



THE RIGHT REVEREND DOUGLAS J. FISHER, BISHOP
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

37 Chestnut Street Springfield, MA 01103 P: 413.737.4786 In MA: 800.332.8513 F: 413.746.9873

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Dear People of God:

Last September, I wrote with the news that Gregory Lisby, formerly a priest of our diocese, had been arrested after an FBI investigation determined that there was probable cause to believe he possessed child pornography. Today I want to update you on this situation and share some additional painful news.

We expect that later today, Lisby will plead guilty to one count of possession of child pornography in federal court in Worcester and will remain in prison awaiting sentencing. In light of this fact, we are conducting a disciplinary process under the canons of our church and taking all required steps to remove him from the Episcopal priesthood. In addition, even after he is released from prison, Lisby will not be permitted any contact with congregations in this diocese without my express permission.

As this situation has unfolded, we have also received devastating credible evidence that after he was ordained as a priest in 2007, Lisby sexually abused a teenager. I am deeply saddened to know that a priest is alleged to have committed such a grievous sin, and on behalf of the entire church, I offer my most heartfelt apology to the victim, the victim's family and to everyone whose trust in the church has been violated.

I cannot undo this terrible situation, but I can commit our diocese to telling the truth and seeking healing and reconciliation for anyone who has been harmed by Lisby. That is why I am making this public and asking anyone in our congregations who may wish to speak to me or to share relevant information to call me confidentially at (413) 417-2401.

Lisby's husband, the Rev. Timothy Burger, is in no way implicated in any of these charges. Tim, who has filed for divorce, remains a priest in good standing and a valuable leader of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts. I am grateful for his faithful perseverance during this time.

Please know that we take the safety of children very seriously in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, and our clergy and lay leaders participate in the safe church training programs mandated by the Episcopal Church. As we redouble our efforts to ensure that our churches are safe places for all people, I ask you to pray for children and youth who have been abused, for the children who are trafficked by child pornographers, and for an end to the unspeakable evil that causes their suffering.

I ask you to pray for Tim and his daughters, for the people of the congregations who are especially wounded by this news, for Greg himself, and for all who are grieving this situation. May God's grace sustain us all during this difficult time.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Douglas J. Fisher
Bishop