

# Pastoral Letter

## 2018 Clergy Report Regarding Abuse

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November 2, 2018

To the People of God in the Archdiocese of New Orleans:

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

To the victims and survivors of sexual abuse, my heart and prayerful support go out to you that you may know God's healing and compassion. Anyone who is a victim or survivor of sexual abuse, please know of my willingness to meet with you so that I may walk with you in healing.

After much prayer and consultation with many people, including the Priests' Council and lay leadership, I have decided to publish the names of Archdiocesan clergy (priests and deacons) who have been removed from ministry for an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. This report also includes deceased Archdiocesan clergy and religious order priests.

I have received many calls and emails asking me to publish the names. I have also received many calls and emails suggesting not to publish the names. I believe it is the right thing to do in order to foster the healing of victims, in a spirit of transparency, and in the pursuit of justice. Jesus reminds us, "The truth will set you free" (*John 8:32*).

For those against whom the accusation came after their death, a very careful examination took place in order to justify the reporting of the person's name. The more recent cases were and continue to be

presented to the Archdiocesan Review Board, an independent board made up of lay experts, who review the cases and make recommendations. For earlier cases, the way in which allegations were reported and investigated varied. This is a weakness that was corrected by the bishops in 2002 with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

A team of more than ten women and men that included staff and outside legal professionals reviewed the files of 2,432 priests who have served in the Archdiocese of New Orleans since 1950. For priests with accusations received after their death, additional people reviewed the file to ensure accuracy to the extent that is possible after death. Of the 2,432 priests who have served in the Archdiocese of New Orleans since 1950, the review identified 57 who are included in this report. This entire list has been given to the Orleans Parish District Attorney and will be made available to any other District Attorney.

Some will be surprised to see the name of a priest who served in your parish or who you personally knew very well. As you experience this disappointment, I raise you to the Lord and ask him to give you comfort and his peace.

Since the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was established in 2002, the number of cases has been reduced significantly. Most of the accusations are from incidents that occurred decades ago, even as long as 70 years ago. There has not been a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor committed in well over a decade by a member of the clergy in ministry in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. In the United States during the last two years, there have been eight substantiated allegations of abuse by clergy according to the 2017 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. There are 33,917 priests currently in the United States; therefore, .025% of priests have had substantiated allegations against them.

While just one case of sexual abuse is one too many, these statistics give evidence that our Safe Environment Program of background checks for those who work with minors, trainings for both adults and children, and extensive psychological testing and formation for seminarians has had a very positive impact on protecting our children. One may have the impression from either the media or on social media that such abuse is rampant in our churches and schools today. This is simply untrue.

I would be remiss if I did not extend my heartfelt gratitude to the very good and faithful clergy who serve in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Daily, they give of themselves to lead and serve God's people. My brothers, thank you as you continue to shepherd God's people today. I also thank all those who support our clergy and appreciate their ministry.

We have done our very best to make this report as accurate and complete as possible. If anyone wishes to raise a question about someone not on the list, I invite you to come forward. The phone number for Victims Assistance Coordinator Br. Stephen Synan, F.M.S. is (504) 522-5019. If necessary, the list will be updated if other cases are presented.

For our sins of the past, we ask for your forgiveness and the mercy of God. Our sin is public and it calls us as church leaders to repentance in order that our church can experience renewal.

As a church, our rock foundation is Jesus Christ. It is His church and has been for over 2,000 years. In spite of our sins, He will not desert the church but will lead us towards healing and renewal.

Wishing you God's peace, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

+ *Gregory M. Aymond*

Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond  
Archbishop of New Orleans