

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Monsignor Barrera Responds to Accusations Against Him

Brownsville, Tx-We are authorized to make a response to allegations against Monsignor Gustavo Barrera. First, and most importantly, Monsignor Barrera denies these horrible accusations completely. There is no truth in any allegations made by this accuser nor has there ever been any sexual contact or abuse with any person during any time in his priesthood.

His character and reputation are already known to hundreds, perhaps thousands of parishioners, priests, administrators—everyone with whom he has had contact in his 45 years of priesthood. An untold number are prepared to come to his defense and will do so if given the opportunity.

We do, however, complain this slander against him has so quickly been made public. He was stripped of his priestly duties before he even had an opportunity to learn of the allegations against him or to prepare and present a defense. Priests are entitled to due process. The Catholic Church's Canon Law created an important protection in the revised *Priests and the Right to Due Process* 1983. Canon 220 grants him the right to a good reputation. Canon 221 grants the right to legitimately vindicate and defend rights in a competent ecclesiastical forum. Canon 1321 guarantees the presumption of innocence: *§ 1. Any person is considered innocent until the contrary is proved.* These are the Church's own rules.

Monsignor Barrera has already suffered from the press release issued against him before he had a chance to defend himself.

Going forward, we urge the Diocese of Brownsville to grant him the due process we all deserve. He should be given written notice of the accusations against him, an opportunity to be heard, confront his accuser and present evidence. He should have an impartial review board to determine the facts.

So far, he has not been afforded these protections. He was confronted with an interrogation before he was told who was accusing him and what the claims against him were. He did not get a chance to discover the claimed facts against him. He was not given time to gather witnesses in his own defense. He was subjected to a violation of his reputation and privacy before he was told of the claims against him. The worst of us are not ambushed in this way with accusations in criminal cases. The penalty should not come before a thorough, careful, and honest evaluation of the evidence. Nevertheless, the is exactly what happened here.

We further contend that he is not and will not be subject to criminal prosecution for many reasons. A thirty-five-year delay in outcry makes any report highly unreliable. Our memories are formed and changed over the years. Whenever this much time has passed, the memory is unreliable. The law of 35 years ago in Texas recognized the unreliability of old accusations and established a statute of limitations that has long since passed. His prosecution would be not only wrong, but illegal.

So, what is the point? What a shame to destroy this good man's reputation months before his retirement. Even his accuser did not want this to be made public according to what we have learned. We ask for a fair and balanced Diocesan Review Board, and a respect for his privacy until the facts are learned. We ask the public to withhold judgment until we have an opportunity to develop all the facts. As we go forward, please keep in mind the decades of faithful service and good works that Monsignor Barrera has given so many of us.

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