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What we know about the 11 Sioux Falls Catholic priests accused of child sex abuse

Patrick Anderson, Shelly Conlon, Katie Nelson and Danielle Ferguson, Sioux Falls Argus Leader

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The south spire of the St. Joseph Cathedral. (Photo: Jay Pickthorn - Argus Leader)

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Catholic leaders in Sioux Falls released the names of 11 priests this week who faced what church authorities called substantiated claims of child sex abuse.

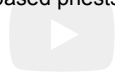
The former priests named worked in hospitals, schools and churches of southeastern South Dakota as part of their assignments within the Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls.

Church leaders volunteered the names of the accused abusers as a way to reach out to victims and encourage them to come forward, said Matthew Althoff, chancellor for the diocese.

"That there's one name on that list is too many," Althoff said.

More: [Sioux Falls Diocese names 11 priests accused of child sex abuse \(story/news/2019/03/21/sioux-falls-catholic-diocese-priests-accused-sexual-abuse-minors/3237715002/\)](https://www.argusleader.com/story/news/2019/03/21/sioux-falls-catholic-diocese-priests-accused-sexual-abuse-minors/3237715002/)

The 11 priests named by the Sioux Falls Diocese join the other 21 South Dakota-based priests named in a similar disclosure last week by the Rapid City Diocese.



Not included are the names of five religious order priests who also faced allegations of abuse. Those individuals were mentioned, without being named, in a 2003 column by then-Bishop Robert J. Carlson, now the archbishop of St. Louis, following an independent audit.

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Since the 1950s, the diocese spent about \$350,000 on settlements and counseling for both victims and accused priests, Carlson wrote in his 2003 column for the diocese's newsletter.

Within the Sioux Falls Diocese, the instances of substantiated abuse occurred between 1958 and 1992, Bishop Paul J. Swain said in a letter published online with the list of names. Churches across the country have responded to a grand jury indictment of Pennsylvania dioceses by publishing names and information of accused priests, including where they worked and where the abuse happened.

The Sioux Falls Diocese declined to share service records for the 11 priests named. The bishop decided to withhold the information out of concern for victims, Althoff said.

"Really it is out of a profound sensitivity for the deserved confidentiality of a victim of clergy sexual abuse that all those details, the bishop chose not to include in his letter," Althoff said.

The Sioux Falls Diocese has had protocol in place since 1988 designed to prevent abuse and respond to sexual abuse victims, long before coverage of clergy sexual abuse in Boston led to the Catholic Church's adoption in 2002 of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Althoff said.

Local church leaders have continued to revise and update the policy. The church has worked to promote prevention by empowering all staff and parishioners to report abuse, Althoff said.

"While the revelation of these names is jarring and it has an impact on so many people, this is not the first effort on the part of the Diocese of Sioux Falls to reach out to victims who may be in our midst," Althoff said. "This is just one additional step."

Robert L. Grabowski

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Grabowski was ordained in Sioux Falls in April 1955 and was listed as assistant pastor as St. Agnes Catholic Church in Vermillion in a 1957 Argus Leader article.



Buy Photo Grabowski

Robert L. Grabowski was pictured in the April 24, 1955 edition of the Argus Leader after he was ordained as a Catholic priest in Sioux Falls. (Photo: Argus Leader archives)

Argus Leader archives show he was transferred to St. Mary's Catholic Church in Salem in late 1957, listed as choir director of St. Mary's Inter-Parochial High School in 1959 and athletic director in 1960, and he is described as superintendent of the school in a 1965 article.

The diocese lists Grabowski as having been permanently stripped of his "faculties for priestly ministry," essentially his license to be a priest, in June 1979 and dismissed from the clerical state in March 1992.

Frank J. McNeil

McNeil graduated from St. Paul Seminary in 1971 and was ordained in June of that year. He was a fire department chaplain in five South Dakota cities across a span of 15 years before becoming Sioux Falls' first Fire Department Chaplain in November 1986.



His duties included visiting sick or injured firefighters, counseling them and their families, helping with injury or death notifications, leading funeral or memorial services, offering spiritual advice, and blessing fire trucks.

He was elected as vice president of the Federation of Fire Chaplains in 1992.

McNeil moved to Sioux Falls in October of 1986, according to an Argus Leader article from that year. He had regular full-time duties at Prince of Peace Retirement Center and part-time duties at McKennan hospital.

McNeil was chaplain and a firefighter in Madison, Watertown, Yankton and Jefferson before Sioux Falls, according to a Sept. 10, 1980 Argus Leader. He was also the official chaplain for the state patrol, according to the same article.

He was removed from faculties for priestly ministry in April 1993, and dismissed from the clerical state in June 2004.



Buy Photo Frank J. McNeil

Frank J. McNeil (Photo: Argus Leader archives)

William Neuroth

Neuroth was ordained in 1963 and was stripped of his duties in September of 1994. He was dismissed from the clergy a year later.

Neuroth worked as a priest throughout southeastern South Dakota and was a religious studies teacher at O'Gorman High School, during which time he was accused of abusing a teenage student, according to past reporting by the Argus Leader.

Former O'Gorman student Kurt Brick filed a lawsuit decades later, accusing Neuroth of abuse, according to the Argus.

Brick was 14 when the abuse started in the 1970s, according to previous reporting by the Argus Leader. Neuroth left teaching in 1975 when Brick's family came forward and complained to church authorities, but he continued to serve as a priest for nearly two more decades working in parishes across southeastern South Dakota, including Canton.

Brick's 1995 civil suit was later settled outside of court, and as part of the settlement the Sioux Falls Diocese wrote a letter of apology to Brick, according to Argus Leader coverage.

Neuroth died in June 2013.

Thomas J. Ryan

Ryan was ordained in 1952 and was stripped of his duties in 2002.

Ryan was a Mitchell native, according to an obituary published in the Argus Leader. He studied for priesthood at St. John's College in Minnesota and was ordained in Sioux Falls at St. Joseph Cathedral.

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He served the Sioux Falls Diocese for 48 years, including work as a teacher at O’Gorman High School and Presentation College in Aberdeen.

He also served as assistant priest at St. Joseph, in addition to working in Yankton, Tea, Beresford and Hartford.

He died in January 2017.

Leonard M. Thury

Thury taught boys' choir, chorus, religion and geography at O’Gorman from 1964 until 1978.

He served as a priest in several South Dakota parishes from his ordination in 1958 until the mid-1980s, including Tea, Christ the King in Sioux Falls and St. Joseph’s Cathedral.

The diocese says Thury was removed from the priesthood in 1987, but his obituary says he left the priesthood in 1988 and married that same year. He died in 2003.



Leonard F. Stanton

Stanton was ordained in 1943 and served as a priest at several South Dakota parishes, including St. Agnes in Vermillion, St. Therese in Sioux Falls and St. Mary in Salem.

He also served as regional Boy Scout chaplain, was on the board of directors of the Boys and Girls Club, was part of the steering committee of the Catholic Boy Scout Committee of the United States and headed the religious education office of the Sioux Falls Diocese.

Stanton was stripped of his priestly duties in 1993 and died in 1997.

Louis D. Nally

Nally was ordained in 1921 in Ireland and served in multiple South Dakota parishes from 1950 until his retirement in 1973, including Mellette and St. Martin in Huron.

He was also chaplain of Gettysburg Memorial Hospital in Gettysburg.

Nally died in a one-car crash in 1987 at age 93. He was never removed from the priesthood, despite accusations confirmed by the diocese.

Milton J. Eggerling

Eggerling was ordained in 1954 and worked as a teacher at O’Gorman High School, while also serving as chaplain for the Sioux Falls American Legion Post No. 15 and working in churches and schools in Lennox and Aberdeen.

While he was in Aberdeen, Eggerling served at Roncalli Catholic High School until becoming a top official at the Aquinas Student Center in Aberdeen.

He died in March 2008, and the diocese included no record of him facing punishment by church leadership despite confirming substantiated claims of abuse.

James V. McCormick

McCormick was ordained in 1963 and was stripped of duties in 1993. He served as a priest and teacher for more than 30 years in the Sioux Falls Diocese, and he also worked in Kansas City, Missouri, before returning to Salem, South Dakota.

He died March 2017 in the Salem Care and Rehabilitation Center.

Bruce MacArthur

MacArthur was ordained in 1953 in Sioux Falls and was stripped of his duties in 1992.

MacArthur confessed to abusing up to 30 girls, including Judith Glassman DeLonga, a Florida woman who sued the Sioux Falls and Milwaukee dioceses in federal court in 2003. DeLonga said she was molested by MacArthur during his time as a hospital chaplain in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin.

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DeLonga was 10 years old. The abuse occurred between 1965 and 1970, according to federal court records.



Former Priest Bruce MacArthur has appeared in past Argus Leader coverage of child sex abuse within the Sioux Falls Diocese. He molested up to 30 girls while working in churches and hospitals in South Dakota and Wisconsin. (Photo: Contributed)

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Before he was stripped of duties, MacArthur served as a priest at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Milbank, at Sacred Heart in Yankton, at the Human Services Center in Yankton, at St. Peter the Apostle in Platte and at St. Williams in Ramona before being transferred in 1966 to Wisconsin, according to federal court records. He then returned in 1970 and was assigned to St. John De Britto in Britton, then to St. Boniface in Seneca, his last assignment in South Dakota.

The Sioux Falls Diocese assigned MacArthur to churches in Texas in 1974, then to Africa before he retired in 1995 — three years after he was stripped of duties.

He died in February 2012.

John Ignatius Murray

Murray was ordained in Boston in 1955 and was stripped of duties in 1991.

Murray served in several South Dakota parishes, including St. Mary's in Dell Rapids, St. Martin and Church of the Resurrection in Huron, and Christ the King in Sioux Falls.

He was president of the Association of Christian Churches of South Dakota. After being stripped of his duties in 1991, Murray moved to Helena, Montana, where he died in 2012 at age 88.

Please check back for updates on this developing story.

Editor Jeremy Fugleberg contributed to this report.

HELP FOR VICTIMS

Sioux Falls Bishop Paul J Swain encouraged victims to come forward, promising to provide help and respond to new claims.

Victims should contact police, the diocesan victims assistance coordinator at 800-700-7867 and the diocesan chancellor at 605-988-3704. Victims can also email the Diocese at vac@sfcatholic.org (<mailto:vac@sfcatholic.org>).

Victim of sexual abuse can call the Compass Center's crisis hotline at 1-877-462-7474.

Sioux Falls police can be reached at 605-367-7212.

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