

March 2, 2014

David Clohessy
Director of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests
[314-566-9790](tel:314-566-9790) cell
SNAPclohessy@aol.com

Cappy Larson
SNAP Orthodox Director
cappy@rlarson.com

Melanie Jula Sakoda
SNAP Orthodox Director
[925-708-6175](tel:925-708-6175) cell
melanie.sakoda@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Clohessy, Ms. Larson and Ms. Sakoda,

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!

I ask for your prayers as we enter this time of Great Lent, a time of forgiveness and repentance. I also thank you for your letter in which you outline your areas of concern relating to Archbishop Seraphim. I share your concerns and can assure you that the Orthodox Church in America is committed to addressing them in a pastoral and forthright manner.

As you may know, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America issued a Statement on January 24 following the judgment against Archbishop Seraphim, which you may access [here](#). Since that time, I have personally traveled to Canada with Bishop Michael, Secretary of the Holy Synod and Fr. John Jillions, Chancellor of the OCA, and met with Archbishop Seraphim and the community at the Ottawa Cathedral. The purpose of these meetings was to convey to His Eminence and to the Archdiocesan community the additional restrictions that have been placed on Archbishop Seraphim. He remains suspended and, in light of his conviction in a criminal court, he has been restricted to church attendance at the Chapel of the Monastery of St. Silouan the Athonite in Spencerville, Ontario, where he resides until sentencing. Archbishop Seraphim was also informed that there are a number of decisions concerning his case that will require further canonical consideration at the Spring Session of the Holy Synod on March 17-20, 2014.

I appreciate your concern and your prayers for the victims in this case and for all other victims of sexual abuse who have yet to come forward. Your work in this regard is invaluable. I want to reassure you that we offer our prayers for the



P.O. BOX 675
SYOSSET, NY 11791-0675
TEL: 516.922.0550
FAX: 516-922-0954
WEBSITE: WWW.OCA.ORG

victims in this particular case, for their families and for all who have been affected directly and indirectly by these events. The OCA takes sexual abuse seriously and has taken steps to prevent and address sexual abuse wherever it may occur. In my meetings in Canada, I made it clear that all of us have an obligation to pray for, and be mindful of the suffering endured by the victims and their family.

In specific response to your five points, I ask that you consider these as action items that we are, and have been, taking in this matter. You wrote:

1. Publicly denounce the March 5th event, and use your influence to persuade the event organizers to cancel the concert.

During my visit to Ottawa, I publically stated that no OCA parishes or clergy are permitted to publicly raise funds for Archbishop Seraphim. His Grace Bishop Irénée and I are in contact with each other on this matter and have taken steps to ensure that the OCA, Archdiocese and parishes understand our directives. It is my understanding that the March 5th event has been cancelled, in large part due to the efforts of SNAP.

2. Forbid OCA employees and discourage OCA parishioners from attending.

A directive from Bishop Irénée has been sent out to the members of the clergy, parish councils and diocesan council of the Archdiocese of Canada reaffirming that there is to be no public or church-sponsored support of Archbishop Seraphim. Such has been the official position of the OCA and the Archdiocese of Canada from the beginning of this process.

3. Post and distribute copies of a brochure called "What to do when your priest is accused,"

I thank you for this suggestion. I have forwarded a copy of your brochure to the members of our Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee for their review and for possible use within the OCA. I would, however, call your attention to the OCA website which has a quite detailed procedure for reporting as well as other resources. All of these materials, including our recently revised Policies, Standards and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct (PSPs), have been distributed to all OCA dioceses and parishes. Each parish is required to fill out a compliance form for their bishop and each diocese is required to report to the Synod on their respective compliance. At their Spring Session, the Holy Synod will be reviewing the progress of this compliance. For further information, please click on [this link](#) and let me know if there is anything that we are missing or if you have other materials or suggestions that might augment our policies and materials.

In addition, we now have a full-time employee, Cindy Davis, a licensed Social Worker who serves as Coordinator of the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA). She is in constant contact with the dioceses on these matters and is also traveling to all the dioceses of the OCA offering

training in the areas of recognizing and reporting incidents of sexual misconduct. For every allegation of sexual misconduct, she is responsible for reaching out to the victims and for ensuring that adequate pastoral and/or therapeutic care is provided to them. We have also set-up a toll free telephone number through which people can anonymously report to ORSMA.

4. Do all you can to prevent others from holding similar events supporting those convicted of committing child sex crimes,

We certainly would agree with this and the above referenced directive from Bishop Irénée addresses this. Part of the process of educating our clergy and faithful has been to draw attention to inappropriate responses to sexual misconduct allegations, including any misguided support of respondents based on a presumption of innocence. We have spent the last few years and an incredible amount of time revising our *Procedures, Standards and Policies* (PSPs) with experts in the field. Please feel free to examine this document and offer any insight or suggestions to improve it. We consider it a "working" document which will be constantly evolving along with the legal and counseling landscape in this critical area of Church life. But certainly it integrates the very best information and expertise that we have available at this time.

We are also sponsoring events in such diverse areas as continuing education for clergy and integrating instruction at the seminaries to fully educate our clergy. This year, the Holy Synod mandated that every OCA clergyman participate in 5 hours of clergy continuing education specifically on sexual misconduct issues. As noted above, we also have a Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC) which assists the Synod and provides professional expertise to ORSMA on a regular basis. I would welcome any additional suggestions your may have in these matters.

5. Aggressively reach out to anyone else who may have seen, suspected or suffered crimes by Archbishop Seraphim or any other employee of the OCA.

We are certainly working to address this issue. In the particular case of Archbishop Seraphim, a Synodal Commission has been working on his case since it was first reported to the authorities. I would call your attention to the following press releases on the OCA website for information that has been publically released on their work.

[January 24, 2014 Holy Synod Statement](#)

[January 21, 2012 Holy Synod Statement](#)

[November 21, 2011 Holy Synod Statement](#)

[December 13, 2010 Creation of Synodal Commission](#)

I would note that, in this original statement, a toll-free line and email were set up for people to call in with any information they may have on the case:

"Those with relevant information may contact the Commission by writing to the Synodal Commission, PO Box 27058, Saskatoon, SK, Canada S7H 5N9 or by sending an e-mail to investigation@oca.org. The Commission has also established a dedicated telephone line—306-974-1812—that will be operational effective Wednesday, December 15 [2010]. Once operational, callers will receive a voice mail message informing them that they have reached the Synodal Commission. All communications, by mail, e-mail, or telephone, will remain confidential and be referred directly to the Commission. "

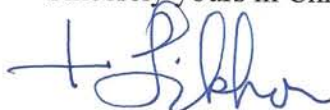
While the Commission was advised by authorities to be in temporary abeyance during the criminal investigation, the Commission continues its work and the toll-free line is still active. While I cannot comment on their work, I can assure you that members of the committee are still quite active and any information that was or is received will be processed according to proper legal and ethical reporting procedures. In addition, although I am no longer a member of this Synodal Commission (from the time of my election as Primate), I can confirm that all the members of this Commission are concerned for the victims and will be reaching out to them as part of their work. Several attempts at such outreach were made in the past, but at the time, the criminal process precluded this happening.

Additional stories on the actions of the Holy Synod and the Commission may be found at the following links:

www.oca.org/news/2338,
www.oca.org/news/2336
www.oca.org/news/2313
www.oca.org/news/2308
www.oca.org/news/2282

I pray that this information will be helpful to you and if we are missing something, please let us know. We, as a Church, are dedicated to protecting all victims and ensuring that such activities will never happen in the Church. I personally appreciate the dedication that you have shown to this critical part of Church life and I ask the Lord to continue to bless your work.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Tikhon'.

+TIKHON
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada