

Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux releases list of priests accused of sexual abuse

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HOUMA, LA – The Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux has released the names of more than a dozen priests who have admitted, were convicted, or have pled guilty to sexually abusing children.

The 14 priests, four of whom are dead and one of whom is currently in jail, have all been connected to the diocese since its inception in 1977.



Bishop Shelton J. Fabre addressed a letter to the faithful entitled “Light in the Darkness” that talks about the process the diocese went through leading up to the release of the names.

“I want to apologize for the egregious sins that have taken place,” Fabre said. “Let me be clear: the abuse of a child by anyone is sinful, abhorrent and evil, particularly when perpetrated by one vested with the sacred trust of God’s children. Furthermore, any attempt to cover up these sins is even more disturbing. I apologize to all who have been harmed. It is with deep respect and profound reverence that I humbly extend this apology.”

Of the 14 priests on the list, only Patrick Kujawa, who was ordained in 1996 and served at Holy Cross in Morgan City and Saint Francis de Sales in Houma, has been convicted of a crime.

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Kujawa pled guilty to possession of child pornography, according to the diocese.

The following priests admitted, were convicted, or pled guilty:

Lawrence Cavell

- Ordained in 1989
- Admitted to solicitation of a minor
- All priestly faculties permanently removed by the Diocese
- Served at Holy Cross in Morgan City, Sacred Heart in Montegut, Saint Francis de Sales in Houma, Saint Genevieve in Thibodaux, and Saint Mary in Raceland

Alexander Francisco

- Ordained in 1979
- Admitted to inappropriate physical contact with a minor
- All priestly faculties permanently removed by the Diocese
- Served at Holy Cross in Morgan City, Saint Bernadette in Houma, Saint Bridget in Schriever, Saint Joseph in Thibodaux, and Saint Thomas Aquinas in Thibodaux

Dale Guidry

- Ordained in 1982
- Pled guilty to online solicitation of a minor and accused of molestation of a minor
- All priestly faculties permanently removed within the Diocese
- Died October 20, 2013
- Served at Holy Cross in Morgan City and Saint Joseph in Galliano

Patrick Kujawa

- Ordained in 1996
- Pled guilty to possession of child pornography
- Convicted and currently incarcerated
- All priestly faculties permanently removed by the Diocese
- Served at Holy Cross in Morgan City and Saint Francis de Sales in Houma.

Robert Melancon

- Ordained in 1962
- Convicted of aggravated rape of a minor

- All priestly faculties permanently removed by the Diocese
- Died November 5, 2018
- Served at Annunziata in Houma, Sacred Heart in Cut Off, and Saint Genevieve in Thibodaux

Carlos Melendez

- Priest of the Missionaries of Christ Crucified in El Salvador
 - Accused of inappropriate physical contact with a minor and pled guilty to misdemeanor battery against a minor
 - All priestly faculties permanently removed within the Diocese
 - United States Immigration returned him to his native El Salvador
 - Current status or location unknown
 - Served in Diocesan Hispanic Ministry
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The following priests are the subject of credible allegations of sexual molestation of a minor that were the subject of civil litigation:

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Etienne LeBlanc

- Ordained in 1971
- All priestly faculties permanently removed by the Diocese
- Served at Annunziata in Houma, Holy Cross in Morgan City, Holy Family in Dulac, Saint Eloi in Theriot, Sacred Heart in Cut Off, Saint Hilary in Mathews, and Saint Thomas Aquinas in Thibodaux

Gerald Prinz

- Ordained in 1968
- All priestly faculties permanently removed by the Diocese
- Served at Saint Francis de Sales in Houma, Saint Gregory in Houma, and Saint Louis in Bayou Blue

Bernard Schmaltz

- Ordained in 1973
- All priestly faculties permanently removed within the Diocese
- Died February 5, 2010

- Served at Annunziata in Houma
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- **The following priests** are the subject of credible allegations of serious and unacceptable conduct with minors, ranging from inappropriate physical contact of a minor to molestation of a minor:

Claude Boudreaux

- Jesuit priest who offered weekend assistance in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux
- Ordained in 1955
- All priestly faculties permanently removed within the Diocese
- Died August 5, 2016

Gerard Kinane

- Priest of the Archdiocese of New Orleans
- Ordained in 1973
- All priestly faculties permanently removed within the Diocese
- Served at Saint Hilary in Mathews

Ramon Luce

- Priest of the Diocese of San Pablo in the Philippines
- Ordained in 1995
- All priestly faculties permanently removed within the Diocese
- Voluntarily left the priesthood
- Served at Holy Savior in Lockport

Dac Nguyen

- Priest of the Society of Domus Dei
- Ordained in 1988
- All priestly faculties permanently removed within the Diocese
- Current status or location unknown
- Served at Thanh Gia (Holy Family) in Amelia

Daniel Poche

- Ordained in 1978
- All priestly faculties permanently removed by the Diocese
- Served at Holy Cross in Morgan City, Sacred Heart in Cut Off, Saint Bernadette in Houma, Saint Francis de Sales in Houma, Saint Hilary in Mathews, and Saint Joseph in Chauvin

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