

## STATEMENT ON RELEASE OF NAMES OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS BROTHERS CREDIBLY ACCUSED OR REMOVED FROM MINISTRY



[Credibly accused and/or removed from ministry](#)  
[Video of Nov. 8 media conference](#)  
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### Today, there can be no more secrets in our Diocese

*Bishop W. Shawn McKnight*

*Nov. 8, 2018*

In the past 12 days I have participated in six listening sessions across our Diocese regarding the sexual abuse crisis in our Church. As Pope Francis has encouraged, we bishops are to be close to our people and know what they are thinking and feeling. Consistently, I heard the message: “Get it all out and deal with it. Don’t hold anymore secrets. We heal better when we all know what the problem is.” This is part of what it means to be Church: we are about the salvation of souls, of caring for people.

On August 24, I announced additional steps to increase our accountability and transparency so that the Diocese of Jefferson City is known as a Church promoting healing and restoring trust in our ministries. Knowing we are better together, I asked for the help of lay people, our priests and deacons to address this terrible crisis.

Today I am providing an update on my efforts, an aspect of which is a [release of the names](#) of 33 priests and religious brothers who have either been credibly accused or removed from ministry in the Diocese of Jefferson City out of concern for the safety of our youth.

While only one on the list has been criminally convicted, the Church holds a much higher standard for those who serve its people holding a sacred trust. The solemn vows we take when we are ordained or enter religious life call us to higher standards of conduct. As of today, there has not ever been a credible accusation of sexual abuse of a minor against any clergy or religious now serving in the Diocese of Jefferson City.

It is with great sorrow that I publish this list. I humbly and sincerely offer my deepest apologies to those who have been abused by clergy and religious. I also offer my condolences to them, their families, friends, and communities.

The most recent case in our Diocese of physical sexual abuse of a minor occurred in 1997. Since then, we have had two credible allegations of violations of the U.S. Bishops’ [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#): one being the inappropriate use of social media; and the other, Internet pornography depicting minors. Although the incidents are in the past, the pain caused is still

a present reality for the survivors of abuse and their loved ones. I pray this effort on our part provides some small measure of hope and opens an opportunity for healing to those immediately harmed by sexual abuse.

The list of these men also offends our Catholic community and the wider public. Their actions, and the incomplete transparency we have lived under by not making all their names public, has affected the relationship of every priest, every bishop with the faithful. It has caused deep and widespread concern.

Today, there can be no more secrets in our Diocese. We can only be a holy people, a people who are better together, if we have confidence in our priests and if you trust me as your shepherd.

After an independent review of the files of our living priests, deacons and seminarians, and an internal review of the files of our deceased clergy, I am confident that no priest, deacon or religious now serving in the Diocese of Jefferson City has ever been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. Those that were credibly accused have all been either removed from ministry in the Diocese or they are deceased.

To ensure the necessary transparency and accountability going forward, we have a multi-disciplinary Review Board (primarily composed of laity) which sees all available information about any new allegations. I continue to rely on their recommendations in considering how to respond to allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse, whether those allegations concern a minor or an adult.

As your bishop, I pledge to put the care of victims, their loved ones, and their communities first and foremost. Our long standing Catholic social teachings require that we afford a preferential option for the poor; and this is most especially the case for those who have been victimized by clergy of our own Church.

Today we are also publishing the amount of money we have spent on these cases since July 1, 2003. For our small Diocese, it is a large amount: \$4.7 million. I do this to be transparent and accountable to those who have contributed not just finances, but time and talents to our Church. Please note that in January 2004, the Diocese publicly reported that \$1.5 million had been spent on the clergy sexual abuse crisis from the inception of the Diocese in 1956 until June 30, 2003.

Because we have generous donors who understand our preferential option for survivors of abuse, we have not used any money donated in parish offertory collections or to the diocesan annual appeal for the care of survivors or legal fees. For the care of survivors we spent approximately \$2.3 million dollars, and we spent approximately \$300,000 in legal fees. In addition to the generous benefactors who have supported this work, other funds came from the sale of the diocesan minor seminary, other dioceses and religious orders, and insurance.

I want to also point out the money we have spent to provide sustenance for the clergy who have been removed from ministry. The Charter prescribes that those clergy who have harmed people by sexual abuse should live lives of prayer and penance. Our support of them must be done in the context of minimal sustenance. Approximately \$2.1 million was spent on the care of our credibly accused

diocesan priests. Our diocesan infirm priest fund provided \$1.8 million and \$300,000 from our Community Reconciliation Fund.

As to the list itself, the 33 names are those priests and religious brothers of whom the diocesan bishop has found credible violations of the Charter, or the diocesan bishop has deemed them unsuitable for ministry out of concern for the safety of children. Again, all of these men are either deceased or formally removed from ministry in the Diocese. The definition of credible, which I apply and which I have asked the Review Board to apply, is whether based on the available information, an allegation of abuse is more likely than not true.

In addition, I have contacted the superiors of our religious communities of priests to inform them of my new policy, effective January 1, 2020, that any religious community serving in the Diocese of Jefferson City must commit to the release of names of all their credibly accused members in order to continue serving in our Diocese.

Since my announcement late August that I intended to release these names, we have received 18 more allegations of abuse, all of which are reported to have occurred decades ago. Some of the investigations into these recent allegations are ongoing. We are moving forward as compassionately and quickly as possible. If and when credible allegations are determined, the list will be updated.

I am ashamed and appalled at how some of my brother bishops and priests have harmed so many. Next week, the bishops of the United States will meet in Baltimore to discuss this crisis in our Church. While I am grateful for the USCCB Administrative Committee's call for standards of episcopal conduct, we bishops already gave our solemn promise to serve the people of God at ordination. Now we know that some bishops have directly violated that sacred oath. We must do much more than make new promises or rely only on more prayer and penance. Resolute action that manifests a true firm purpose of amendment by the U.S. hierarchy is necessary.

I hope the actions I am taking here for the Church of central and northeast Missouri show how seriously I take my responsibility as your bishop. My vocation is a call to serve you, the people of God. I know the only way through this tragedy of ours must be taken with the active engagement of the entire Church. Thank you for the trust you have given to me, to walk with you as your shepherd.

We want to provide care for those who have been harmed. Today we are publishing what we know. If you have further information about any priest, deacon or religious brother or sister, please contact the [appropriate civil authorities](#). You may also contact our Victims Assistance Coordinator, [Nancy Hoey](#). Her contact information is available on our website. Thank you for your attention.

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