

Contact:
Penny Wiegert
Director of Communication
pwiegert@rockforddiocese.org
Phone: (815) 399-4300
Fax: (815)399-6225

555 Colman Center Drive
P.O. Box 7044
Rockford, IL 61125
www.rockforddiocese.org



**DIOCESE OF
ROCKFORD**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2018

PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL

Yesterday, the office of the Attorney General of the State of Illinois issued a preliminary report following its examination of the records of the six dioceses of Illinois regarding the sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy. The Catholic Church and specifically the Bishops of the United States have recognized the grave harm done to victims of such abuse. That harm can be helped but never undone. However, especially since 2002 the Catholic Church and the Diocese of Rockford have made extensive efforts to address our history and our future in this regard.

Following the Grand Jury Report issued in the State of Pennsylvania last July, The Diocese of Rockford made the decision similar to other dioceses across the United States to disclose in one compiled list, the names of priests with substantiated allegations. Almost all of those names had been previously publicly disclosed individually by various sources, including the Diocese, at earlier times.

In November of this year, The Diocese of Rockford published a list of priests who had served in the Diocese of Rockford against whom allegations of sexual abuse of a minor have been substantiated. That list includes the identities of the three priests referred to in a report previously issued by the Diocese in 2004 following an examination of priest files from 1950 to 2004.

Included in the November 2018 list are 6 priests and 1 permanent deacon of the Diocese of Rockford, 5 religious order priests, 1 religious order brother, and 2 priests belonging to other dioceses. The list was published on the Diocese of Rockford website, where it remains and is easily accessed; in the Diocese of Rockford weekly newspaper, *The Observer*; and on the Diocese of Rockford Facebook page. The list was compiled after a complete examination of all priest files dating back to the establishment of the Rockford Diocese in 1908. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of that list and to keep it updated as necessary.

The Diocese of Rockford has fully cooperated with Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office in that office's examination of the files of cases of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. The diocese provided all necessary documentation and procedures dating back to 1908.

The Diocese of Rockford does not agree that the Attorney General's report is an accurate reflection of this diocese's historical and current policies and practices of properly responding to allegations of clergy sexual abuse of minors; and is disappointed with the broad brush approach taken by the Attorney General's report. For example, the Attorney General's report concludes that the healing of victims is not a priority for the dioceses, but that conclusion is contradicted by

our policy and practice of offering and paying for counselling to individuals who report an allegation.

We are confident in the truth and transparency of the list published in November 2018, and in our continued efforts to assist victims in healing from any abuse they have experienced and to assure all people of our constant vigilance and prayers on their behalf. We also remain committed to both preventing and disclosing sexual abuse by members of our clergy. We look forward to continuing to work with the Attorney General staff and the new Attorney General on this inquiry, as well as a final report that accurately reflects the facts.

The practice of the Diocese has been to inform the faithful when a priest has been removed from ministry due to a credible allegation of sexual abuse or other inappropriate conduct long before the State Attorney General's investigation and most certainly will continue long after its conclusion.

The Diocese of Rockford has been and will remain fully committed to the protection of children, young people and all those in its spiritual care and ministries. And we again remind all people that to report an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor please call the police in the county in which the abuse occurred and then contact the Diocese of Rockford at its victim abuse hotline at 815-293-7540 or reportsexualabuse@rockforddiocese.org.

For more information about the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Essential Norms, the Diocese's safe environment policies and training of children and adults in prevention, detection and reporting of sexual abuse, please visit www.rockforddiocese.org.

--END--

About Catholic Diocese of Rockford

Established in 1908, the Diocese of Rockford is comprised of 105 parishes in Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, JoDaviess, Kane, Lee, McHenry, Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside and Winnebago Counties in Northern Illinois serving a Catholic population of more than 300,000. For more about the Catholic Diocese of Rockford, visit rockforddiocese.org