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RESOURCES

Q&A on the disclosure of names

Date: Thursday, December 5, 2013

Questions and answers were provided by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Q. Why are you choosing to disclose the names of offending priests now?

A. Appropriate disclosure is critically important if we are to do all that we can to keep children safe, help victims of abuse heal, and regain the trust and confidence of our communities. We believe this is an essential step in regaining trust and confidence. This decision on disclosure will take us to a new level of accountability and — most importantly — we believe these actions will further serve our primary goal of protecting minors.

Q. Will the names be posted online? If so, where?

A. Yes. Information about clergy members who have credible claims of sexual abuse of a minor that have been substantiated will be posted on our website at www.archspm.org. Right at the top of our home page, you'll see an icon that says "Advocacy and Victim Assistance," a page on 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."

Q. You initially said you would only disclose the names of living priests currently residing in the archdiocese. Why did you decide to expand your disclosure by including the names of the deceased priests as well as priests living outside the archdiocese?

A. Consistent with the paramount goal of protecting children, the archdiocese is including the names of clergy members from other dioceses or religious orders who at one time worked in the archdiocese and were accused of engaging in sexual abuse of minors in our archdiocese, to the extent we have reliable and sufficient information to determine whether the claim is credible and has been substantiated.

The archdiocese is disclosing information about priests of our archdiocese who are living outside of the archdiocese for the same reason. We believe it may aid in protecting children in other dioceses where these priests live. We also believe that it is appropriate to disclose information regarding the deceased priests because doing so may help the healing process for some victims.

Q. Why was permission required from the court to release the names?

A. There has been a protective order in place in Ramsey County District Court since 2009 related to a list of 33 priests provided by the archdiocese to the John Jay Commission in 2004. That list was used to compile a nationwide summary of "credible" claims of clergy abuse of minors. The court order to seal this list applied to all parties, including the archdiocese. Out of respect and deference to the court, we wanted to ensure that our initiative now to release the names and related information was not in violation of that order.

In addition, we were concerned about the release of the entire list because we were able to determine that only 29 of the priests listed in 2004 had credible claims asserted against them of sexually abusing a minor that could be substantiated. We have not determined that the other four priests had substantiated claims against them of sexually abusing a minor. In fact, we were unable to verify any claim in two of the four cases.

Q. What is the difference between a "credible" claim and one that is "substantiated?"

A. As soon as the archdiocese is made aware of an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, appropriate archdiocesan staff promptly takes two steps. First, the allegation is reported to the police or other authorities, as appropriate, so that they can make whatever evaluation or investigation they deem appropriate. Second, the archdiocese initiates its own internal evaluation of the allegation.

The first step in this internal evaluation is to determine whether the claim is "credible." A "credible claim" is one that is "not manifestly false or frivolous." If the archdiocese determines that a credible claim exists, the archdiocese opens an investigation to determine whether a claim is "substantiated." A "substantiated claim" is one for which sufficient evidence exists to establish reasonable grounds to believe that the alleged abuse occurred.

Neither a credible accusation nor a substantiated claim is a conclusion or presumption of guilt. Rather, if a credible claim is substantiated, this finding initiates a canonical process in order to resolve the claim. All credible claims are thoroughly investigated by the archdiocese and all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor are



reported to civil authorities in accordance with applicable law, prior to the determination of the applicable canonical process.

Q. Is this the extent of the disclosure of names? Is it possible more names could be added after the review of clergy files?

A. These disclosures are intended to be ongoing. We are currently engaged in a comprehensive review of clergy files and the list will be updated as additional announcements are made. These disclosure practices may evolve in the future as we progress, including recommendations that may be made by the independent task force or through the review of our clergy files by an outside firm. If the archdiocese learns of additional credible claims that are substantiated, whether from the review of the clergy files from outside experts or otherwise, the disclosures will be updated on our website.

Q. How often will additional names be disclosed?

A. Whenever the archdiocese learns of additional credible claims of abuse of a minor by a member of the clergy, the archdiocese will share that information with the public by issuing and posting a press release. 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.

Q. Are these priests being supported financially or in other ways by the archdiocese? Where does this money come from?

A. All priests are legally entitled to receive pension benefits that have been accrued. Financial support varies depending on the individual circumstance. The archdiocese has an obligation in Church law to ensure that no priest is left destitute. All of the living priests who have not been laicized are receiving their pension and retirement healthcare. Two of the men are receiving a salary and housing allowance. Pension and retirement health care payments are paid from the pension trust, and salary and housing allowances are paid from the archdiocese operating account.

Q. Have any of these men been permanently removed from the priesthood (laicized)?

A. A few of these men have been laicized. None of these men is allowed to exercise ministry. When the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" was promulgated in 2002, the decision was made to impose severe restrictions and monitor these offending priests rather than seek laicization — removal from the priesthood altogether — based on a desire by the archdiocese to oversee these men versus placing them outside of the Church and unsupervised as lay citizens who would have no restrictions. This was an earnest effort to be responsible.

For some of the men, the decision to sequester them by removing them from all ministry, monitoring their behavior and ensuring they are living lives of prayer and penance was approved by the Holy See as an appropriate response to their abusive behavior.

Q. How are the men who have been removed from ministry, but who are still priests, being monitored?

A. The archdiocese currently has a program by which priests who have committed sexual misconduct are monitored by a professional who works for the archdiocese. The Promoter of Ministerial Standards (POMS) creates and oversees an individual monitoring plan for each priest and meets regularly with these priests to help ensure accountability and health. Each year, a new plan is developed with the goal of maintaining and ensuring appropriate behavior and boundaries, a healthy lifestyle and spiritual life, and accountability. Among other things, priests on the monitoring plan may be required to do the following: attend counseling sessions, meet regularly with a spiritual director, attend priest support groups, and, where appropriate, attend accountability groups regarding particular addictions and/or issues.

The archdiocesan monitoring program was created and has been implemented to contribute toward the creation of safer environments. Appropriate accountability and monitoring of priests who have a history of sexual misconduct helps ensure present and future health toward the goal of preventing future sexual misconduct and safer environments.

Q. What is the threshold for removing a priest from active ministry?

A. If the archdiocese receives a credible claim of sexual abuse of a minor, a priest will be removed from active ministry. These restrictions stay in place until an investigation determines whether or not the claim is substantiated. If a claim is determined to be substantiated, he will remain restricted until any criminal or canonical proceedings are concluded.

Q. What should a person do if he or she recognizes a name on the list and has concerns about further risks the man may pose?

A. Any concerns should be conveyed to the proper civil authorities, such as the local police. In addition, he or she is encouraged to notify Greta Sawyer, the archdiocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator at (651) 291-4497.

Q. Can priests with substantiated claims of sexual abuse of a minor against them ever be put back into active ministry?

A. No priest who has sexually abused a minor can ever return to active ministry. The determination by the review board that the claim is substantiated is a very serious matter. Ultimately though, a final determination is made through a criminal or canonical process. If not enough evidence is presented to support an accusation, the priest may return to active ministry.

Q. How much has the archdiocese paid to victims to settle civil claims related to clergy sexual abuse of minors? How have those settlements been funded?

A. Since July 1, 2002, the archdiocese has paid out approximately \$680,000 to victims. Additional amounts were paid to these victims by our insurance carriers. We will disclose these amounts once we obtain such information from the carriers.

Q. How many individuals have civil suits pending against the archdiocese regarding sexual abuse of a minor?

A. Currently, there are 14 lawsuits involving 23 claimants alleging that they were sexually abused as a minor by a member of the clergy who, at one time, had an assignment within our archdiocese.

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