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Child Protection

MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. COLUMBAN

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ST. COLUMBANS, Neb.—Statement on Abuse

The Columban Fathers do not tolerate sexual abuse of any kind by its member priests. Abuse shatters lives and relationships. Our first concern is always for the well-being of anyone who has been hurt by the misconduct of one of our members. Our organization has taken many steps to prevent and respond to allegations of abuse, and we have deepened our understanding of the issues involved over many decades.

Since 2006, the Columbans have maintained accreditation as a “child safe” environment with Praesidium, Inc., a nationally recognized child protection agency. Our accreditation has been renewed multiple times, most recently in 2019. As an accredited Society, we have stringent policies and practices in place to prevent abusive conduct, and all members participate in safe environment training.

In 2019 we contracted with Kinsale Consulting of Portland, Oregon, an organization led by a former FBI official with significant expertise and experience in the identification and prosecution of sexual abuse by clergy. Kinsale was asked to review in detail every available personnel file at the Columban U.S. headquarters in order to identify those files that include potential indicators of an abusive relationship or event. The scope of Kinsale’s work was extensive, as there have been 463 priests attached to the North American region of the Columban Fathers since 1950.

Kinsale's findings were recently reported to and considered by our Review Board, comprised of a majority of independent lay professionals, to ensure that our disclosure arising from Kinsale's review is accurate and transparent.

The outcome of this comprehensive process is the attached list of names of Columban priests whom the Review Board has concluded were the subject of credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor. A credible allegation was defined to be present where there is the *likelihood* that the accusation is true and that an incident of sexual abuse of a minor has occurred.

The information written here reflects what we know today. It is possible, of course, that claims of abuse may yet be brought forward. We will follow our written policy in all such cases. Anyone having a report of abuse is asked to telephone our Victim Assistance contact at 402-397-2477 or email swemhoff@me.com.

In addition, there are names of certain deceased Columban priests not being disclosed at this time, either because allegations about them remain under investigation or they are the subject of pending legal proceedings. If further investigation results in a conclusion that credible allegations are present, or when legal proceedings are concluded, those names will be added to the list. In some cases, files have also been turned over to Columban leaders in other countries for their investigation and follow up action.

We share this information to assist with the healing of those who have been hurt by the actions of members of the Columban Society. We are saddened and ashamed to acknowledge this part of our history. We apologize to all victims, families, and communities who have been hurt by the actions of a Columban priest. We recommit ourselves to be instruments of Christ's love and healing mercy.

Name	Credible accusations and date of alleged conduct, if known	Current Status
Francis Byrne	Multiple, 1973	Left the community and ministry 1976; deceased 2011
John Crafton	Single, 1960's	Deceased 1989
Thomas Glennon	Single, pre-1990	Restricted from public ministry since 1992
Joseph Hanrahan	Single, 1976	Deceased 1990
Francis Keane	Multiple, 1980's	Deceased 2018
Robert Lamby	Multiple, 1970's	Left the community 2000; deceased 2002
Michael McCourt	Single, 1940	Deceased 1977

*List compiled as of February 15, 2021. Our process will continue and this list will be updated as appropriate.

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About the Columbans: The Missionary Society of St. Columban, also known as the Columban Fathers, is a Catholic missionary society that was founded in 1918 to proclaim and witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Society seeks to establish the Catholic Church where the Gospel has not been preached, help local churches evangelize their laity, promote dialogue with other faiths, and foster among all baptized people an awareness of their missionary responsibility.

The Society's U.S. headquarters are based in Bellevue, Neb., which is south of Omaha.

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