

STATEMENT FROM BISHOP DAVID MALLOY AND THE DIOCESE OF ROCKFORD TO THE PUBLIC REGARDING THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S REPORT

ROCKFORD—MAY 23, 2023--Today, May 23, the Attorney General of Illinois released a final report of its investigation into the handling of claims of childhood sexual abuse involving Catholic Clergy by the six Catholic dioceses of Illinois including Rockford.

First and foremost, the Diocese of Rockford apologizes for the pain endured by victim survivors of childhood sexual abuse. No child should ever be harmed, and no adult should have to endure the memories of that harm. Our priority today remains the safety of all children and vulnerable individuals, and the repair of the past.

Since the opening of this inquiry in August of 2018, the Diocese of Rockford has worked cooperatively with the Attorney General first under Lisa Madigan and now under Kwame Raoul to make sure that the Rockford diocese has publicly accounted for all allegations and all instances of abuse by opening diocesan files to independent review by the Attorney General's staff. Bishop David Malloy stated in a press statement on December 20, 2018, that he was committed to working with the Attorney General to achieve those goals and that cooperation has continued to date.

To that end, the Diocese of Rockford made every effort to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all files and documents provided to the Attorney General's staff for its review. However, in this final report we find there are inaccuracies. For example, there are statements/allegations in the report that there are known abusers actively ministering in our diocese. To the best of our knowledge that is simply not true. There is no cleric or lay person in ministry or employment in the Diocese of Rockford with a credible accusation against him or her. At no time during the 4 ½ years-long investigation by the Attorney General's office was the Diocese ever informed that the Attorney General holds this view. In fact, the Attorney General's report identifies 160 priests it maintains should be on public lists but are not. However, the Attorney General reports that none of those 160 priests is or was in any way affiliated with the Diocese of Rockford. (page 671)

In November of 2018, the Rockford Diocese publicly disclosed the identities of all clergy against whom a substantiated allegation of childhood sexual abuse has been made to this Diocese, for the period of the Diocese's 1908 inception to the present. The Rockford Diocese is confident in the truth and transparency of the list, which remains on our website and is updated as necessary; and the Diocese will continue to disclose sexual abuse by members of the clergy. Six diocesan priests, one diocesan permanent deacon, and 17 religious order clerics are currently identified on the list.

Now, as the Attorney General has released the final report on this investigation, Bishop Malloy reminds the clergy and faithful as well as the community served by our 105 parishes that our vigilance, training and promise to protect all those in our care is not contingent upon nor does it end with this investigation. The Diocese of Rockford's commitment and promise to protect began well before this Attorney General's inquiry and will continue forever after.

Bishop Malloy states the following:

Our promise to protect: To illustrate that promise to protect, allow me to recall the history of the Diocese of Rockford's protocols for the protection of children and vulnerable adults and, in that way, demonstrate that our commitment has been longstanding and remains ever present. In 1986, the

Diocese implemented a procedure for the responsible handling of allegations of inappropriate conduct against clergy members, including allegations of sexual abuse of minors and sexual misconduct with adults. The procedure entailed the creation of an Intervention Team comprised of professionals, and included a mechanism for prompt removal of the accused, professional assessment of the priest, and compassionate outreach to the alleged victim, including paying for counseling. That procedure was developed into a formal policy in 1987, and has been revised over time to the present (Diocese of Rockford Norms for the Prohibition of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Sexual Misconduct with Adults: Education, Prevention, Assistance to Victims, and Procedures for Determination of Fitness for Ministry/Employment).

Beginning in 1995, the Rockford Diocese has trained its employees, clergy, and volunteers in detection, prevention, and required reporting of suspected child abuse, including their obligations as mandated reporters of suspected abuse and neglect. With the implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002, the Diocese of Rockford has trained all youth enrolled in its elementary and secondary schools and religious education programs in age-appropriate child safety and reporting of any conduct that makes them uncomfortable. All lesson plans have been made available to parents and publicly published on our website. These programs have been revised over time as new and better ways of instruction have been made available.

Since 2002, all clergy, employees, and volunteers having contact with minors must pass a criminal background check, participate in safe environment training, and agree to abide by the Diocese's safe environment policies which include the mandated reporting of all suspected child sexual abuse to DCFS and the Diocese. Even our volunteers, who are not considered mandated reporters by law, are required to agree to adhere to the reporting obligations of mandated reporters.

Our commitment to improve: We continuously work toward making our parishes, schools, and other facilities the safest environments for all those we serve, with special care for children and vulnerable adults: the elderly, the mentally and physically challenged. Written information on how to report allegations of abuse has been available in our churches, parish offices, and schools since 2003. Our Code of Pastoral Conduct, implemented in 2003, governs the conduct of all clergy, and counselors who work for our Catholic Charities and in our schools.

In 2011, the Diocese implemented its Social Media and Technology Policy, containing rules for the proper communication by our clergy, employees and volunteers with minors, and restrictions on "friending" and one-on-one messages, texts, or emails.

In 2014, the Diocese implemented its Guidelines for Those Working with Youth which sets forth conduct rules and ratios for seminarians, clergy, employees, and adult volunteers working with minors during group activities, in transportation of minors, and in supervising minors both on and away from Diocesan premises.

We Cooperate and Communicate: The Diocese of Rockford notifies law enforcement of allegations of abuse that it receives, without regard to whether the criminal statute of limitations has expired or the alleged victim is an adult at the time of the reporting. One such letter in our files dates back to 1988. We have cooperated with police and sheriffs' departments, states attorneys' offices, child advocacy centers, and federal agents in investigations of this subject. The Diocese also publicly informs parishioners and school families of the Diocese's receipt of a credible allegation of inappropriate conduct by a member of the clergy toward a minor, and of that clergyman's removal from ministry pending

investigation. The public can be assured that in the Rockford Diocese there is no cleric or lay person in ministry or employment with a credible accusation against him or her.

In November 2018, the Diocese published a list of credibly accused diocesan clergy, as well as clergy of religious orders or other dioceses who served in the geographic boundaries of the Diocese. The list includes the date of ordination, the Diocese's response to the report of abuse, and the cleric's current status. Changes to that list recommended by the Attorney General's Office were completed in 2019. That list is updated as necessary and updates are announced in the diocese's weekly Catholic newspaper.

In regard to our website, we also feature prominently at the top left our website a large Safe Environment badge that takes the reader to our safe environment webpage containing our policies, list of credibly accused clergy, as well as important information on how to make a report of abuse, and the steps the Diocese follows once a report of abuse is received.

The Diocese of Rockford also provided the Attorney General with all of its policies and procedures for reporting, prevention and outreach to victims in place and updated since 1986.

Our serious commitment and constant vigilance began long before this inquiry and will continue ever after so that we may always protect those who are most vulnerable among us, and assist victims and survivors in finding some peace and healing from the harm they experienced.