

St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus knew much suffering, as St. Thérèse died from tuberculosis at age 24. I ask her intercession...

## Diocese releases names of priests, seminarians with substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of children

Oct. 1, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My whole strength lies in prayer and sacrifice, these are my invincible arms; they can move hearts far better than words, I know it by experience," wrote St. Thérèse of Lisieux. She knew much suffering, as St. Thérèse died from tuberculosis at age 24. I ask her intercession as we publish the list of priests and seminarians who have substantiated allegations of the sexual abuse of children.

I apologize to victim survivors of child sexual abuse, especially those who were abused by priests and seminarians of the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City. You have suffered from this terrible sin. I beg your forgiveness. I pray our Lord Jesus will give His healing love to you and your families. We hope in Christ: **"... power came forth from [Jesus] and healed them all"** (Luke 6:19).

I offer my assistance to the victim survivors and their families. If you wish, I will meet personally with you and your support people.

If anyone you know may have been a victim of sexual abuse by clergy, seminarian, employee or volunteer of the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City, please call local law enforcement, the Kansas Department for Children and Families Report Center, or the Kansas Bureau of Investigation. In addition to making a report to the civil authorities, you may contact the representative from our diocesan Review Board for assistance, and he will also offer the help of our Assistance Minister (all contact info is on our website and in the *Southwest Kansas Catholic* newspaper).

I pray for just punishment, remorse, and conversion of the perpetrators and concealers of sexual abuse. I thank law enforcement, attorneys, judges, health professionals and all who help victims of this heinous crime.

I am grateful to Retired Judge Robert J. Schmisser for his careful attention in auditing our clergy and seminarian files.

I affirm all faithful priests, deacons, and seminarians who are true servants of God. It is easy to be discouraged, but we take hope in our Savior. Jesus is with us, and will strengthen us.

I encourage everyone to be involved in our Safe Environment program as we learn and implement ways to keep our children protected. I appreciate the countless staff and volunteers of this ministry. May all organizations that work with minors rededicate themselves to keeping children safe.

St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, intercede for us as we follow your example of prayer and sacrifice. Let us trust in our Gentle Savior. Jesus **"saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them and cured their sick"** (Matthew 14:14). Jesus is revealing our sufferings, healing our wounds, and loving us more than we can ask or imagine.

+ Bishop John B. Brungardt

*Catholic Diocese of Dodge City*

## Retired judge completes review/audit of priests, deacons, seminarians

Since 1993, the Dodge City Diocese has had a Review Board and Policies in order to provide a safe environment especially for children and to address sexual abuse by clergy. Over that span of nearly three decades, understanding of the reality of sexual abuse and ways to address it have developed and been refined. Over 8,500 people in the Diocese have participated in training sessions to heighten awareness of signs of abuse, methods and means by which offenders abuse, and steps one can use to prevent child sexual abuse.

The Dodge City Diocese and Bishop Brungardt regret and apologize for the hurt that has been inflicted and the pain caused especially to those who were most vulnerable. We ask forgiveness and seek to help those suffering from sexual abuse.

Retired Kansas District Judge Robert J. Schmisser conducted a comprehensive review and audit of all files in the Diocesan Chancery office related to priests, deacons and seminarians. More than 600 files since the beginning of the diocese in 1951 were reviewed during the four-month audit. The audit included the identification of substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by a member of the clergy or a seminarian. The findings of the auditor's report have been shared with the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and the Kansas Attorney General's office. The audit did not reveal any allegations of sexual misconduct that had not previously been made known to the Review Board.

Following the audit and the Diocesan Review Board's review, Bishop Brungardt offers this list of substantiated allegations:

Bishop John B. Brungardt has now determined that publishing an "accused priest list" is contrary to natural law and canon law, specifically against the presumption of innocence, the right to defense and the right to a good name. Thus, on April 4, 2025, Bishop Brungardt has directed that this list be removed from this webpage. As already stated above, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and the Kansas Attorney General's office has investigated the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City. *Anyone is encouraged to communicate with the KBI if information is needed or an accusation is made.*

For further support for this decision, please refer to this link to a Vatican document (Feb 21, 2019) (see in particular item #14): <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2019/02/21/190221f.html>:

"14. The right to defence: the principle of natural and canon law of presumption of innocence must also be safeguarded until the guilt of the accused is proven. Therefore, it is necessary to prevent the lists of the accused being published, even by the dioceses, before the preliminary investigation and the definitive condemnation."

A more authoritative and more recent document on the same topic from Sept 5, 2024 (however, only in Italian):

[https://www.delegumtextibus.va/content/dam/testilegislativi/CHIARIMENTI%20NORMATIVI/Ch%20Normativi%20Risp%20Particolari/Chiar%20normativi%20CIC/Prot.18316\\_2024\\_Circa%20dovere%20opera%20bona%20fama%20defuncti%20can.%202020.pdf](https://www.delegumtextibus.va/content/dam/testilegislativi/CHIARIMENTI%20NORMATIVI/Ch%20Normativi%20Risp%20Particolari/Chiar%20normativi%20CIC/Prot.18316_2024_Circa%20dovere%20opera%20bona%20fama%20defuncti%20can.%202020.pdf)

## IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

If you suspect abuse or neglect of a child in Kansas and the child is in immediate danger, call 911 or local law enforcement.

If you have suspicion a child is being abused or neglected, make a confidential report to Kansas Department for Children and Families Protection Report Center, 800-922-5330 or to the KBI Hotline, 800-KSCRIME (800-572-7463).

If you suspect sexual abuse by Church personnel, in addition to making a report to the proper civil authorities, please contact Mr. Charles Befort, the diocesan Review Board representative who receives and follows up on reports. His contact information is [crbefort@cox.net](mailto:crbefort@cox.net), 620-285-3219. In addition, Mr. Befort will offer the help of the Assistance Minister whose goal is to be a listening ear and to promote healing.

To report sexual abuse or related misconduct by a Catholic bishop, contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting (CBAR) service. CBAR is a third-party reporting service that gathers and routes reports to the appropriate Church authorities for investigation. To make a report in English or Spanish, go to <https://reportbishopabuse.org> or call 800-276-1562.

*The Review Board is a consultative body of lay Catholics and one priest-representative who advises the Bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse, reviews diocesan policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors and offers advice on all aspects of sexual abuse cases retrospectively and prospectively.*

*The Assistance Minister's role is to aid in the pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel, whether the abuse was recent or occurred many years in the past.*

# What is the Diocese of Dodge City doing to Protect Our Children?

It is my hope the information on this page will provide some measure of confidence in our efforts to keep children and young people safe in the Diocese of Dodge City.

+ Bishop John

## **Q. What is the Review Board and what does this Board do?**

- The Review Board is a consultative body to the Bishop comprised of at least five persons of outstanding integrity and good judgment who are not employed by the Diocese. The majority of the members are lay persons.
- The responsibilities of the review board include advising the Bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse in his determination of suitability for ministry, reviewing diocesan policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors, offering advice on all aspects of sexual abuse cases both retrospectively and prospectively, and offering advice on other matters the Bishop wishes to bring to the Board for their counsel.

## **Q. What is an Assistance Minister and what is this person's role?**

- The Assistance Ministers is to aid in the pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel, whether the abuse was recent or occurred many years in the past. The Assistance Minister will make every effort to reach out to the victims and their families and demonstrate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being.

## **Q. What steps will be taken if an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is made against a priest or deacon?**

- Outreach to the victim and family, including the offer to meet/talk with the Bishop or his representative and/or the Assistance Minister.
- Encourage and, if necessary, assist with reporting the incident to local law enforcement, Department of Children and Families or the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.
- If the accused priest or deacon is active, remove him from the parish and restrict his faculties pending an investigation by law enforcement or authorized by the Review Board.
- The Review Board will be convened to review the allegation, determine and recommend the appropriate next step (such as the manner of obtaining further information).
- If the allegation is determined to be substantiated, an announcement that an allegation has been received involving the priest or deacon will be made at the parishes the priest or deacon has served.

## **Q. What steps will be taken if an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is made against a bishop?**

- In May 2019 Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter entitled "You are the Light of the World" (*Vos estis lux mundi*) and in June 2019 the Bishops of the United States approved Directives to implement the Pope's document in the United States.
- Encourage and, if necessary, assist with reporting the incident to local law enforcement, Department of Children and Families or the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.
- Outreach to the victim and family by the Assistance Minister.
- In the case of an allegation against a bishop, the report will be made to the ranking bishop (called the Metropolitan) of the geographic region (called a Province). In Kansas, an allegation made against the bishop of Dodge City, Salina or Wichita would be reported to the Archbishop of Kansas City, Kansas. An allegation made against the Archbishop of Kansas City would be reported to the senior bishop of the other dioceses of the Province (presently Bishop Brungardt in Dodge City).
- After communication with the Vatican, an investigation will be undertaken.
- Further steps to be taken will be determined by the outcome of the investigation.

**Q. What steps will be taken if an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is made against a lay person?**

- Outreach to the victim and family, including the offer to meet/talk with the Bishop or his representative and/or the Assistance Minister.
- Encourage and, if necessary, assist with reporting the incident to local law enforcement, Department of Children and Families or the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.
- If the lay person is an employee of the Diocese, the employee may be placed on leave with pay pending a determination of whether such employee should continue to be employed. If allowed to continue his/her job function pending the completion of the investigation by law enforcement or authorized by the Review Board, restrictions may be placed on the lay employee that would limit or eliminate contact with minors while the employee is at work.
- If the lay person is a volunteer or affiliate of the Diocese, the volunteer may not continue to serve in any capacity which involve contact with minors during the pendency of the investigation by law enforcement or authorized by the Review Board.
- At the conclusion of the investigation, any lay employee, volunteer or affiliate of the Diocese who admits to, does not contest, or whom the Review Board determines committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor, shall be terminated.

**Q. What has been done in our diocese to ensure the safety of children?**

- Protecting God's Children (PGC) awareness sessions—train adults to become aware of signs in children and youth that may indicate they have been abused. The session also provides steps we can take to create a safe environment for our youth.
- Completed criminal background check of all employees and adults who volunteer with children and youth. (See "Did you Know?" sidebar)
- In 2007 we began offering age-appropriate safety training lessons to our students. Over the subsequent years, a variety of lesson formats have been made available.

**Q. Have monetary gifts of the faithful been used to pay for past settlements?**

- No. Past settlements have been paid by insurance and funds from deceased priests' legacies.

## **Did you know?**

- 493 Protecting God's Children Awareness sessions have been offered in Spanish and English since July 2003, and over 8,500 adults have been trained as of September 15, 2019.
- In July 2018 we changed to a background check vendor who will review newly completed background checks quarterly.
- Our Code of Pastoral Conduct-Interaction with Children and Young People addresses specific behaviors an adult will and will not have with a minor. For a copy of the Code of Conduct and other documents, go to <https://www.dcdiocese.org/safe-environment/>
- Every issue of the *Southwest Kansas Catholic* provides information (in English and Spanish) on how to report suspected sexual abuse by clergy, an employee or volunteer in the Diocese of Dodge City.

## ***A Prayer for Victims of Sexual Abuse***

Compassionate God, we pray for victims of sexual abuse. We pray for deep comfort. We pray that you will restore what has been stolen and broken. While you do not alter history, you reveal your love in the present and in the future.

What seems hopelessly shattered, in you can be redeemed. For the many millions who have been defiled in sexual abuse, show yourself to be loving and able—as you are willing—to give back life, and life abundant.

Yes, there is great pain in our world. There is injustice. There is evil. We turn to you and cry out for help and healing. We cannot help but wonder why such horrible abuse happens.

But we turn from “why?” and ask instead, “how?” How now will your perfect goodness and love find expression in the shadow of wickedness?

God, you are good and loving and also all-powerful. Yet you have risked giving humans the right to choose how we live.

Some choose evil. For those who are victims of other’s vile deeds, we ask you for grace and healing. For those who have suffered, come to them tenderly and with overwhelming and powerful love. We join with Jesus and borrow his words, “Be freed from your suffering.” Compassionate God, heal the victims of sexual abuse.

*(M. Herringshaw)*