



# DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Contact:

Annalise Laumeyer, director of communications

Phone: 616-551-5629 | 616-307-3474 cell

Email: [alaumeyer@grdiocese.org](mailto:alaumeyer@grdiocese.org)

### **The Diocese of Grand Rapids' Office of Communications has issued the following statement on behalf of Bishop Walkowiak in response to the WOOD TV 8 story regarding St. Stephen Parish:**

“We appreciate Judge Sara Smolenski’s service to the community. We are grateful for her past generosity. These facts are not at issue in this matter.

As Pope Francis explains in *Amoris Laetitia*, “The Eucharist demands that we be members of the one body of the Church. Those who approach the Body and Blood of Christ may not wound that same Body by creating scandalous distinctions and divisions among its members.” (186) Lifelong Catholics would surely be aware of this.

Inclusion and acceptance have been a hallmark of Catholic Churches in the Diocese of Grand Rapids throughout the diocese’s history. They remain so. They presume, however, a respect on the part of individuals for the teachings and practice of the wider Catholic community. No community of faith can sustain the public contradiction of its beliefs by its own members. This is especially so on matters as central to Catholic life as marriage, which the Church has always held, and continues to hold, as a sacred covenant between one man and one woman.

Father Scott Nolan, pastor of St. Stephen Parish, has dedicated his priesthood to bringing people closer to Jesus Christ. Part of his duty in pursuing that end is to teach the truth as taught by the Catholic Church, and to help it take root and grow in his parish. Mercy is essential to that process, but so are humility and conversion on the part of anyone seeking to live an authentically Catholic Christian life.

Father Nolan approached Judge Smolenski privately. Subsequent media reports do not change the appropriateness of his action, which the diocese supports.”

*The Diocese of Grand Rapids serves more than 191,000 Catholics, 80 parishes and 31 schools in an 11-county area of West Michigan. For additional information visit our website [grdiocese.org](http://grdiocese.org). Connect with the diocese on [Facebook](#) (Diocese of Grand Rapids), [Twitter](#) (@GRDiocese), and Instagram ([@GRDiocese](#)).*

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