

10-3-07 - Did John Urell Lie During his Deposition?

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Supporters of Monsignor John Urell, the former chancellor for the Catholic Diocese of Orange who is currently in some Canadian psychological treatment center to treat his anxiety after failing to finish a deposition, argue that their man is being unfairly hounded by lawyers and the press, that his testimony has no bearing on the Jeff Andrade trial for which he's now being subpoenaed.

They base their claims on Urell's half-finished July deposition, in which the monsignor testified he was not in charge of receiving allegations of sexual misconduct for diocesan lay people-only clergy.

But Urell's assertions contradict the words of his former boss, retired Bishop Norman McFarland. In an Sept. 8 depo for the Andrade case, McFarland had the following exchange with Newport Beach lawyer John Manly (after the jump):

Manly: Okay. So it was-it was Monsignor Urell's job to deal with these incidents or reports of childhood sex abuse at the diocese during the time you were the bishop?

McFarland: He was my high right-hand man in it, yes.

Notice how McFarland does not differentiate between clerical and lay employees of the Orange diocese-Urell was just his "right-hand man."

But McFarland had more to disclose in his deposition. At one point, he pulled out a 1994 document that spelled out the Orange diocese's policy on sexual misconduct, a document Manly would go on to describe as having never been previously publicly disclosed. The critical passage:

"Any person who believes that he or she (or one's child) is or has been a victim of sexual misconduct by any member of the clergy or other employee of the Diocese of Orange should immediately report the allegation to the Diocese. Generally the person to contact is the Chancellor at the Diocesan Office in Marywood Center. The Chancellor will make appropriate arrangements with the party either in person or by telephone to enable the commencement of a factual investigation."

The wiggle word here is "generally." Urell and his supporters could argue that the Andrade incident could've slipped by Urell because it was reported to someone else. But the second sentence makes the previous one a moot point:

Regardless of who was contacted, it was up to the Chancellor to get in contact with the person who reported the allegation and help start an investigation. The Chancellor while the Andrade incident happened at Mater Dei? John Urell.

"This is written not just for priests," McFarland told Manly about his sexual misconduct policy. And then the conversation continues:

Manly: That's what I thought. So basically, you are establishing, in writing, a policy that applies to all the diocesan schools, including

Mater Dei; correct?

McFarland: Everybody. Yeah, anybody who works for the church.

Manly: And not only are you establishing it as of 1994, you also are codifying what you believe to be an existing policy of the diocese as to diocesan schools?

McFarland: That's-that's true. The first is, yeah.

Manly: Okay. Okay. All right. Now, so this-I can assume that this policy in 1996, when the plaintiff in this action was, um, when Mr. Andrade, the teacher at Mater Dei was having sex with his 15-year-old student, the princ- -the plaintiff in this action, this policy was in effect; is that correct?

McFarland: It should have been.

Manly: Did you-

McFarland: Yeah, it should've-

Manly: Did you-did you distribute this to all entities of the diocese?

McFarland: I presume I did. It was written for it all. I didn't go out and deliver it myself, obviously.

Manly: No. But you directed it would be delivered to all of them?

McFarland: Yeah.

This isn't the first time in the Andrade case that diocesan employees have contradicted each others' explosive stories. And, to be fair, it could very well be that Mater Dei officials never bothered to contact Urell as required by McFarland's 1994 diocesan policy after learning about Andrade's molestation allegation. So, we're left with this:

Either Urell is lying about his role in the Andrade case, McFarland is full of it, or Mater Dei officials broke diocesan policy. Either way, what a crazy case, ¿qué no?
