

# SNAP

## Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests

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For immediate release  
March 8, 2004

For more information  
David Cerulli, Board Member, 917 757 1791 cell  
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### **Victims group wants Cardinal Egan to halt priest's libel suit against victim**

#### **Msgr. Gaffney must be removed from ministry**

#### **Egan needlessly puts children at risk, SNAP says**

Once again SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) is calling on Cardinal Edward M. Egan to remove Msgr. Thomas Gaffney from ministry. It is particularly distressing that Msgr. Gaffney is still in ministry when one considers that according to the attorney for the victim a second person has come forward with allegations of sexual abuse when Gaffney served at a different school.

We also want Cardinal Egan to halt Gaffney's libel suit against his victim. This priest only revictimizes Dan O'Dougherty and his family with his lawsuit. As the mother of the victim stated, "This man has robbed my son's soul." she said, "and robbed his youth." If Gaffney will not do the right thing and end his lawsuit, then it is time for the Cardinal to step in and stop this priest from doing more damage.

SNAP New York City leader David Cerulli wrote in his letter to Cardinal Egan, "...you can't have it both ways. You can't urge abuse victims to come forward, and then allow your priests to sue them. Common decency, common sense and your own charter compel you to create a healthy, welcoming climate for those who have suffered sex crimes, not an intimidating climate. But this is precisely what you have done by allowing Gaffney to sue his alleged victim." SNAP hopes that this hardball legal tactic backfires and more victims will come forward as a result.

SNAP believes that roughly eight other priests across the country have also filed slander or libel suits against their accusers. (See New York Times story by Sam Dillon and St. Louis Post Dispatch story by Bill Smith). Only one such case has been resolved. The victim won.

For more information:  
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SNAP is the nation's largest self-help group for clergy abuse victims. It is based in Chicago and has 4,600 members.

[www.snapnetwork.org](http://www.snapnetwork.org)

Full text of SNAP letter follows:

# SNAP

## Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests

David Cerulli, New York, NY  
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March 8, 2004

His Eminence Edward M. Egan  
1011 First Avenue  
New York, NY 10022

Dear Cardinal Egan,

It is very distressing to learn that Msgr. Thomas Gaffney has now filed a lawsuit against Dan O'Dougherty, the young man who was a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of this priest. We in the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests believe that you, as the leader of the Archdiocese of New York, should forbid your priests from filing lawsuits against former or current parishioners. Is this what Jesus would do? Accused priests can defend themselves without attacking their accusers. We would expect you, at the very least, to state publicly that you do not approve of such actions by a priest facing allegations of sexual abuse.

It is our understanding that the victim in this case was only asking that Msgr. Gaffney remove himself from ministry and not present himself as a priest. We believe this would have been accomplished if the Archdiocese followed the spirit of the Charter adopted in Dallas in 2002. To allow a priest with credible allegations of the sexual abuse of a minor to be left in ministry is a direct violation of the Charter. Instead, the Archdiocese has allowed Msgr. Gaffney to continue working as the pastor of St. Charles Church in Staten Island after formal charges have been lodged against him, needlessly placing children at risk.

According to the attorney for the victim, a second person has come forward with credible allegations of sexual abuse by Gaffney while he served at a different school. We applaud the courage of these victims to overcome the many obstacles to speaking out about their abuse. This is the only way the truth will be known and that children will be protected. The Archdiocese of New York now needs to do the right thing, follow the spirit of the Charter, remove Msgr. Gaffney from all contact with children, and inform him that he is no longer allowed to present himself as a priest.

The reported excuse given by the Archdiocese of New York, that the victim has not presented his testimony in person, is not a requirement of the Charter. A sworn statement, which has already been presented to the Archdiocese, is sufficient. The most accurate reason why Gaffney needs to be removed from ministry was stated by the mother of the victim in a recent news account, "This man has robbed my son's soul." she said, "and robbed his youth." We need to insure that other children don't suffer the same fate.

Cardinal Egan, SNAP is extremely concerned that you to do the right thing. Remove Msgr. Gaffney from ministry and inform him in no uncertain terms that he is

forbidden to present himself as a priest. We further urge that you halt his libel suit against the victim, thereby protecting the victim from being re-victimized.

Finally, you can't have it both ways. You can't serve two masters. You can't urge abuse victims to come forward, and then allow your priests to sue them. Common decency, common sense and your own charter compel you to create a healthy, welcoming climate for those who have suffered sex crimes, not an intimidating climate. But this is precisely what you have done by allowing Gaffney to sue his alleged victim.

Further, we request that you or your designated representatives set up a meeting with SNAP representatives and the parishioners at St. Charles R.C. Church. SNAP members, VOTF members, supporters, and family members of survivors will stand outside St. Charles R.C. Church on March 14, 2004 to show our support for Dan O'Dougherty, the victim and re-victimized survivor in this sad situation. We hope that you will join us in supporting a young man who has suffered too much already.

Sincerely,

David Cerulli  
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and Board of Directors  
Survivors Network of those  
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