

Most Reverend Robert W. Finn
Bishop of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Community Update

May 27, 2011

When the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph reported its concerns about Father Shawn Ratigan to the Kansas City Police Department on May 12, we set into motion a series of events that have provoked feelings of concern, anger and shame.

During the last two weeks, I have learned facts that I had not previously known. As Bishop, I owe it to people to say, "Things must change."

I must also acknowledge my own failings. Yesterday evening, I read, for the *first time*, the memorandum prepared in May 2010 by our principal at St. Patrick School. There, she reported her concerns about Shawn Ratigan's inappropriate behavior with children at her school.

In the following days, Diocesan Vicar General Msgr. Murphy gave me a brief verbal summary of the report and his meeting with Shawn Ratigan, which had occurred immediately after the report was received. Msgr. Murphy told me that he had thoroughly discussed these concerns with Shawn Ratigan, and how he was to change his behaviors. Shawn Ratigan expressed both the willingness and the desire to make these changes.

To the best of my knowledge, no one on my staff, other than Msgr. Murphy, read the report. Hindsight makes it clear that I should have requested from Msgr. Murphy an actual copy of the report. And, so, I also have to change. Please understand that at the time of the May 2010 report, we had no knowledge of any inappropriate photographs or images in Shawn Ratigan's possession. Those were not discovered until December 2010.

How will we change?

I already have met with the people of the St. Patrick Parish community, priests of the diocese, diocesan staff, and the chair of the Independent Review Board. As a result of these meetings, I have asked the Independent Review Board to expand its role in receiving and evaluating reports of misconduct with children. I will be meeting with others, to determine how best to change our internal structure, reporting and procedures. The changes could be unsettling but, more than ever, I realize that they are necessary.

Please pray for me in these resolutions. And, let us pray for each other in these difficult days.