



NEWS

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Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg Releases List of Names of Clergy and Seminarians Accused of Sexual Abuse of a Child

HARRISBURG - The Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg released information from their own internal investigation on child sex abuse. Bishop Ronald W. Gainer released the following statement:

"With the Grand Jury investigation concluded and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ordering a stay of the Grand Jury's full report pending further review, the Diocese of Harrisburg chose to release our own list of clergy and seminarians who were accused of sexual abuse of minors as we felt it was critical to get this information out to the public and our parishioners as soon as possible. The information we are releasing today is the result of a great deal of work by outside counsel and professional investigators. I wish to emphasize that this list is a list of accusations; we did not make assessments of credibility or guilt in creating this list.

"I read the information used to create this list with great sadness, for once again we come face-to-face with the horror that innocent children were the victims of egregious acts committed against them. I am saddened because I know that behind every story is the face of a child precious in God's sight; a child who has been wounded by the sins of those who should have known better.

“I acknowledge the sinfulness of those who have harmed these survivors, as well as the action and inaction of those in church leadership who failed to respond to you appropriately and justly.

"In my own name, and in the name of the Diocesan Church of Harrisburg, I express our profound sorrow and apologize to the survivors of child sex abuse, the Catholic faithful and the general public for the abuses that took place and for those Church officials who failed to protect children.

“While I apologize and continue to make amends for the sins of our past and offer prayers and support to all victims of these actions, we must work towards continuing and enhancing the positive changes we have made to ensure that these types of atrocities never occur again. Since the turn of the century, the Church has instituted policies that take clear and decisive action to prevent future abuse.

“I want the children, parents, our parishioners, the students, the staff, clergy and the public to know that our Churches and our schools are safe and there is nothing we take more seriously than the protection of those who walk through our doors. During my tenure as Bishop of the Diocese, I have a zero-tolerance policy with respect to child sexual abuse. We send every and all complaints to the proper legal authorities and we remove the subject of the complaint from active ministry pending a law enforcement investigation. The safety and well-being of our children is too important not to take immediate and definitive action.”

As has been publicly reported, the Diocese previously intended to publish a list of clergy with allegations of sexual abuse against them in September 2016, yet the Office of Attorney General requested, in order to protect its then-ongoing investigation, that the Diocese stand down on that effort. The Diocese honored that request. Now, however, with the investigation at an end and the Supreme Court ordering a stay of the full Report pending review, we have directed that a list again be made available at our new website at www.youthprotectionhbg.com. Accordingly, the Diocese is publishing a link to a list of clergy with allegations of abuse.

Finally, this investigation has caused the Diocese to take a frank look at its past as well as its present. Part of that assessment was an evaluation by the Diocese of whether any lingering symbols of the sad history revealed in the Diocese’s files remain. Specifically, the Diocese evaluated whether the names carried on certain buildings, rooms, and halls in the Diocese should remain. Bishop Gainer has determined that anyone who has been accused of sexual misconduct and appears on our list will have their name removed from any position of honor throughout the Diocese.

As a result of a careful review of historical cases, it was also clear that the leadership of the Church did not in every case take adequate measures when handling matters related to offending clerics. With that reality, and after reviewing information with our legal counsel, along with the unanimous recommendation of the “Committee on Naming,” which was convened to advise him on these matters, he has directed that the name of every Bishop since 1947, the beginning date of the Grand Jury’s investigation, be removed from any building, facility, or room in the Diocese. Bishop Gainer agrees with the recommendations he has received from his advisors on these matters and has instructed Diocesan Staff to begin efforts to change names, effective immediately. Because there are no records of these matters during the tenure of Bishop McDevitt, and since the investigation extended back to 1947, twelve years after his death, there will be no change to the naming of Bishop McDevitt High School.

Bishop Gainer added, “The decision to remove names of Bishops and clerics may prove to be controversial, but as a Bishop, I strongly believe that leaders of the Diocese must

hold themselves to a higher standard, and must yield honorary symbols in the interest of healing.”

Additionally, the Diocese of Harrisburg has reviewed its historical files and learned that prior to 2002, the Diocese from time-to-time entered into settlement agreements with survivors of child sexual abuse and some of those settlement agreements contained confidentiality provisions. Though it has been the Diocese’s policy for some time not to enforce those confidentiality provisions, Bishop Gainer learned that some survivors still feel constrained by them. Accordingly, on behalf of the Diocese, Bishop Gainer does hereby waive any remaining confidentiality rights the Diocese has in those confidentiality provisions, while retaining all other rights the Diocese has under these agreements.

Bishop Gainer continued, “I take this step about confidentiality so that the survivors can feel free to tell their stories to whomever and whenever they wish. I hope that this step will further aid those survivors, and perhaps others, in their path to healing.”

The Church’s new website, www.youthprotectionhbg.com, also contains information on how to report child sexual abuse, contact information for the Victim Assistance Office and detailed information on how our Church has confronted this issue.

The Diocese of Harrisburg takes the protection of youth in all Church related activities and programs very seriously. That is why we have an aggressive Safe Environment Program with a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy, employees or volunteers and gives guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse.

Youth Protection efforts in the Diocese of Harrisburg include:

- **We are aggressive in rooting out abusers** in ministry or employment within the Diocese. If anyone has even one proven allegation they are barred permanently from ministry or employment.
- **We report every allegation we receive** to the District Attorney of the county involved.
- **We help survivors to heal.** We have a Victims Assistance Coordinator for survivors and families.
- **We screen all employees and volunteers** with multiple background certifications and abusers are ineligible for hire and not permitted to volunteer in any capacity.
- **We train people to recognize and report abuse.** We require that all clergy, every employee and volunteer successfully complete a state approved online training program on how to recognize and report child abuse.
- **We teach students how to stay safe.** Students receive instruction in age-appropriate child abuse awareness programs.

- **We provide ID badges for all persons** who have completed the requirement of our Diocesan Youth Protection Program.
- **We execute a prudent and prompt** inquiry and reporting of each accusation. If law enforcement declines to act, the Diocese contracts with professional investigators, not clergy or Church employees, to conduct an independent and thorough investigation.
- **We openly communicate with all involved** and support due process.
- **We comply with national standards for youth protection** and are audited annually in an independent audit.

There are **TWO** steps to make a complaint:

1. We encourage anyone who suspects abuse of a minor to call the toll-free PA Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-932-0313.
2. To report suspected abuse of a minor by a church official, employee or volunteer, also please call the Diocesan toll-free hotline at 1-800-626-1608 or email: ReportAbuse@hbgdiocese.org. It is critical that the Church be made aware of any complaints immediately so that we can remove that person from active ministry or service.

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