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Saint Vincent Archabbey releases names of members accused of sexual abuse



STEPHEN HUBA | Thursday, August 16, 2018 9:42 p.m.



SHANE DUNLAP | TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Saint Vincent Basilica Parish in Unity.

Two days after the release of a bombshell report chronicling allegations of sexual abuse by Catholic priests across Pennsylvania — and decades after it removed many from ministry — Saint Vincent Archabbey in Unity on Thursday revealed the names of a dozen members it deemed to have been credibly accused of similar wrongdoing.

The list includes 11 Benedictine priests and one brother against whom “credible allegations” of child sexual abuse had been made to the archabbey since 1993. It was released, the archabbey said, in

response to the 40th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury report on 301 “predator priests” in six dioceses, including three archabbey members.

The members, all deceased, were: the Rev. Fidelis Lazar of the Pittsburgh diocese, the Rev. Giles Nealen of the Erie diocese, and the Rev. Charles Weber of the Greensburg diocese.

All but two of the 12 people named by the archabbey are dead. Many allegations stem from pastoral assignments taken by the Benedictines in other dioceses.

“The Archabbey Community is saddened by the behavior of those accused and extends its deep apology to any person who has been victimized by any member of the Archabbey Community,” Archabbot Douglas R. Nowicki said in a statement.

Below are the names and details released by the archabbey:

The Rev. Raymond Balko, alleged to have abused a minor sometime in 1963 or 1964, when he was assigned to St. Mary Parish in Erie. Balko died in 1985. The allegation was reported to the archabbey in 2000.

The Rev. Gordian Burkardt, alleged to have abused a minor sometime in 1961 or 1962, when he was assigned to James Barry Robinson School in the Diocese of Richmond, Va. Burkardt died in 1985. The allegation was reported to the archabbey in 2006.

The Rev. Alvin Downey, alleged to have abused a minor in 1981, when he was assigned to weekend service at St. John the Evangelist Parish, Bellefonte, in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. The allegation was reported to the archabbey in 2002. Downey was removed from ministry at that time and died in 2010.

The Rev. Joseph Gerg, alleged to have abused a minor sometime in 1969-71, when he was assigned to St. Benedict Parish in Baltimore. The allegation was made in 1997. In 2002, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, in accord with the U.S. bishops’ “Dallas Charter,” publicly reported the allegation as credible, and he was removed from active ministry.

The Rev. Germain Lieb, alleged to have abused a minor between 1975 and 1978, when he was assigned to Immaculate Conception Parish, New Germany, in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. Lieb died in 2006. The allegation was reported to the archabbey in 2018.

The Rev. Stanley Markiewicz, alleged to have abused multiple individuals between 1966 and 1971, when he was assigned to St. Vincent’s Preparatory School in Latrobe. The first allegation was received by the archabbey in 2002. He was removed from active ministry at that time.

The Rev. Cosmas Minster, alleged to have abused an individual in 1942, when he was assigned to a weekend mission at St. Joseph Parish, Mt. Pleasant. Minster died in 1985. The complaint was reported to the archabbey in 2002.

The Rev. Emmeran Rettger, alleged to have abused multiple individuals between 1965 and 1967, when he was assigned to St. Benedict Parish in Covington, Ky. The complaint was reported to the archabbey in 1993, and he was removed from active ministry. Rettger died in 1999.

The Rev. Jerome Rupprecht, alleged to have abused an individual in the early 1970s while on a field trip in Emporium, Cameron County. Rupprecht died in 1982. The allegation was reported to the

archabbey in 2002.

Brother Benet Salis, alleged to have abused an individual between 1964 and 1965 while a monk at St Leo's Abbey in Florida. Salis died in 1991. The allegation was reported to the archabbey in 1993.

The Rev. Alcuin Tasch, alleged to have abused multiple individuals between 1950 and 1963, when he was assigned to 40 Holy Martyrs Parish in Baltimore. Tasch died in 1982. The allegations were reported to the archabbey in 1995.

The Rev. Herman Ubinger, alleged to have abused multiple individuals between 1966 and 1971, when he was assigned to St. Vincent's Preparatory School in Latrobe. Ubinger died in 1997. The allegation was reported to the archabbey in 2002.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh received a report in 1986 of Lazar sexually abusing an adolescent male that same year. Records indicate Lazar was serving as parochial vicar at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Bloomfield and St. Teresa Catholic Church in Koppel, Beaver County.

"Lazar took this victim on overnight trips. They slept in the same bed. The victim stated Lazar kissed him and began touching the child's genitals. While in bed, Lazar pulled the victim close to him, close enough (that) the victim felt the erect penis of Lazar," the report said.

Lazar was sent away for treatment in 1987 and admitted being sexually active with children after his ordination, the report said.

Then-Bishop Donald Wuerl determined in 1989 that Lazar could not continue in ministry because of a diagnosis of ephebophilia, defined as a primary sexual interest in older adolescents, the report said.

Other instances of alleged abuse were traced to Lazar's service at Saint Vincent's Preparatory School in Latrobe in the 1960s and at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, Library, Allegheny County, in the early 1980s.

The grand jury report cited Nealen's "long history of sexually abusing numerous young boys."

One victim was later arrested and criminally tried for also sexually abusing young boys, according to the report. He reportedly testified at trial that he had been an altar boy and had been sexually abused while Nealen was assistant pastor at Queen of the World Catholic Church in St. Marys, Elk County.

Nealen was abruptly removed from the parish, with no explanation being given to parishioners, according to a letter provided to the grand jury by the Erie diocese.

Weber allegedly fondled a boy's genitals in the early 1980s after giving a lecture at St. Gertrude Catholic Church, Vandergrift, on "the meaning of impure thoughts and actions," the report said.

An allegation of sexual abuse against Gerg was reported to the Benedictines in 1997, according to BishopAccountability.org. The abuse stemmed from Gerg's time in the Archdiocese of Baltimore in the late 1960s and early '70s.

In 2005, the archabbey and the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown settled a lawsuit involving allegations of sexual abuse against Downey in 1980, when he served at St. John the Evangelist Church in Bellefonte.

Downey allegedly performed oral sex on a teenage boy after giving him alcohol and drugs, according to news accounts.

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