica. Bishop Raica's credibility to truthfulness just cannot be trusted.
2. In 2018, Bishop Raica not only ignored the formal charges of sexual harassment by Father Matthew Cowan against Father Dennis Stillwell, but wrongfully removed the right of Father Cowan to celebrate the mass publicly. For almost two years Father Cowan was isolated from his church. He was ultimately reinstated as a priest in good standing, but had to move to Kansas for his good name and pastoral rights to be reinstated.
3. Bishop Raica then allowed Father Dennis Stillwell to retire with full benefits and no admonishment for his immoral sexual activities and blatant disregard for diocese policy.

These activities which are well documented by the Gaylord Diocesan Watch to the best of their knowledge, and by other sources, found at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/162j30FwBA27POQ2BLb91U1ieiQISJJ8W?usp=sharing>
show Bishop Steven Raica unfit to hold the office of Bishop because:

1. He refuses to lead by moral example,
2. He totally disregards the moral and sexual protection granted all people of the diocese under his leadership and totally disregards diocesan policy against these matters,
3. He falsely accuses a subordinate and commences to ruin the life and reputation of a well thought of young priest for the protection of one of his own staff because he does not have the courage to prosecute the real sexual abuser,
4. He is a disgrace to all leadership within the USCCB.

Based on Vos Estis Lux Mundi:

1. Article 1-1(b)
2. Article 3-1
3. Article 4-2
4. Article 5-1a), b), c), 2
5. Article 6 a)

And in addition, the following Canon laws support the above allegations:

1. Canon 1371 – failure to obey, support and enforce existing diocesan policy regarding sexual predators,
2. Canon 1372-1 use of ecclesiastical power for means of intimidation,
3. Canon 1378 – 1 abuse of ecclesiastical power,
4. Canon 1378 – 2 omitting use of ecclesiastical power to enforce diocesan policy

Because the documentation of these activities took place outside our diocese, and the supporting documentation is housed on the cloud, I have attached a certificate of the authentication of these facts signed by the members of the Gaylord Diocesan Watch. They attest to the best of their knowledge; all the information of the Gaylord Diocesan Watch website is true and factual.

Under normal circumstances this document would be submitted to the Metropolitan See of Michigan. The appropriate Metropolitan See is the Archdiocese of Detroit presided over by Archbishop Vigneron. Archbishop Vigneron is scheduled to assume the reins of the USCCB. This action would also necessarily involve Archbishop Hebda, who knew of Fr. Holtz and did nothing. These investigations would likely have a negative impact on Archbishop Vigneron's chances of election to head the USCCB. So, Archbishop Vigneron would likely refuse to investigate the case. The list of culpable bishops would include Bishop Raica and Bishop Hebda. From Gaylord Diocese Watch's and my perspective, we believe the Mobile Metropolitan See is the only See in which this case has any hope of being properly investigated.

I respectfully request that a full and thorough investigation be made into Bishop Steven Raica's activities during 2015-2020 referenced above and if found guilty of any or all of these charges, be removed

immediately from the office of the Bishop of Birmingham, AL. This request is in line with the penalties associated with the referenced Canon laws quoted above.

Cc: Archbishop Christopher Pierre-Apostolic Nuncio