



# DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

*Office of the Bishop*

December 15, 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today, the Michigan Attorney General's Office released its report on the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests serving in the Diocese of Grand Rapids. This report follows an investigation into all seven Catholic dioceses in the state. The investigation did not reveal any allegations of child sexual abuse regarding priests in active ministry in the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

The Attorney General's Office explains in its opening of the report, *"The allegations are summarized here, and their inclusion does not reflect a determination by the Department that the allegations are credible or otherwise substantiated or indicative of a crime"* (pg. 9). This report presents detailed descriptions and is hard to read.

I want to acknowledge the courage of victim-survivors who came forward and to recognize the importance of listening to them and believing them. Sexual abuse is both a crime and a sin. The courage that victim-survivors demonstrate in sharing their stories is a testament to their strength and resilience.

The Diocese of Grand Rapids has cooperated fully with the Office of the Michigan Attorney General since the launch of its investigation in 2018. As part of the investigation, the Diocese gave the Attorney General's Office our internal files, which they have retained for the past seven years. We share a common goal in this investigation – to shine a light into the darkness of sexual abuse and to better understand how we can improve our efforts to protect children and other vulnerable people.

## **Investigation Details**

The investigation, which dates back to 1950, reviewed occurrences involving both diocesan priests and priests belonging to a religious order who were serving in the diocese at the time. During this 75-year period, more than 1,000 priests served in our diocese. The report details the reported abuse of 152 victims by 51 priests. It is important to underscore that the report also provides details on consensual relationships between priests and adults. While these actions are immoral, they are not in violation of Michigan law. Counting these adult relationships in the report inflates the number of both the accused and the number of minor victim-survivors of clerical sexual abuse.

All alleged conduct involving a minor occurred before 2002, the year the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops enacted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. While the report highlights the failings of priests over a 75-year period, it lacks proper context, especially in failing to acknowledge how the Church has supported victim-survivors and taken appropriate and immediate actions to address reports of clerical sexual abuse, especially since 2002. The AG report gives evidence that these safeguards are working.

## Protecting Children


I want to highlight some of the policies and procedures we have in place as part of the *Charter*. These protocols ensure our parishes and schools are as safe as possible for children:

- The Diocese maintains a zero-tolerance policy. Anyone suspected of abusing a child or vulnerable adult is immediately removed from public ministry until a civil and canonical investigation is complete.
- Every allegation – even those made against a deceased member of the clergy or reported long after the criminal statute of limitations has run out – is immediately reported to the appropriate civil authority.
- The Diocese has a victim assistance coordinator who answers calls from victim-survivors, arranges for counseling, and encourages them to make a report to civil authorities. Additionally, I have personally met and will continue to meet with victim-survivors to hear their stories and to offer them my prayerful support.
- Every allegation is presented to our Diocesan Review Board, even if criminal charges cannot be or are not filed. The Review Board is comprised of a member of the clergy and six lay members, including a retired judge, a retired FBI agent, psychologists, and a social worker. The Review Board makes a recommendation to me regarding the case under review.
- We adopted *Virtus*®, a reputable children's protection program focused on the detection and prevention of sexual abuse. Anyone who wants to work with children must complete this training beforehand along with a background check. Nearly 33,000 clergy, teachers/staff, and volunteers in our diocese have participated in this mandatory program since 2002. Additionally, students in our schools participate in age-appropriate training to learn how to spot and report inappropriate behavior.
- Finally, the Diocese has participated in and passed annual child safety compliance audits conducted by an independent third party every year since 2002. We passed our most recent audit in August 2025.

The Diocese of Grand Rapids – and I as your bishop – remain committed to the promises we made more than 20 years ago. I thank our priests, teachers, and laity for their vigilance in this important work.

We will continue to work to ensure the voices of victim-survivors are heard and they have resources available to find healing and peace. Please join me in praying for all who have been impacted by the Church's scandal-ridden past. May our continued actions ensure we keep the most vulnerable among us safe and secure.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak  
Bishop of Grand Rapids

### **To Report Abuse:**

Any person with reasonable cause to suspect the sexual abuse of a minor by a member of the clergy, or by any person acting in the name of the Catholic Church, is urged to file a complaint with the Attorney General at 844-324-3374.

If you are a survivor of sexual abuse, either as a child or an adult, by someone representing the Catholic Church, we urge you to contact the diocesan victim assistance coordinator, regardless of when the alleged abuse occurred. The victim assistance coordinator is available to help survivors make a formal complaint and obtain support. To contact the victim assistance coordinator: Call: 616-840-2079, email: [vac@GRdiocese.org](mailto:vac@GRdiocese.org), or write to: Diocese of Grand Rapids Attn: Victim Assistance Coordinator, 360 Division Ave. S., Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Our diocese accepts and responds to all reports.