



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***Fr. Brian Boucher pleads guilty: Archdiocese responds***

Montreal, January 21, 2019 -- The Archdiocese of Montreal responds to the guilty plea that Fr. Brian Boucher entered today at the beginning of his second trial on sexual abuse charges involving a minor, two weeks after a first trial had found him guilty on similar charges.

With this plea, the victims are able to continue the difficult process of healing according to their own needs and out of the glare of the public.

Once again, the Archdiocese of Montreal must laud the courage of the two victims who met both with diocesan authorities and with the police to share what they had experienced, which led to the criminal proceedings. The abusive behaviour they described is deplorable.

“It’s a scandal that is a source of tremendous sadness. It stands in complete opposition to Jesus Christ and his Church,” states Archbishop Christian Lépine, currently in Panama for World Youth Day, an international gathering with Pope Francis.

“We are of one heart with the victims, their families, their parish communities in their pain and suffering. Your pain is our pain,” the Archbishop adds. “We will never accept that such crimes be committed and remain concealed.”

The Archdiocese wants to assure all Catholics and the general public that anyone coming forth with allegations of abuse will be received openly and listened to carefully. Protocols are in place to receive complaints. The public is urged to contact diocesan authorities through two confidential means: telephone, 514-925-4321 or by email, [assistance@diocesemontreal.org](mailto:assistance@diocesemontreal.org).

### **PREVENTATIVE ACTION**

Since 2011, a diocesan policy to promote “responsible ministry” has been developed and progressively implemented throughout the diocese. This policy aims to prevent all forms of abuse against minors and vulnerable adults: sexual, emotional, financial and physical. Some adults can be rendered vulnerable because of age or handicap or they are unable fully to protect themselves due to temporary or permanent circumstances.

As of June 2018, all parishes and every diocesan service must implement this policy, which will be evaluated and adjusted periodically.

## **CANONICAL PROCEEDINGS UNDERWAY**

From the time one of Fr. Boucher's victims approached diocesan authorities in December 2015, he was immediately removed from all priestly ministry and the diocese initiated a canonical inquiry.

The inquiry was completed in May 2016. In July, the Vatican authorized Archbishop Lépine to initiate a penal administrative process (simplified canonical process). At the same time, the Archdiocese assisted the two victims with whom it was in contact. In addition, it collaborated fully with the police, including making its complete canonical report available to them.

The penal canonical process was near completion when criminal charges were laid in March 2017. The process was temporarily suspended, a normal practice when a civil or criminal proceeding occurs concurrently.

With the conclusion of the two criminal trials, the canonical process will now resume.

With sentencing for the two trials awaited and the case still before the ecclesiastical tribunal, the Archdiocese will offer no additional comment at this time.

The penal administrative process can impose several sanctions upon a cleric deemed guilty; the most serious of which is dismissal from the clerical state (laicization).

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