



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MEMPHIS  
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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

February 28, 2020

Dear Faithful of the Diocese of Memphis,

Our Diocese of Memphis realizes the extent of damage caused by the sexual abuse of minors perpetrated by Catholic clergy. This realization has left us horrified. We are heartbroken and deeply saddened for the victims of these crimes and we have been scandalized to learn that some of those in authority ignored the cries from victims or minimized the damage.

Since the adoption of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in 2002, the 'Dallas Charter,' our diocese has urged victims of clergy sexual abuse of minors to come forward and, with the establishment of our Memphis Diocesan Review Board in 2003, many victims have reported their abuse. The Review Board, composed of laity and clergy, reviews all allegations made against priests and deacons. Also, in May 2019, Pope Francis issued the *Vos estis lux mundi*, which provided new procedural norms to ensure that living bishops and religious superiors are held accountable for their actions as well. Counseling and pastoral care are offered to all victims who come forward.

When I was installed as the Bishop of Memphis on April 2, 2019, I made a commitment to learn as much as possible about our Review Board, the accusations made against clergy in the past and the file reviews and public statements that had already been made. Within my first few weeks, I met with the Review Board and found them to be highly qualified and dedicated people who took their work very seriously. I learned that much of the information the diocese could and should disclose had already been made public. However, I also became aware that while file reviews had taken place in the past, the Review Board had not been directly involved in all file reviews, and they had not previously examined all accusations with respect to clergy who had already died.

As the Bishop of Memphis, I promised to do everything in my power to safeguard our children and youth and to help those abused in the past. To aid in the healing process, in June of 2019, I ordered an examination of all our files dating back to the establishment of the Diocese of Memphis in 1971. A system of examination was established and all 442 files in our diocese were reviewed by two sets of examiners: one comprised of priests who are members of the College of Consultors and one comprised of laity from our Review Board. In addition, we hired an independent investigation firm, Inquisitor, Inc., to review all files for any reference to or suggestion of sexual abuse of minors. All of this was done with a view to publish a list of clergy names, living and deceased, who we believe could be credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors.

In publishing our list, we recognize that many among us have been wounded by the actions of some clerics who served in the diocese over our 49-year history. It is not our intent to cause them further pain. Yet the evils of the past can only be purged through a vigilant process of examination that is transparent to the public. Our response must demonstrate the highest levels of honesty and scrutiny.

Together with all the members of the Review Board, I believe we are presenting as truthful and thorough record of the credible allegations of sexual abuse by clerics against minors during our diocese's history. I know that this list may be incomplete, not because we have held anything back, but because this kind of evil is perpetrated in secret and out of fear and shame some may not have been able to come forward.

The names on our list are clergy, living and deceased, whom the majority of the Review Board believes have been or could be credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. Many of the names found on our list are clerics who were ordained with the Diocese of Nashville prior to the establishment of the Diocese of Memphis. If those

clerics were incardinated into our Diocese or if the cleric ever served in West Tennessee, then their names are being republished on our list from a similar list prepared by the Diocese of Nashville. Our Diocese of Memphis has accepted the findings by the Diocese of Nashville without a separate investigation.

Over the course of the last year, many other dioceses and religious communities have also published their own lists of credibly accused clergy. We have attempted to monitor those lists and have included those clerics whom we have reason to believe served in the Diocese of Memphis.

Most notable in this category is the name of our founding Bishop, Carroll T. Dozier, who was included on the credibly accused list of the Diocese of Richmond (Va.) where he served as a priest. Our files reveal no evidence of credible allegations made against Bishop Dozier in our Diocese prior to his death or inclusion on the list of the Diocese of Richmond.

While the Diocese of Memphis will investigate all allegations that come forward against Bishop Dozier, such investigations will be essentially incomplete as Bishop Dozier will not have had an opportunity to defend himself. We recognize listing Bishop Dozier might be upsetting to some parishioners who remember him as our first Bishop. However, because of the Diocese of Richmond's findings, placing his name on our list is appropriate.

As with Bishop Dozier, many of the names listed are clergy who were deceased at the time allegations were made or their files were reviewed. On examination, in regard to these deceased clerics, enough evidence was reviewed case by case to believe that accusations against them are credible. We do realize, however, that the deceased cleric had no opportunity to bring evidence refuting the accusation(s).

While this process of review and publication is not a declaration of guilt, it is our best assessment of all the evidence available to us at this time. We believe that publicly listing these names is a matter of justice if we are to help the victim-survivors and the Church we love and serve. It is our continued hope that anyone who has been abused will come forward to speak the truth and seek the healing that all desire.

If any allegation is made against a living cleric, national and diocesan protocols, become applicable. When this occurs, the police are notified and our Director of Child and Youth Protection begins her service to the victim while an assessor begins an investigation for the Review Board.

If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual abuse as a minor, please immediately call The Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline at 1-877-237-0004. Sexual abuse is a serious crime and must be treated as such. If you would like more information or need help, please contact our Director of Child and Youth Protection at (901) 359-2027.

Along with the need for justice, we must seek the healing grace that can come only from Our Savior who has redeemed us from the darkness of sin and death. Remembering Christ, "Who is our Light," I ask all of us to continue to be vigilant in our efforts to safeguard our children and youth.

It is my hope that by constant vigilance and awareness we may prevent this tragedy from ever happening again. We must never forget the damage done to the victims, their families and to the whole Body of Christ, which is the Church. While we live with the reality of evil, it is my hope that none of us will ever lose sight of the victory that has been won for us by Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Trusting in his love for us, I, together with all the clergy of the Diocese of Memphis, our religious and diocesan staff members, extend our heartfelt sorrow for all the pain and anguish caused to our children and youth by this evil. Please know that I am ready to meet with any victim in this healing process.

I remain fraternally yours. In the light and love of the Lord,

+ David P. Talley

Most Reverend David P. Talley, M.S.W., J.C.D.