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Priest Seeks Probe of Lawyer's Charge

Albany-- John Aretakis Had Accused the Rev. Carl Urban of Abusing Boy

By Michele Morgan Bolton
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A Schenectady priest who claims John Aretakis publicly defamed him during a May 8 speech in Latham has asked the Committee on Professional Standards to investigate the unorthodox attorney's behavior.

The Rev. Carl Urban's June 30 complaint to the state panel that oversees lawyers joins at least 10 others that have been lodged against the North Greenbush resident who represents victims of clergy sex abuse.

Aretakis said he voluntarily made the three-page letter public because Urban's claims are "baseless, frivolous, mean and diabolical."

The move could cause the combative lawyer more problems, however, since state officials said such investigations are confidential.

Aretakis released Urban's letter to the media this week, along with a transcript of the speech he gave to the Coalition of Concerned Catholics of the Albany Diocese. In it, among other allegations, he said the longtime pastor of St. Adalbert had sex with a boy in a public restroom 15 years ago.

Wednesday, Aretakis said he has the right to release claims against himself based on a recent Court of Appeals ruling.

"I am also a U.S. citizen with the right to free speech," Aretakis said. "The truth is an absolute defense."

Although he would not comment specifically on the Aretakis matter, Committee on Professional Standards chief counsel Mark Ochs said judiciary law requires any attorney under investigation to make an application to the court before releasing privileged material.

"The statute says all investigations are confidential," Ochs said.

Robert Roche, who represents Urban, said Aretakis' decision to act independently only feeds the intimidation many already feel about raising concerns about attorneys.

"If I was to complain about my lawyer, I'd want to know I could complain without my name being on the front page of the newspaper," Roche said. "Some people take their privacy seriously."

Urban categorically denied Aretakis claims about inappropriate sexual misconduct and refuted another reference Aretakis said was noted on letters repeatedly by the Rev. John Minkler that he is "one of the worst."

Minkler killed himself on Feb. 15 just days after a letter he wrote to church officials about the sex lives of Bishop Howard Hubbard and other priests was made public.

"The clear implication ... is that I am one of the worst pedophiles or abusers of children," Urban wrote.

"The implication is clear in the context in which it is made."

"I don't know why he has accused me of these false things except to prosper his own vindictive campaign against my bishop and diocese," he said.

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