

**STATEMENT FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE ON THE RELEASE OF
NAMES OF DIOCESAN PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS PRIESTS AND DEACONS
CREDIBLY ACCUSED OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS SINCE THE
EARLY 1950'S. July 1, 2019**

On Monday, July 1, Bishop Tobin publicly released the names of clergy credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. This report reflects the consistent efforts of the Church to ensure transparency above and beyond civil law requirements. It is another step forward by the Diocese of Providence toward safety, healing, and justice for victims and the community at large.

The crime of sexual abuse is devastating whenever it occurs and is a scourge upon our society. Sexual abuse is especially horrific when it is perpetrated against the most innocent among us. When this abuse is caused by a person meant to represent Christ, the Good Shepherd, the damage becomes all the more profound. Such abuse cries out to Heaven for justice. How could this happen in the Church, the Bride of Christ? How could men who have consecrated themselves to the Lord commit grave acts against the most innocent among us? How could our response at times seem so inadequate? In the midst of such evil, sufficient responses often fail to satisfy the deepest questions within the human heart. Only Jesus Christ can provide the answer. He, who never failed to express his closeness to the "little ones," came to set us free, to heal and to redeem us. He remains the only answer to the mystery of evil in our world. He took evil upon himself, the unblemished Lamb, when he bore the Cross for our sins. Christ is our life and our hope—there is no other.

The Church continues along her path in salvation history keenly aware that only with her Bridegroom will she reach the eternal destiny made ready for her in Heaven. In order to do so, her ministers must stand before the Lord, who said to his disciples, "Whatsoever you did for the least of these, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). Without discounting the failings of the past, we move forward in hope of a better future. The Diocese of Providence continues that commitment today.

Since 2002, the Catholic Church in the United States has implemented one of the most robust child protection programs in the country since 2002, signaling countless efforts to protect children and ensure safety, justice, and healing for victims. Even before 2002, the Diocese of Providence has been a leader in this movement. Over 25 years ago, the Diocese established the Office of Education and Compliance to investigate claims of sexual abuse and oversee safe environment policies for all parish, school, and diocesan entities. The office is currently headed by a retired Rhode Island State Police Major and Commander of the detective

division with 23 years of experience. Each and every claim of sexual abuse of a minor—regardless of credibility—is sent promptly to law enforcement. Even when statutes of limitations or other factors inhibit police from pursuing criminal charges, or when the allegation does not meet the level of a crime, the Office of Compliance still conducts its own investigation as a measure of additional protection and transparency. The results of these investigations are presented to the Bishop’s Child and Youth Protection Advisory Board, made up mostly of lay persons and experts in the fields of criminal justice, psychology, and child protective services. The Board, in turn, presents its findings and recommendations to the Bishop. If an accusation is deemed credible, the person in question is immediately and permanently removed from public ministry.

The list of credibly accused clergy is just one more step the Bishop has taken to provide accountability to his flock, and help those who have suffered so unjustly journey toward healing. The names of those clergy credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor are already well-known to the public. Rather than providing new information, this list confirms what the Diocese has already shared with law enforcement. While the shameful history of sexual abuse in the Church can never be undone, it is hopefully comforting to know that the vast majority of cases in the United States where clerical sexual abuse or misconduct took place were reported to have happened between the 1960’s and the 1980’s. In the Diocese of Providence, the overwhelming majority of claims date back several decades.

No list will ever make-up for the innocence lost by victims of abuse; but hopefully this is one more step to ensure that victims receive the justice and healing which is due to them. As Pope Francis recently wrote in his landmark *motu proprio, Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, “In order that the phenomenon of sexual abuse, in all its forms, never happens again, a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church, so that personal sanctity and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the full credibility of the Gospel message and the effectiveness of the Church’s mission.”