

Pedophile Priest Gets Disability Pay From Catholic Church

After the Rev. Gil Gustafson was convicted of child sex abuse 30 years ago, the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis made sure he was financially secure for decades to come.

The church continued his priestly salary and health insurance, covered his living expenses and psychological treatment and paid for his education and training, according to church records and a former archdiocese accountant. It has given him jobs in the chancery, helped him establish his own consulting business and steered clients his way.

In July 2006, Gustafson was declared “disabled” based on his pedophilia, the church said. This allowed him to collect disability checks on top of his earnings as a leadership consultant.

The archdiocese’s long-standing support of Gustafson, outlined in church documents and interviews, has angered abuse victims and their families. They say it’s another sign that the church cares more about the welfare of abusive priests than the children they assaulted.

“Since when is a crime a disability?” asked Jeff Herrity, the father of a boy whom Gustafson was convicted of abusing from 1977 through 1982. “If that’s the case, everyone in prison should be disabled.”

The archdiocese said it is required by church law and “Christian compassion” to care for priests removed from ministry.

“Gustafson is permanently and totally disabled and is

therefore entitled to benefits through the Pension Plan for Priests,’’ said a statement to the Star Tribune.

It has been 30 years since Gustafson’s last known instance of child abuse, the archdiocese said. Some of his clients say he is entitled to a second chance.

Gustafson, now 62, lives in a small bungalow in West St. Paul. He declined to be interviewed for this story.

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