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**Augustinians**

Province of St. Thomas of Villanova

April 2, 2020

The Office of the Prior Provincial

Dear Parishioners of Saint Augustine, Philadelphia

At the start of Holy Week one year ago, on the weekend of April 12/13, 2019, Father Bill Donnelly spoke on my behalf at all Masses, informing you that your pastor, Father Bill Waters, had been placed on administrative leave due to an accusation of abuse alleged to have taken place in the 1980s.

I am overjoyed to tell you that Father Waters has been totally exonerated and restored to full ministry. The Augustinian Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova of which Father Waters is a member, engaged an independent firm to investigate thoroughly the allegation and found that there was “no evidence of any kind to support the allegations of sexual abuse.” The investigation process and findings were then submitted to evaluation by an independent review board which upheld the investigator’s conclusions. Just days ago, the recommendation was made to Archbishop Nelson Perez that Father Waters’ faculties be restored and that he return to Saint Augustine Parish to continue his ministry as pastor. The Archbishop has accepted the findings of the investigation and our recommendation. Father Waters will return soon to take up his duties at Saint Augustine.

This past year has been a most trying time for Father Waters, his family and the Augustinians. We are grateful for the prayers, the friendship and the words of encouragement that have accompanied Father Bill throughout this process. We are indebted to those who have advised and counseled us along the way. I am particularly grateful to Father Bill Donnelly who has served generously and faithfully as temporary administrator of Saint Augustine this past year, as well as to the local community of friars who have assisted him.

A new day begins! And a helpful lesson, I believe, particularly at this time when a shadow of a much different kind hangs over our country and our world. We are a people called to walk in the light of hope with faith as our guide, trusting always in the love of our God who is our faithful companion.

Sincerely,

Father Michael Di Gregorio, O.S.A.  
Prior Provincial