News



by Brian Roewe

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The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests issued an apology Monday to a St. Louis priest and the St. Louis Archdiocese "for any false or inaccurate statements" made in relation to sexual abuse allegations brought against the priest that courts have found false.

The apology was part of a settlement reached in October between SNAP and Fr. Xiu Hui "Joseph" Jiang, who in 2015 brought a civil rights suit against the abuse victims advocacy group and the parents of a boy who accused him of sexual abuse.

That allegation, made in 2014, was the second against Jiang, following one made by a teenage girl in 2012 accusing him of improper contact. Each accusation led to criminal charges and civil suits against the priest. In both instances, the criminal charges were dropped and the civil suits ruled in Jiang's favor.

In the apology, released by the St. Louis Archdiocese, SNAP said that false claims of clergy sexual abuse do occur, and that neither of its leaders named in the suit,

former executive director David Clohessy and current executive director Barbara Dorris, had personal knowledge of complaints against Jiang.

"SNAP acknowledges that false claims of clergy sexual abuse injure those clerics falsely accused and the Roman Catholic Church. SNAP apologizes for any false or inaccurate statements related to the complaints against Fr. Joseph Jiang that it or its representatives made which in any way disparaged Fr. Joseph Jiang, Archbishop Robert J. Carlson, Monsignor Joseph D. Pins and the Archdiocese of St. Louis," the statement read.

Dorris told NCR that SNAP still maintains it did not make false statements about Jiang.

"It is an apology if we made a false allegation. ... And right now, I'd say none of them have been proven to be false. In other words, we said he was arrested twice; he was arrested twice. We said two children accused him of sexual assault; two children did.

"But it's like with anyone, if we make a false statement, of course we would apologize. That holds true for everyone. We would not want to make false statements," Dorris said.

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Jiang returned to ministry in June as associate pastor of the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, three months after a Lincoln County jury's verdict sided with him in the civil case involving the teenage girl. He had previously held the role before the archdiocese placed him on administrative leave in 2012 after it learned of the girl's allegation.

Jiang, a Chinese-born priest ordained for the St. Louis Archdiocese who fled religious persecution in China in 2006, has adamantly denied he abused either child.

He filed the civil suit against SNAP and the boy's family, along with two police officers and the city of St. Louis, a week after criminal charges were dropped in June 2015. The suit brought conspiracy and defamation charges against the parties, with Jiang claiming he experienced discrimination based on his religion and race. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported Nov. 27 that the suit against the city and police officers was dismissed without prejudice, allowing Jiang an opportunity to refile, which he is

expected to do.

At one point in Jiang's civil suit, a federal judge ordered SNAP to pay more than $20,000 in legal fees after the advocacy group refused to turn over documents requested in discovery proceedings. The judge also instructed jurors to assume as true that SNAP conspired to seek Jiang's conviction on religious and racial grounds, and that they issued false statements about him.

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