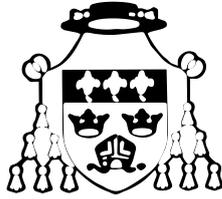


# DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA



## **PRESS STATEMENT – CONVICTION OF REV. ANTHONY MCSWEENEY**

### **Statement by Bishop Alan Hopes**

On 27th February 2015, the Rev. Anthony (Tony) McSweeney who served as a Catholic priest in the Parish of St George's, Norwich, Diocese of East Anglia, was convicted following a 10 day trial at Southwark Crown Court, London, of 1 count of indecently assaulting a child, and 3 count of making indecent images of children. Fr McSweeney was found not guilty of 4 other counts. He is currently on bail from the court pending his sentencing, and this is understood to be taking place on 27th March.

These are grave crimes, and I wish to reassure firstly the victims and all of those affected that I take the matter very seriously. As a bishop and as an ordinary member of society, I share the experience of great sorrow and regret that such offences take place and am firmly committed to observing those robust guidelines for the protection of children and vulnerable people that have been established in recent years. It is one of the fundamental duties of any society and institution to protect the most vulnerable.

The offences which were committed by Fr McSweeney when he worked at the children's home took place long before these guidelines had been established and indeed before he was ordained priest. If they had come to light, his future ordination would certainly not have taken place. The later offences of accessing indecent images of children, whilst serving as a priest have both served to compound the abuse already committed on the children themselves and breached the trust that was placed in him as a minister in the Church and those who held him in high regard.

Since the initial allegations of the offences of which Fr McSweeney has now been convicted were made, he has not exercised any active ministry in the Church. Once sentencing has taken place the Church will begin her own disciplinary process which will reflect both the severity of the crimes committed and seek to ensure the protection of the vulnerable.

I wish to assure the victims and their families that their suffering is taken seriously by the Church. In line with the policy of the Catholic Church throughout England and Wales, the Diocese has co-operated fully with the Police and statutory authorities throughout their investigations. Any accusations of abuse of children or vulnerable people made against clergy or lay people working in the Church are reported to the Police for their investigation.

If anyone has any concerns at all relating to this matter, please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator.

Bishop Alan Hopes, Bishop of East Anglia

27th February 2015

### **Contacts**

#### **Safeguarding Coordinator**

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