

Monsignor Kelly issues statement in response to credibly accused listing

In response to being named on the Diocese of Scranton's Credibly Accused Individuals List, Monsignor Joseph P. Kelly released the following statement, which is printed in its entirety:

"Bishop Bambera has decided that I have been 'credibly accused' of the sexual abuse of minors, and has removed me from ministry.

It is true that some priests of the Diocese did abuse minors, which is both a sin and a crime. I am not one of them.

I deny the allegations that I abused anyone, and I especially deny that I abused any of the children under my care while I was Director of St. Michael's School for Boys.

I have spent much of my ministry involved with children. I worked at Boys Town. I helped found and worked at Project Hope. I was Director of Camp St. Andrew. I taught in Catholic Schools for 25 years. The only claims against me come from former, court-assigned boys who were committed to St. Michael's in the mid 70's.

The Bishop's decision to name me as 'credibly accused' is based on a seriously flawed process that is an open invitation for fraud. Once the Diocese established and announced that it created a 'Survivors Fund,' former St. Michael's boys made claims of having been abused while

there. These claims were referred to a Diocesan-created Independent Survivor Compensation Program for review and decision. I was not given the opportunity to defend myself, and no adequate investigation of these claims was made.

My accusers, who claim that I abused them 45 years ago, have criminal records ranging from murder to robbery to assault to drug offenses. These claims arise as part of a prison industry, where claims against Diocese nationwide have arisen. One former St. Michael's boy was charged in Federal Court in Oregon for having asserted fraudulent claims against 5 separate Diocese.

None of the claimants against me came forward until the Survivor's Fund was created and announced.

I say to my family, my friends, my former co-workers, my former parishioners that these claims are not true. I have spent the last 54 years as a priest who believes in and practiced respect for the dignity and safety of all I came in contact with, especially those under my supervision.

I put my record before the people of the Diocese, and ask that you not accept the label 'credibly accused' that has been applied to me, but that you do accept my denial that these claims are false and fraudulent."