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Current News: Archbishop Dolan's July 9, 2004, E-Mail to Archdiocesan, Parish and School Leaders

Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan sent this e-mail to archdiocesan, parish and school leaders throughout the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

July 9, 2004

Dear Friends united in love and service of Jesus and His Church,

During the past two years, you have heard and read much about the clergy sexual abuse crisis facing our Church. Since my arrival, I have tried to be open and honest with the faithful of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and with you, my key collaborators in southeastern Wisconsin.

Thus, during the past two years you have often received e-mails and letters from me with information on various aspects of this crisis. One aspect that has continually been discussed is the listing of names of offending priests. As you know, the idea of disclosing these names came up before my arrival and I found myself conflicted about the wisdom of such a move.

Back in March, I wrote to you with some of the "pros and cons" surrounding this issue and let you know how I was approaching its resolution. Since that time, I have talked with many, many people – first and foremost, victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse, and the priests of the archdiocese. I have consulted with my community advisory board, my priests' council, public officials, the college of consulters, my key advisors here at the central offices, and many of the faithful in the pews around the Archdiocese.

With all of this thoughtful advice, and through a great deal of time spent in reflection and prayer, I have decided to publicize the names of diocesan priests of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee who have been (or would be if they were still alive) restricted from all priestly ministries in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the Protection of Children and Young People. There are four reasons behind this decision.

1. Protecting children is our primary concern and obligation.
2. By releasing this information, the Church of southeastern Wisconsin reaffirms its commitment to seeking, reaching out to, and encouraging any victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse of minors who have yet to come forward to do so, knowing that they will be believed.
3. We want to affirm the faithful, holy, and wholesome service of the vast majority of faithful priests who serve Catholics and the community in southeastern Wisconsin.
4. We again demonstrate the promise of the Church in southeastern Wisconsin to be open and candid. To obtain forgiveness and rebuild trust, our commitment is to remain open, accountable, and vigilant.

In that regard, in line with the assurances given in the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, a listing of diocesan priests of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee who fall into this category and who have been restricted from all priestly ministries is now available at [this link](#). All living priests under this restriction have been removed from serving as priests. Their names were provided to appropriate law enforcement officials months ago. They are restricted from all priestly ministry and are prohibited from celebrating the sacraments publicly or presenting themselves as priests.

The information posted on the Web site includes the name of the priest and his

The information posted on the web site includes the name of the priest and the current status. I have asked, and will continue to encourage, religious orders to do the same. When they do, they can add their lists to our compilation.

To assist in your efforts to communicate this information to your parishioners, I will send a separate e-mail with a bulletin announcement for your July 18 parish bulletin.

Yes, the release of these names may cause another shockwave to move through your parish community. I have asked my staff, led by Father Bill Kohler and our parish consultants, to be available to assist you in whatever way they can. For some parishes, the pastoral need may be greater than others. Please be in contact with your parish consultant and let them assist you as you work with your parishioners.

I also ask you to be aware of people who may have more information about individuals who are victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse. We must do all we can to encourage and support anyone who has been a victim to come forward for help and assistance.

There may also be some criticism of me for distributing this information about past priest offenders. Some will see it as a vengeful act. Others will see it as too little, too late. Others will question why the names of religious order priests are excluded. Some will criticize me for not releasing information about every priest that has ever been accused, but whose alleged offense has never been substantiated.

As I weighed these issues during the past months, I kept coming to the same conclusion – anything we can do to keep children safe, we must do. Anything we can do to help people who have been victimized come forward, we must do. I pray that our focus and commitment to these two critical points will be self-evident and perhaps mute some of the criticism we receive.

Please see this action for what it is: a true and sincere attempt to reach out to victims/survivors and an added effort to ensure the safety of children. In the future, I will continue to publicize information about priests whose alleged offenses have been substantiated.

The victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse who have had the courage to talk about the hurt and pain they have experienced and the damage done to their lives, their spirituality, and their faith have our gratitude and admiration. Through their witness, they are renewing the Church.

The priests of this archdiocese – past, present, and future – who continue to renew our Church through selfless service, dedicated ministry to those entrusted to their care, and their faithful commitment to priestly ministry in the footsteps of Christ Jesus have our gratitude and our love for their devotion and dedication.

For your commitment as parish leaders to minister in a broken Church in need of renewal, you have my deep gratitude.

As your bishop, I too, want to accept my responsibility for renewing the Church. That renewal must begin with my sincere and humble apology to any individual harmed by a priest. I ask your forgiveness, and I ask for your prayers. I understand the toll this crisis has taken on you as pastors and parish leaders. I am sorry the callous and criminal actions of a few seem to have diminished the good works of so many.

With this letter and others to come, I renew my public commitment to making progress on issues related to clergy sexual abuse. Working together with a sense of openness, truthfulness, responsiveness, and engagement, trust can be restored and maintained and the Church can be strengthened.

We continue to pray for healing for all those who have suffered in this crisis and ask that you continue to keep the Church of southeastern Wisconsin in your prayers.

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of Milwaukee

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