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Activist and theologian Fr Phil Linden, SSJ, accused of child sex abuse

The former chair of theology at Xavier University of Louisiana was newly listed in June as having been accused in the Archdiocese of Baltimore in 2020.

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Fr Phillip Linden Jr., SSJ, a retired priest newly listed on the Archdiocese of Baltimore's list of individuals accused of child sex abuse. (Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Port Arthur, Texas/Facebook)

The Archdiocese of Baltimore has released an updated list of individuals accused of child sex abuse, adding for the first time the name of Fr Phillip Linden Jr., a retired African-American Josephite priest known for his work as a theologian and activist.

The update follows the April release of a redacted report from Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, himself a Black Catholic who called the actions of the Church “systemic” and “depraved.”

Linden, a Texas native who has not been in active ministry for several years, was not listed in the report and last served in the Archdiocese of New Orleans as a priest-in-residence at St. Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Mission.

“The Archdiocese of Baltimore received an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor involving Fr. Philip Linden, S.S.J., a Josephite priest, while he was serving at St. Francis Xavier Church in East Baltimore in the 1970s,” the Baltimore Archdiocese said on June 30.

“The allegation was reported to law enforcement and to Fr. Linden’s religious community.”

According to *The Baltimore Sun*, the allegation was first received and reported in August 2020, after which the archdiocese began conducting an internal investigation.

Linden, who turned 82 in June, was ordained for the Josephites in 1969 and served in Baltimore in his first assignment as a priest, later serving there as a hospice chaplain. While in Maryland, Linden made a name for himself among the Catholic Left alongside noted activist-priest and fellow Josephite Fr Philip Berrigan—with whom Linden and others protested the Vietnam War and other causes, often leading to arrests and court action.

Linden remained in pastoral work in Baltimore until 1986, when he transitioned to an academic career in philosophy and theology, studying for two doctorate degrees in Louvain, Belgium. He later served as chair of the theology department at Xavier University of Theology, a division which he helped to found.

Neither the Josephites nor the university immediately responded to a request for comment from *BCM*.

In a separate press release, the Archdiocese of Baltimore noted that Linden was among 39 individuals added this month to their list of accused, the result of a recommendation from the Maryland attorney general and that of Archbishop William Lori to expand the criteria for the list.

“The board—an interfaith group that meets several times a year and includes experts from law enforcement, health care, academia, social work and the legal community—endorsed the Archbishop’s recommendation as an important step to further the local church’s commitment to transparency and healing,” the archdiocese said.

The Baltimore list was first published in 2002, reportedly one of the first in the country for the Catholic Church. The archdiocese says that the “overwhelming majority” of the new names added in June fell under the updated criteria—which includes religious sisters, deacons, individuals never assigned to ministry in the archdiocese, and those first accused of abuse after death and in the form of a “single, uncorroborated allegation.”

The Josephites, to which Linden belonged, work specifically with African Americans and were founded in Baltimore in 1893. Linden is the third member to be included on the Baltimore list of accused, following Fr Alfred Dean and the late Auxiliary Bishop [Carl A. Fisher](#) of Los Angeles.

Two other priests on the list studied at the Josephite seminary but were not members of the community at the time they were accused of abuse.

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