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NEWS

St. Norbert Abbey identifies two more Norbertine priests who abused minors, including former abbot

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DE PERE – St. Norbert Abbey, under pressure to deal with a history of abusive clergy, has identified two more Norbertine priests who sexually abused minors in the 1960s and '80s.

The newly named priests include former Abbot Benjamin Mackin, who led the Catholic order in De Pere from 1982 to 1994. A review by an independent board substantiated claims that Mackin sexually assaulted minors in the 1980s while abuse by Arnold Schinkten occurred in 1962, according to a news release from the abbey Thursday.

Both men are dead.

Mackin and Schinkten join 22 other Norbertine priests who have "substantiated" allegations of sexual abuse against them. The abbey first published its list in July 2019 after the organization Praesidium investigated files dating as far back as 1966 and found incidents of abuse from the 1940s to the 1990s.

Norbertines are part of an independent order of Catholic clergy and are different from diocesan priests.

They are based at an abbey in De Pere and serve Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church and Holy Cross, among other parishes. Their priests also work at four Catholic schools, including St. Norbert College.

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Information about the abuse by Mackin and Schinkten was brought to the abbey in late 2020 and early 2021, the news release said. An abbey spokesman declined to say how many victims

came forward or how old they were at the time of the abuse.

As with its prior disclosure, the abbey did not provide details about the priests' assignment histories — a practice upheld by other religious organizations that identify abusive clergy, including the Diocese of Green Bay.

Press-Gazette archives indicate Schinkten was a psychology professor for St. Norbert College the same year he carried out the abuse, but abbey spokesman Montie Chavez said it did not occur on campus or involve a student. According to Mackin's obituary, he worked on the faculty at St. Norbert High School and Abbot Pennings High School and served as pastor for the college parish before becoming abbot.

Alumni of Notre Dame Academy, a Norbertine-affiliated Catholic high school in Green Bay, have called on the abbey and the academy to be more transparent about sexual abuse allegations against priests. They are among those speaking out following the death of Nate Lindstrom, who took his own life in March 2020 after alleging he was abused by three priests from the abbey in the 1980s.

Only one of the men Lindstrom accused is on the abbey's list.

Because of the two added cases of sexual assault, abbey officials said Defenbaugh and Associates Inc. will conduct a second review of the order's files, which is expected to take around six months.

Danny Defenbaugh, the lead investigator, worked at the Federal Bureau of Investigation for almost 33 years.

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