



# The Diocese of New Jersey

THE RIGHT REVEREND WILLIAM H. STOKES, D.D., BISHOP OF NEW JERSEY

Comments on Proposed Order of the Hearing Panel dated February 14, 2020  
Submitted by: The Right Reverend William H. Stokes, 12<sup>th</sup> Bishop of New Jersey  
Date: February 29, 2020  
IN RE: The Venerable Gideon Uzomechina, Presbyter – Respondent  
Title IV Case No. 2016-1

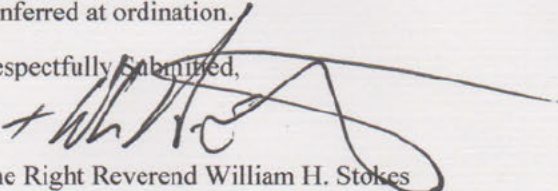
I have reviewed the Proposed Order of the Hearing Panel in the matter of The Venerable Gideon Uzomechina, Title IV Case # 2016-1, a matter that commenced in October 2016 when serious allegations concerning Fr. Uzomechina about a wide-range of disturbing behaviors were first brought to my attention. As a result of these complaints, the services of a professional investigator, Rosemary Richards, were retained. Ms. Richards interviewed many of the involved parties. In the final summary paragraph of her Summary Statement about this investigations she concluded:

*Gideon Uzomechina has engaged in a series of behaviors that are not in keeping with the expectations of an Episcopal priest. He was accused of violating the Title IV Canons 4.1(c) 4.1(h)(1) and 4.1(h)(8). He has raised concerns in both [REDACTED] Church and [REDACTED] Episcopal church about his conduct with young males. He has serious accusations against him including sexual misconduct, keeping a person against their will in a hotel room, theft and conduct unbecoming a priest. The two complainants have been found to be credible by virtually everyone who has encountered them in the course of these events and this investigation. Gideon Uzomechina was deemed by the Bishop to pose a threat to the safety to one or more members of the congregation that he served at the time of his placement on administrative leave. This investigation has revealed that those concerns were well founded. There are corroborating witnesses to the allegations made by these two complainants and a partial admission by Father Uzomechina to some of his misconduct with [REDACTED], validating the Title IV charges. Additionally, Gideon Uzomechina has engaged in behaviors that could have, and may yet result in criminal charges being levied against him.*

I believe her conclusions were fair and warranted. Moreover, even after my placing Fr. Gideon on Administrative Leave and prohibiting him from serving as a priest or chaplain in any capacity, I have been informed by several sources that he has continued to function in both capacities. Additionally, I have been told by credible persons that he has continued to engage in predatory behaviors with young men and that he has also stolen church property.

Having reviewed the Proposed Order, I believe it accurately reflects what can only be considered the minimum number of egregious violations committed by Fr. Uzomechina. I believe that the Hearing Panel has arrived at true, just and appropriate conclusions and I agree with its final recommendation to me that Respondent, The Reverend Gideon Uzomechina be deposed from ministry in The Episcopal Church and deprived of the right to exercise the gifts and spiritual authority of God's words and sacraments conferred at ordination.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
The Right Reverend William H. Stokes  
12<sup>th</sup> Bishop of New Jersey

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