

DOJ Orders Bishops Not to Destroy Abuse Documents

Written by Peter Isely, Founding Member, SNAP

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US DOJ orders all US bishops not to destroy abuse documents, but in previous post in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania bishop did just that.

GREEN BAY, WI - Yesterday it was learned that the U.S. Department of Justice has put every US diocese under notice to “not destroy, discard, dispose of, delete, or alter any” documents related to the sexual abuse of children as they investigate “possible violations of federal law.” The letter, addressed to Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, is significant because it covers not only the state of Pennsylvania, where the D.O.J. has officially launched a federal probe, but the entire U.S.

One Pennsylvania bishop likely at the center of the current federal investigation is Bishop David Zubik of Pittsburgh. Zubik has a long history in Pittsburgh. According to the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, as Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar of Clergy under Archbishop Daniel Wuerl, [Zubik was involved in covering up child sex abuse](#)

Zubik was promoted to bishop of the Green Bay diocese in 2003. While in Wisconsin, court records show that Zubik systematically destroyed nearly all criminal evidence of abuse and cover up from that diocese relating to at least 51 known sex offenders. In fact, Zubik reissued the order for the shredding the day before the Vatican announced he would leave Green Bay and return to run the Pittsburgh diocese in 2007. At the time, [SNAP issued a letter](#) for a federal investigation of the document destruction.

The Wisconsin document destruction was clearly timed around a Wisconsin Supreme Court decision that dioceses in Wisconsin could be sued in civil court for fraud for covering up child sex abuse. Among the most critical records Zubik destroyed were those from church-run “treatment” facilities, which often contain the most detailed evidence and admissions of criminal conduct and the administrative decisions to cover up those crimes and reassign offenders. Treatment records are among the specific documents the Federal Prosecutor in

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Pennsylvania has ordered the dioceses not to destroy and turn over to federal authorities.

Zubik's conduct raises a set of troubling questions that need answers: Did Zubik destroy documents in Pittsburgh? If not, why did he do so in Green Bay? It is difficult to believe that in destroying criminal and civil court evidence of child sex abuse that Zubik did not violate federal laws, since many of these offenders were moved across state lines. That is why a federal investigation needs to be launched not only in Pennsylvania concerning Zubik's conduct but also in Wisconsin.

(SNAP, the Survivors Network, has been providing support for victims of sexual abuse in institutional settings for 30 years. We have more than 25,000 survivors and supporters in our network. Our website is SNAPnetwork.org)