



PRESS RELEASE

Statement from Gayle Benson

For Immediate Release: February 10, 2020

This past weekend, our organization received an interview request from The Associated Press. The email stated that an article was coming out Tuesday. It stated that we could expect questions that “would include things about the nature of Gayle’s relationship with Aymond and why, no matter how good a friend he is, would she feel compelled to have her pro sports organizations affiliated in any way with the clergy-molestation scandal? And maybe how she views the decision to do so in hindsight?”

I have decided to take this opportunity based on the request from the Associated Press to send out this statement in order to bring clarity to questions about my relationship with the Archdiocese. While I appreciate the opportunity and thank the Associated Press for kindly reaching out to me to appear in this article, we have had subpoenas served to get emails, and calls made for me to pay into a victim’s fund. I have decided to no longer stand idly by while stories are written about our role in this matter and speak to this in my own words. This is a profoundly sad time for the Church, but more so for the victims that live with the daily pain that was inflicted upon them.

Greg Benschel, our senior vice president of communications, was asked if he would help the Archdiocese prepare for the media relative to the release of clergy names involved in the abuse scandal. In the weeks leading up to the Nov. 2, 2018 release of clergy names, Greg met with the Archbishop and communications staff.

Greg informed me that his recommendations were consistent with the Archdiocese which included: be honest, complete and transparent; own the past wrongs and find a solution to correct them and then define those solutions that are in place now to protect victims; be a leader in the Church by being the first Archdiocese in the country to release the full list of names, release all of the names of clergy that have credible evidence against them, regardless of whether they are male/female, dead or alive; and make sure that all law enforcement are given these names prior to the Archdiocese releasing them so they can be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Finally, Greg recommended that, with the goal of transparency, the Archbishop would meet with each media member in person, answering any question. No one associated with our organizations made recommendations or had input on the individual names of those disclosed on the list, rather our suggestion was to be completely transparent.

We are proud of the role we played and yes, in hindsight, we would help again to assist the Archdiocese in its ability to publish the list with the hope of taking this step to heal the community. In addition, we already turned over every email to the court and plaintiff attorneys.

Which brings me to my connection to the Church, the Archbishop and making this statement. I remain repulsed by the actions of past clergy in this abuse scandal. I pray for the healing of the victims and I am hopeful this terrible time will provide a path to eradicate this behavior in the Church. That is why we wanted to help. It is time for healing, which was the purpose of our involvement.

My late husband Tom Benson and I have been devout Catholics all of our lives. We met in the Cathedral. I read at the lectern this weekend reflecting on this very issue offering my prayers for healing. We have supported the Catholic Church and this Archdiocese both financially and spiritually for decades, proudly. Neither Tom Benson nor myself, or any of our organizations have ever contributed nor will ever make payments to the Catholic Church to pay settlements or legal awards of any kind, let alone this issue. To suggest that I would offer money to the Catholic Church to pay for anything related to the clergy-molestation issue sickens me.

Our relationship with past Archbishops and the Archdiocese dates back 50-plus years. Our faith is the core foundation from which we live our daily lives. Unifying, helping, and giving back is not something we do when asked; we do it every day. It defined how Tom Benson ran his organizations and how I ardently continue his legacy.

Sadly, there are many in need in our community, and we work very hard to make sure that we help where we can. We get calls and requests seeking help, advice, and money from every sector of our community, no matter the issue, no matter how controversial or mundane, every day. More often than not, we try to help or assist in finding a solution. Are we perfect – of course not, but we sincerely listen, we sincerely care, and we sincerely love. It is who we are. Tom Benson instilled that in our organization. I will always continue his legacy.

In closing, I want to be clear in this statement, that I am not going to be deterred in helping people in need, whether a friend seeking advice or a stranger in need, it does not matter, our list is long. We will always find the best way to unify and heal. That is who we are.

I hope that is not lost on the same people that write such articles when they too come asking for help or support. We do not judge those that need help.

We remain steadfast in our prayers for those affected. We pray for our community and we pray for healing.

Gayle Benson