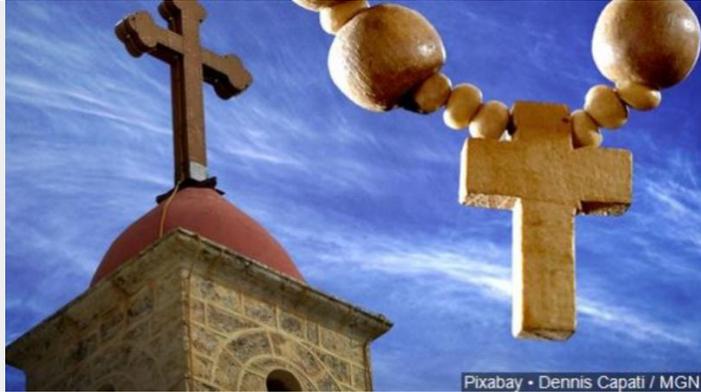


WEST VIRGINIA PROSECUTOR SAYS DIOCESE RESISTING TRANSPARENCY

Posted on July 4, 2019 by Tyler Barker



CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — The West Virginia attorney general on Wednesday accused the Catholic diocese of attempting to ‘sidestep transparency’ with its efforts to dismiss a case by the prosecutor’s office.

The Parkersburg News and Sentinel reports Patrick Morrissey’s comments came after the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston filed an amended motion to dismiss the lawsuit.

The suit originally filed in March in Wood County Circuit Court accuses the diocese of violating the state’s Consumer Credit and Protection Act. It claims the diocese let clergy and employees accused of sexual misconduct interact with children in Wood, Ohio, Brooke and Hancock counties. Prosecutors amended the complaint in May to add accusations that the diocese and former bishop Michael Bransfield knowingly hired pedophiles and did not conduct background checks on school and summer camp employees.

Wednesday’s filing by the diocese says Morrissey has no legal authority to file suit under the Consumer Credit and Protection Act and accuses him of using the act to violate the separation of church and state.

“Riddled with continuing misleading and egregious factual inaccuracies, the amended complaint does not save the case from dismissal,” the memorandum states.



The filing also says that of the 22,738 teachers and 36,358 volunteers hired by the diocese over 45 years, the attorney general's lawsuit only points to five cases that were poorly handled.

"Statistically alone, the allegations do not support the conclusion of that the (diocese) is providing an inherently dangerous service," the memorandum states.

Morrissey fired back, calling the motion to dismiss "yet another attempt to sidestep transparency" and "distract public attention."

He called on the diocese to release to the public an investigative report alleging sexual and financial misdeeds by Bransfield.

The Washington Post, which obtained a copy of the document, has reported that Bransfield is accused of lavish spending, including \$350,000 in monetary gifts to influential clergy, \$2.4 million on travel that included chartered jets and luxury hotels, and \$4.6 million in renovations to his church residence.

The report cites nine men who accused Bransfield of touching or groping them, kissing or exposing himself to them or commenting on their bodies. Bransfield abused alcohol, oxycodone and other prescription drugs, which "likely contributed to his harassing and abusive behavior," according to the report as quoted in Post.

Information from: News and Sentinel (Parkersburg, W.Va.), <http://www.newsandsentinel.com>