

Protecting Our Children

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Status Report on Clerics Accused of Child Abuse

Church law for the United States is very clear in regards to clerics who have abused children:

"When even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accordance with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed permanently from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants."

"If the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied (e.g., for reasons of advanced age or infirmity), the offender ought to lead a life of prayer and penance. He will not be permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to administer the sacraments. He is to be instructed not to wear clerical garb, or to present himself publicly as a priest."

"When an accusation has been shown to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken to restore the good name of the person falsely accused."

This is the status of the following priests of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

1. Administrative Leave

Administrative leave is the strongest action a diocesan bishop can take against a priest on his own. Priests on administrative leave may not celebrate the sacraments publicly, engage in priestly ministry, or present themselves as priests in any way. The Archdiocese will announce any change in the status of these priests.

- Thomas Kuhn
- Daniel Pater
- Thomas Feldhaus
- Ronald Cooper
- David Reilly

2. Permanently Removed from the Clerical State

Permanent removal from the clerical state means that in accord with canon law these priests are no longer incardinated in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and are unable to function as a priest anywhere.

- Keith Albrecht – was dismissed from the clerical state in 2005 by Pope Benedict XVI.
- Thomas Brunner – voluntarily requested that he be permanently removed from the clerical state. His request was granted by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006.
- George Cooley- was removed from the clerical state in 1998 as the result of an ecclesiastical trial.
- Lawrence Strittmatter – voluntarily requested that he be permanently removed from the clerical state. His request was granted by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006.
- Ellis Harsham – voluntarily requested that he be permanently removed from the clerical state. His request was granted by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006.
- Kenneth Schoettmer – petitioned the Holy Father to be permanently removed from the clerical state. His request was granted by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007.
- Richard Unwin – voluntarily requested that he be permanently removed from the clerical state. His request was granted by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007.

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3. Permanently Removed from Priestly Ministry

After initially being put on administrative leave, the following have been permanently removed from priestly ministry at the direction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican. They are prohibited from wearing clerical clothing and publicly presenting themselves as priests. Expected to lead a life of prayer and penance, they are still under the authority of the archbishop and subject to certain priestly responsibilities including celibacy.

- Francis Massarella
- Thomas Hopp
- John Berning; died in 2004

4. Other

The case of David Kelley was in process at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith when he died on June 6, 2009.

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