

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE DISCLOSURE OF NAMES OF CLERGY FOR WHOM ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF A MINOR HAVE BEEN ADMITTED, SUBSTANTIATED, OR DETERMINED OR CONSIDERED TO BE CREDIBLE

1. *What if I or someone I know has been sexually abused by a priest, deacon, or other personnel of the Church?*

If you have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused by *anyone*, please first contact the civil authorities by calling the Arkansas Child Abuse Hotline (800-482-5964). If the abuser is a priest, deacon, or member of Church personnel, then please call or email our diocesan contacts: Dcn. Matthew Glover, Chancellor for Canonical Affairs (501-664-0340, ext. 361; mglover@dolr.org) or Drs. George or Sherry Simon, Victims Assistance Coordinators (501-664-0340, ext. 425).

2. *Why is this disclosure being made now?*

With the release of the report of the grand jury in Pennsylvania, people began to ask about the existence of such cases in Arkansas. Bishop Taylor believes people have the right to know, so he asked for a review of diocesan files of the priests who have served in Arkansas during the last 70 years, and he is now making the findings of this preliminary review public.

3. *Why was this disclosure not made earlier?*

Actually, when he was Bishop of Little Rock, now-Archbishop Sartain publicly disclosed similar numbers in 2004 following the 2002 clergy sex abuse crisis in Boston, but without releasing the names of known abusers over what was then the previous 50 years (*see* “A Pastoral report to the people of the diocese,” *Arkansas Catholic* (Feb. 21, 2004)). The reason our numbers in 2018 are so similar is there have been no further cases of abuse of minors reported to have occurred since then. We continue to receive credible allegations of abuse, but so far these have all been for crimes committed prior to 2002.

4. *How did the bishops of the Diocese of Little Rock handle allegations received in the past?*

Archbishop Sartain (2000-2006), Msgr. Hebert (administrator 2006-2008) and Bishop Taylor (2008 to present) acted decisively whenever allegations were received—and all verified cases of offenses committed since 2002 have involved misconduct with adults or imprudent acts that did not rise to the level of sexual abuse (i.e., not crimes against children). The way allegations were handled by Bishop McDonald (1972-2000) and Bishop Fletcher (1946-1972) is currently under review, especially since they served prior to the 2002 implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, and most of the known cases occurred during their tenure.

5. *Who made the decision to publish this list?*

The decision was made by Bishop Taylor, after consultation with and recommendation by the Diocesan Review Board.

6. *How was this list developed?*

Bishop Taylor asked for an internal investigation and review of all personnel files of clergy whom we already knew or whom we suspected had been credibly accused of child sexual abuse. That information was then shared with the Diocesan Review Board, which recommended its publication.

7. *What additional investigative efforts is the Diocese undertaking?*

The diocese has hired Dr. Kathleen McChesney and her firm, Kinsale Management Consulting, to conduct an independent review of Diocesan files. That process will occur over the course of this fall, and we hope to make those results public in December. The Diocese will also continue its own internal review and investigation of all clergy personnel files. The Diocese will present the results of that information to the Diocesan Review Board, which will then make recommendations to Bishop Taylor on whether there are additional credible allegations to be published. This list will then be updated with any additional credible allegations.

8. *Will the Attorney General's office or other civil authorities be investigating?*

The Diocese has already reached out to the Arkansas Attorney General and has communicated this list and our plans for additional external investigations by Kinsale Management Consulting, as well as continued internal investigations. The Diocese has expressed to the Attorney General that it is prepared to cooperate fully with any investigation that she might request.

9. *Does this list contain all names of clergy who have been credibly accused of child sexual abuse?*

The list contains all the names of those clergy whom we have been able to identify to date. This is a preliminary list, based on our initial preliminary review and examination of files. Over the course of this fall, Kinsale Management Consulting will conduct an independent review of *all* clergy personnel files in conjunction with our own ongoing internal review, and this list will be updated accordingly at the conclusion of that investigation.

10. *What help does the Diocese of Little Rock provide to known victims?*

The Diocese automatically covers the cost of all counseling and psychological care sought by any victim, including their immediate family members, if it is desired. It also covers other expenses and needs on a case-by-case basis, including needs that are not necessarily directly related to the abuse the victim suffered. In addition, in every case, the diocese offers a pastoral meeting to apologize on behalf of the church and to assist in the healing process.

11. *In addition to offering pastoral care and payment for counseling, what other steps does the diocese take when an allegation of abuse of a minor is received?*

If there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused, law enforcement is notified first. The diocese cooperates fully with any law enforcement investigation. At the conclusion of any law enforcement investigation, or if no criminal investigation is possible, then the diocese conducts its own investigation, including the possible hiring of an independent investigator. The results of the investigation(s) are presented to the Diocesan Review Board for a determination of the credibility of the allegation and to make a recommendation to the Bishop. The Bishop arrives at a decision based upon the investigation and the Board's recommendation. If the allegation is determined to be credible, the accused is immediately removed from ministry. If the accused is a priest, the Bishop then coordinates with the Vatican in conducting a full canonical trial—and if that trial substantiates the allegation, then he is placed on permanent prayer and penance or laicized in a process through the Vatican.

12. *What does the term “determined to be credible” mean?*

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by Church personnel is received, the first step is to determine whether the incident(s) could have taken place as described. For example, if an allegation is received that a particular priest abused a minor in a particular parish in a particular year—but that priest was not at that parish or was not in the country at that time or was not even ordained yet at that time—then this particular allegation could not be accurate. If, on the other hand, the incident(s) could have taken place as described, the diocese conducts an investigation as described above, and the Review Board (whose members act as independent advisors to the bishop) makes a recommendation as to whether the accusation is credible. In arriving at this determination, they take into account a number of factors including whether there are similar allegations, a credible statement of the complainant, corroborating evidence or testimony, and the accused's admission of guilt, if applicable.

13. *What does the term “considered to be credible” mean?*

There are some allegations on this list that did not come to the Diocese's attention until after the priest had already died, sometimes many years after that priest died, thus limiting the Diocese's ability to conduct a thorough investigation and to give the priest an opportunity to respond. In such situations, a “determination” of credibility may not be possible. Nevertheless, in some cases, based on a number of different factors (e.g., multiple similar allegations, the credibility of the accusers, and general information on file), the Diocese considers some such allegations to be credible, and has offered pastoral care and counseling to the victims.

14. *What does “permanent prayer and penance” status mean?*

A priest may be placed on permanent prayer and penance through a canonical process authorized by the Vatican. This status applies to a priest permanently removed from all public ministry while still remaining a priest. He is not permitted to administer sacraments, wear clerical attire, or present himself publicly as a priest. He is asked to pray for healing and to do penance on

behalf of those who have been abused. A priest in this category is regularly visited by a compliance monitor with professional expertise in monitoring of this type.

15. *What does “laicized” mean?*

A “laicized” priest or deacon has been removed from the clerical state and returned to the status of a lay person. He is no longer considered or treated as a priest or deacon. “Laicization” is a canonical process through the Vatican.

16. *What is the definition of a minor for purposes of this list?*

Anyone under the age of 18 at the time the abuse occurred.

17. *Do clergy on this list receive financial support?*

None of the clergy on this list receive any financial support from the diocese. However, even after a priest is laicized, depending on the circumstances the Vatican may require that the diocese help ensure that the priest’s basic necessities are provided for (e.g., health insurance or small retirement support).

18. *How much has the diocese paid in settlements and victim support over the years, and where has that money come from?*

The Diocese will continue to analyze these numbers over the course of this fall, along with the help of Kinsale Management Consulting. These figures will be made public once that report and analysis is finalized.

19. *What steps has the diocese taken to prevent sexual abuse of minors by church personnel?*

The Diocese of Little Rock has a Safe Environment Program with training, policies, and procedures designed to prevent and recognize signs of sexual abuse of minors (<https://www.dolr.org/safe-environment>). The Diocese conducts criminal background checks of clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers who have routine contact with minors. And these individuals are also required to undergo training to recognize and respond to potential signs of sexual abuse of minors. Finally, in all of our Catholic schools and parish religious education programs, minors are given age-appropriate education so they can know how to help create safe environments for themselves, and what they can do when they feel that a certain environment is not safe.