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Diocese of Springfield
in Illinois

(/)

Office for Communications



Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement in Response to the Illinois Attorney General Press Release

SPRINGFIELD - The Diocese of Springfield in Illinois has cooperated with Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office for several months regarding their inquiry into cases of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. In response to the Attorney General's requests, diocesan staff have assembled information from paper files dating back as early as 1923, when the diocese was established in Springfield. We have provided the Attorney General's office with documentation of all allegations of such abuse, whether or not those allegations were deemed credible.

“The Attorney General’s inquiry has prompted us to comb through decades’ old paper files, reviewing cases that involve clergy and lay people most of us have never met, and many of whom are deceased” said Bishop Thomas John Paprocki. “Revisiting the pain caused to victims of abuse has motivated us to redouble our commitments to the reforms undertaken many years ago and to sustain our vigilance.”

Beginning in 2002, the Springfield diocese, along with the other Catholic dioceses in the United States, implemented a zero-tolerance policy and began promoting an environment of awareness and safety. The diocese has seen two priests and a former bishop removed since 2002 for substantiated allegations arising prior to 2002 and removed only one priest since 2002 for an allegation found to have occurred after 2002. As part of this program, the diocese refers all allegations of abuse to a Review Board, which is led by predominantly lay people, including a victim of clergy abuse, and is responsible for intake and review of claims of abuse of minors by clergy. Anyone bringing an allegation is offered counseling through our Victim Assistance Ministry. The diocese has also broadly implemented a safe environment awareness and prevention program that has trained 57,000 individuals, including volunteers, since 2002, through 2,600 training events. Through this program, 250 facilitators and 130 coordinators of safe environment programs have been trained in parishes and schools throughout the diocese, creating a broad-based environment of awareness and intervention.

“Reviewing these past cases has also reminded us that many years ago people didn’t publicly discuss the kind of salacious allegations documented in these files,” Bishop Paprocki said. “A virtuous intent to protect the faithful from scandal unfortunately prevented the transparency and awareness that has helped us confront this problem more directly over the past fifteen years. We are continuing to learn and strive to improve our assistance for those who are victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.”

The diocese encourages anyone with concerns about abuse of a minor by clergy to contact The Diocese’s Child Abuse Reporting and Investigation number at (217) 321-1155. Individuals may also contact the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse Hotline at 1(800)-25-ABUSE.

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[back to top \(/communications/press-releases/434-statement-in-response-to-the-illinois-attorney-general-press-release.html#startOfPageId434\)](/communications/press-releases/434-statement-in-response-to-the-illinois-attorney-general-press-release.html#startOfPageId434)

[Home \(/communications\)](/communications/)

[Staff Directory \(/communications/staff-directory.html\)](/communications/staff-directory.html)

[Prayer for Communicators \(/communications/prayer-for-communicators.html\)](/communications/prayer-for-communicators.html)



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Search ...



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[Diocesan Pastoral Directory \(/communications/directory-updates.html\)](/communications/directory-updates.html)

[Bulletin Announcements \(/communications/bulletin-announcements.html\)](/communications/bulletin-announcements.html)

[Parish Link \(/communications/parishlink.html\)](/communications/parishlink.html)

[Active and Lapsed Catholics Survey \(/communications/survey.html\)](/communications/survey.html)

[Catholic TV and Radio \(/communications/catholic-tv-and-radio.html\)](/communications/catholic-tv-and-radio.html)

[Contact Our Office \(/communications/contact-our-office.html\)](/communications/contact-our-office.html)

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