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## Bishop's March 2019 Update Letter

March 22, 2019



DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

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March 22, 2019

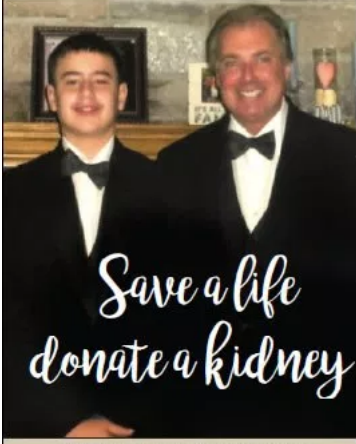
My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

I am writing to provide you an update about our ongoing efforts to address the sexual abuse of minors by clergy in the Diocese of Bridgeport. I specifically wish to address the following topics:

1. Provide an update on the work of Judge Robert Holzberg and his comprehensive report on clergy abuse of minors in our Diocese and the diocesan response to this abuse (/march-update-letter-from-judge-robert-l-holzberg/)
2. The reorganization of our list of credibly accused clergy (/safe-environments/list-of-credibly-accused-diocesan-priests-accused-religious-order-priests-who-served-



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in-the-diocese-of-bridgeport/)

3. Additions to our list of credibly accused clergy (/statement-from-bishop-caggiano-on-updates-to-the-list-of-credibly-accused-clergy-in-the-diocese-of-bridgeport/)
4. The reporting of names of clergy on whose behalf settlements have been paid (/safe-environments/disclosure-of-settlements-paid/)
5. The establishment of a hotline for reporting information to Judge Holzberg related to past clergy abuse of minors in the Diocese (/march-update-letter-from-judge-robert-l-holzberg/) and
6. Three upcoming listening sessions for the faithful of the Diocese. (/listening-sessions/)

Each of these initiatives, which is explained in more detail below, is intended to continue our healing journey in an open and transparent manner.

### 1. Judge Holzberg Update

As I reported to you in my letter dated October 3, 2018, the Diocese invited retired Superior Court Judge Robert Holzberg to conduct a comprehensive review of all diocesan files related to the sexual abuse of minors by clergy in the Diocese since its inception in 1953, and the diocesan response to such abuse. That work has begun in earnest by the Judge and his team. The task of identifying and reviewing the documents relevant to this review has been arduous and time-consuming. The attached letter from the Judge provides an update on his progress to date. He projects that his work will be completed no sooner than June 30, 2019. I urge you to read the letter for specific details on the critical work completed to date by Judge Holzberg and his team.

### 2. The Reorganized List of Credibly Accused Clergy

The Diocese has published information on its website regarding credibly accused clergy dating back to 2002. In 2015, the Diocese organized this information and published a streamlined list on the website in October 2015. We continue to review all of our Safe Environment practices to ensure the utmost transparency, particularly regarding our list of credibly accused clergy. To that end, today I have approved the posting of a reorganized list of credibly accused clergy, divided into the following four categories: (1) Credibly Accused Diocesan Clergy, Living; (2) Credibly Accused Diocesan Clergy, Deceased; (3) Credibly Accused Religious Order Clergy, Living or Deceased; and (4) Credibly Accused Clergy Visiting from Other Dioceses, Living or Deceased. New to this list are the diocesan assignment dates for those credibly accused as well as whether they were subject to a single allegation or multiple allegations of abuse. We believe these changes provide a clearer picture of accused clergy, their assignments and their specific connection to the ministries of the Diocese.

### 3. Updates to the List of Credibly Accused Clergy

Three circumstances have led to the addition of ten names to our list of Credibly Accused Clergy:

- i. The work of our diocesan Sexual Misconduct Review Board has been expanded to consider allegations of abuse against deceased clergy. Many of these allegations significantly predate the creation of this Board and therefore were not investigated under the guidelines of *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (the "Charter"). These cases have now been reviewed to assess credibility.
- ii. In the last several months, we have received new allegations of sexual abuse of minors against clergy in our Diocese that date back many years. These reports were forwarded both to civil authorities (the Department of Children and Families) and presented to the Sexual Misconduct Review Board for investigation and a determination of credibility.
- iii. We have also re-reviewed certain cases in which new information has become available, or further review was deemed necessary. These reviews included allegations against both living and deceased clergy.

In 2002, when the *Charter* first led to the creation of the Sexual Misconduct Review Board, its stated purpose was to determine the suitability of an accused clergy member to return to ministry. Thus, the Diocese did not present allegations against deceased priests to the Sexual Misconduct Review Board. However, with a renewed focus on survivors of abuse and the need for transparency, I have expanded the scope of the Sexual Misconduct Review Board to review files of accused deceased clergy not previously presented to the Board, a process which was arduous and time consuming.



For the diligent work of the Review Board, I am most grateful. Many of the allegations had limited information and necessitated a steadfast focus on the available facts and information. While some may argue that this presents an unfair judgment against clergy unable to defend themselves, be assured that any such case was given careful and thorough consideration before a determination of credibility was established.

With this recently completed review by the Board and its recommendations sent to me regarding credibility, the Diocese is now updating its list to include the names of ten additional priests, nine of whom are diocesan priests (8 deceased and 1 living) and one is a visiting priest from a Venezuelan diocese who spent only the summer of 1991 in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The one living diocesan priest is retired and has not served in the Diocese since 1984. His faculties were removed in 2006. He was placed on permanent administrative leave as a result of an allegation in 2006 of sexual abuse of a minor dating back to 1976. The Archdiocese of Military Services, where he had served for many years, was notified of the allegation. In 2019, the Review Board reaffirmed the decision that he should remain on permanent administrative leave. This list will continue to be updated as new information or allegations come forward and a determination of credibility is made.

#### **4. Disclosure of Settlements Paid**

As mentioned above, the Diocese has now published an additional list that includes the names of all clergy on whose behalf settlements were reached because of an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. As a follow-up to the Financial Report issued on November 1, 2018, I determined that it is important and prudent to disclose the names of all clergy on whose behalf settlements were paid. It is crucial to note that in some cases, a settlement may have been paid as part of a larger global settlement or for strategic or administrative purposes without rendering a finding of credibility against the accused clergy. The Settlement List presents the names of those clergy who were not found credibly accused separately from those who have been credibly accused.

#### **5. Reporting Hotline**

As a part of Judge Holzberg's review, a confidential hotline has been established. As indicated in his attached letter, the Judge and his team want to encourage the people of the Diocese to speak to them directly regarding what they know of the past sexual abuse of minors by diocesan clergy as well the diocesan response to such abuse.

The hotline, recently announced on the diocesan website, is 1-833-990-0004 and the website on which to make an on-line report is [www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt](http://www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt) (<http://www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt>). Despite the confidentiality of this hotline, it is critical to note that any allegation of sexual abuse of a minor **that has not been previously reported must be reported** to civil authorities. The contact information for the Department for Children and Families is 800-842-2288 and the Office for Safe Environment for the Diocese of Bridgeport is 1-203-416-1406 or 203-650-3265.

#### **6. Listening Sessions**

Finally, as your diocesan Bishop, I am committed to hearing your concerns directly as we continue our healing journey together. To that end, I have scheduled three listening sessions at which I will be available to respond to your concerns and questions.

- **April 3, 7:30 pm at Notre Dame High School in Fairfield;**
- **April 9, 7:30 pm at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull; and**
- **May 1, 6:30 pm at Immaculate High School in Danbury**

While there are many issues associated with this crisis to be dealt with on both the global and national levels, I remain determined to move forward with whatever tangible steps are possible to address this grave matter in the Diocese of Bridgeport. I encourage you to attend one of these listening sessions.

I have been both humbled and gratified by the steadfast support and encouragement I have received from the people of the Diocese in our common effort to heal our Diocese and our Church. Most of all, I am deeply grateful to those men and women who have suffered at the hands of their abusers and are now working actively to serve as advocates and agents of healing. Their generosity of spirit and commitment are for me both a personal inspiration and a sign of great hope.

As your Bishop, I am committed to remaining transparent and instituting whatever change is needed to better respond to those affected by abuse. I recognize that any restoration of trust will require a continued diligent effort on my part, as well as on the



part of all of us who love the Church.

During these difficult days, please be assured of my prayers for you and your families. I also ask that you continue to pray for the lay leadership of the Church, our clergy and for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*+ Frank J. Caggiano*

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano

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  - [Foundations in Faith](https://www.foundationsinfaith.org/) (<https://www.foundationsinfaith.org/>)