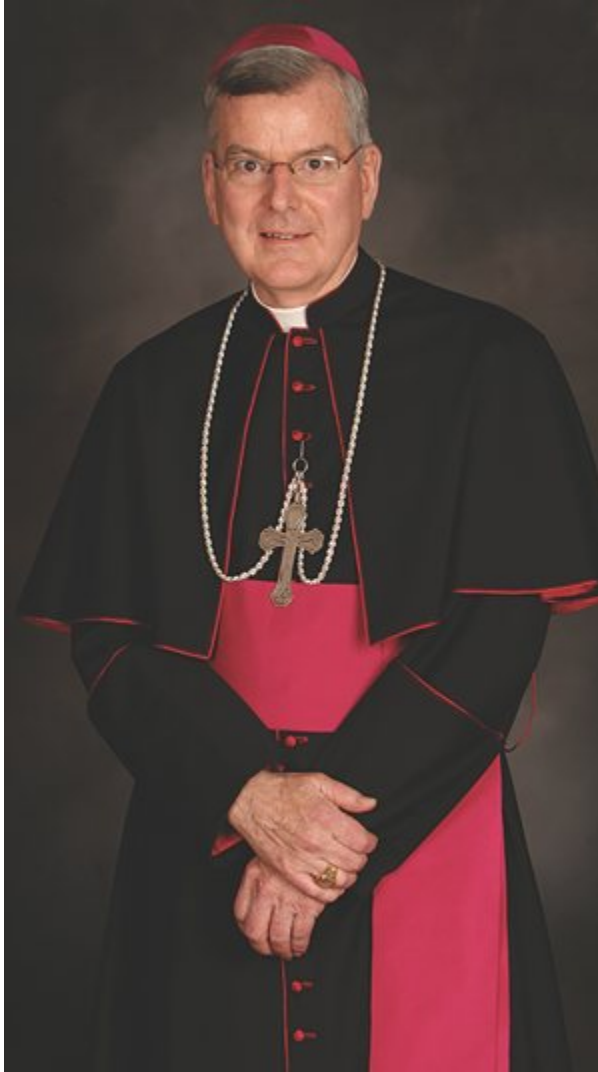


# Disclosure moves us forward on a path toward healing

Archbishop John C. Nienstedt | December 5, 2013

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Over the last several decades, some clergy members of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis unfortunately have violated the sacred trust placed in them by children, youth and their families by committing acts of sexual abuse.

This is a tragedy that has caused insufferable harm to victims, their families, parishioners and the Church. I must say once again to all victims of this abuse: I am so sorry for the pain you have endured. You have been on my mind and in my heart as I offer my daily prayers for you.

My staff and I are completely committed to combating the problem of sexual abuse and doing all we can to ensure that these horrors are never repeated in the Church. To that end,

as I have been communicating to you over the last two months, we are evaluating and improving our policies and practices in our concerted effort to protect children and prevent sexual abuse.

Today, I am announcing the details of our new disclosure practices. These disclosures being made now, and the changes in our disclosure practices generally, are part of a comprehensive and cohesive set of actions we have been taking here in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis this fall to address the issues associated with clergy sexual misconduct.

These decisions reflect not only a great deal of my own prayer and reflection, but also wise counsel provided by my staff and other advisers. I also have considered the practices of a number of other dioceses. As we progress with our disclosure, our practices may continue to evolve, including recommendations that may be made by the independent task force or through the review of our clergy files by an outside firm. Please be assured that I will let you know of any changes to the practices that may develop in the future.

It is the practice of the archdiocese to report promptly to law enforcement all allegations of clergy sexual abuse of minors. Any clergy member facing a credible claim of sexual abuse of minors will be removed from ministry pending an investigation of the claim.

Now, if the claim is credible and can be substantiated, our new disclosure practices will require that claim to be disclosed on our website. Starting today, in addition to the listing you will find in this edition of *The Catholic Spirit*, any member of the public will be able to find this disclosure on our website at <http://www.archspm.org>. At the top of our home page, you'll see an icon that says "Advocacy and Victim Assistance," a section of our website that we have had for many years. In this section of our website, we have added access to a new page called "Disclosures Regarding Clergy Sexual Abuse of Minors."

This new page of our website compiles a list of ordained ministers of the Catholic Church who previously had assignments in the archdiocese, and who have had credible accusations and substantiated claims against them of sexually abusing a minor in our archdiocese.

For each clergy member whose name is listed, the website will provide the following information, if known:

- The cleric's year of birth and year of ordination;
- Whether the cleric is alive or deceased;
- If deceased, the year of the cleric's death;
- The cleric's prior assignments in our archdiocese;
- The date of the cleric's removal from ministry; and

- For clerics who are alive, their present status with the Church (permanently removed from ministry, laicized, deceased, etc.) and the city and state in which they presently reside.

Further, whenever the archdiocese learns of additional credible claims of abuse of a minor by a member of the clergy, we will share that information with the public by issuing and posting a press release. Then, if a credible claim is determined to be substantiated, whether from the review of clergy files by outside experts or otherwise, we will provide that information on the disclosure section of our website.

As I considered and prayed about this change in our disclosure practice, I thought about many things. My leadership team and I discussed the importance of ensuring all that we do is grounded in the goals that I have articulated over the last month or so. Again, these goals are to protect the young and vulnerable, care for victims of abuse, and restore trust among the laity, as well as our clergy who are serving honorably.

Based on these goals, I considered the following to be particularly important:

- Those who have been victimized by these horrible crimes have been deeply hurt. Disclosure of the names of those with substantiated claims of abuse can assist victims in their healing process.
- The Church must be open and transparent about clergy members' sexual abuse of children in order to foster the process of healing and restoration of trust.
- Offending clergy members, even if they have been dismissed from the clerical state (laicized) and are no longer under the authority of the archdiocese, could pose an ongoing risk to children. Therefore, a comprehensive disclosure of their names, status and location may assist in reducing that risk.
- Not only must the archdiocese honor its commitment to protect children, we must also be mindful of the due process concerns of those whose innocence or guilt has not been established. There must be justice and due consideration of the rights and dignity of every human person as we seek the truth. This is not only the bedrock of our beliefs as Catholics, but also of the justice system of our country.

The disclosures made today are not intended to be final. We are currently engaged in a comprehensive review of clergy files, and the list will be updated as additional announcements are made.

Our first priority remains creating and maintaining safe environments where the Gospel of Jesus Christ can flourish because we cannot bring others to the light of Christ unless we first live out his love through our witness.

Keeping our environments safe also requires measures aimed at prevention. Importantly, this must start with implementing productive steps to promote a healthy clergy.

In addition, we continue to train thousands of clergy, volunteers, staff and children and their parents to report suspected abuse. As has been our policy and practice for many years, we encourage anyone who suspects abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult within Church

ministry — or any setting including the home or school — to first contact law enforcement. And, of course, we will prevent further harm by ensuring that any clergy member who has sexually abused a child is permanently removed from any ministry.

All clergy feel the shame of the acts of some of their brother priests. We deeply regret the pain caused by sexual abuse by members of the clergy, and we remain committed to protecting children and promoting healing for victims. I sincerely pray that these efforts will contribute to the healing process for victims and others who have been harmed, and serve to protect God's children and foster trust in the Church. I also humbly ask that you pray for the many noble clergy of our archdiocese who serve honorably and deserve our respect.

I am grateful for your prayers and support. Together, and in light of the many new actions we are taking with sincerity and in pursuit of the truth, we can move forward on a path toward healing. It is my most sincere hope that this may be true especially for victims, for whom I again offer my heartfelt apology and daily prayers.

May God bless you as we begin this Advent season together in anticipation of the coming of Emanuel, God with us.