

Statement by Seth Langson

I am pleased to announce that, on behalf of Robby Price, we have reached a settlement of his claims with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte. In exchange for the payment of \$1 million by the insurers for the Diocese, and a provision of providing counseling and other services, Robby has agreed to dismiss his claims against the Church. At the time of the settlement, the parties were in active Discovery, having already taken twenty five depositions and generated over 40,000 pages of documents.

Robby's claims are based on his molestation by Father Robert Yurgel for 6 months during 1999. Father Yurgel was a Capuchin Friar who was serving as a priest of the Diocese at St. Matthew and Our Lady of Consolation in Charlotte. Father Yurgel was 35 years old at that time, Robby Price was 14 years old. For six months, Father Yurgel molested Robby at his home, in his car, in the rectory at Our Lady of Consolation, and even in the sanctuary of St. Matthew.

The sexual abuse of children, particularly by those they trust and especially by those in the ministry, causes extensive mental and emotional damage and trauma. Robby, like most victims, was unable to even speak of the abuse to his parents for many years. At the end of 2007, he courageously came forward and began telling others what happened to him. He wanted then to make sure that Father Yurgel never hurt another child. Robby came to me and we immediately went to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. The CMPD launched an investigation and quickly arrested Father Yurgel in April 2008. In February 2009, Father Yurgel pled guilty to second degree sexual offense against Robby and was sentenced to up to 10 years in prison. He will also be subject to lifetime monitoring as a registered sex offender.

The arrest, conviction and imprisonment of Father Yurgel was only possible because Robby Price had the courage to come forward and the determination to stop Father Yurgel from hurting another child.

Robby's claims in his lawsuit centered on the fact that Father Yurgel committed an act of sexual misconduct with an adult male parishioner at St. Matthew before he molested Robby. Despite the fact that the sexual misconduct policies that applied to Father Yurgel called for his suspension from active ministry, a decision was made not to apply those policies. Father Yurgel was allowed to continue in ministry, the lay people who worked with him were never informed of his misconduct, and he continued his molestation of Robby Price. We do not believe that at the time of this decision those in authority were aware that Father Yurgel was molesting Robby Price; however, we believe that the failure to enforce the sexual misconduct policy and then the failure to inform those who worked with Father Yurgel of this issue effectively enabled Father Yurgel to continue to commit crimes against a child.

I believe that the payment of \$1 million by the Church represents one of the largest settlements paid in North Carolina by a religious organization for the sexual abuse of a child. The lessons of this case are even more significant. First, the sexual abuse of a child is a crime and should always and under all circumstances be reported to the police and reported to them first. North Carolina does not have a statute of limitations for felonies; victims should not hesitate to go to

the authorities at any time. Second, every organization, and particularly religious organizations that deal with children, must strictly enforce their policies against sexual misconduct of any kind. The failure to enforce those policies serves only to endanger others, and place children at risk.

I would like to thank my paralegal, Fran Thresher, for her tireless work in investigating Robby's case and helping him to achieve some measure of justice. Her dedication to the cause of fighting child abuse contributed directly to this outcome. I would also like to thank my co-counsel, Jim Cooney, of Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice for his willingness to exercise his consummate skills on a Plaintiff's case and for his ability to help manage such a massive undertaking. I am indebted to Robby Price for the privilege of representing him and being able to witness his courage on a daily basis.