News



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A last-minute round of legal maneuvering to keep some names from appearing in a grand jury report detailing a months-long investigation of clergy sex abuse claims in six Pennsylvania dioceses may have kept the document from being made public Aug. 8 -- the earliest date given for its possible release.

On Aug. 8, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette newspaper reported that confidential sources said "more than one" person filed a challenge under court seal. Some of those named in the report had been given until Aug. 7 to file a challenge, objecting to their inclusion in the report because they have not had the legal opportunity to defend themselves. They are scheduled to have a hearing with the court in September.

Pennsylvania has until Aug. 14 to release the report, which is said to detail some seven decades of claims of sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy and a

reported cover-up by officials in the dioceses of Harrisburg, Allentown, Scranton, Pittsburgh, Greensburg and Erie, according to the Pennsylvania's Office of the Attorney General.

In July, the state's Supreme Court said the grand jury investigation led by Pennsylvania's Attorney General Josh Shapiro had identified over 300 "predator priests."

Those who object to being named may have their names redacted, or blacked out, when the document is made public. A grand jury does not determine guilt or innocence, but whether there may be enough evidence or probable cause to support a criminal charge.

Though the report was not released Aug. 8, The Associated Press reported Aug. 3 that a court filing made public that same day showed an excerpt of what's to come.

The AP quoted the excerpt of the report as saying: "The main thing was not to help children, but to avoid 'scandal," speaking of church leaders and other officials in the dioceses. The report also says victims were "brushed aside," with concern being placed on the protecting of the alleged abusers and the institution of the church, the AP news story said.

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Some of the dioceses involved have released the names of those who have been accused of sexual abuse in their localities. One of them, the Diocese of Harrisburg, updated its public list Aug. 6, adding the name of an accused priest to it after receiving "additional information" since the first time it made the information public Aug. 1.

"We again emphasize that this is a list of accusations; we did not make assessments of credibility or guilt in creating this list," a statement from the diocese said.

Others, such as the Diocese of Scranton, have said they will make public a list of those who have been "credibly accused" after the release of the grand jury report.

Not all who are accused of sexual abuse or of covering it up in the report are priests. Some on the lists released by dioceses are deacons, some are seminarians, teachers

or other church workers, and some are no longer alive. Some are accused of being in possession of child pornography, others of inappropriate touching, kissing, soliciting a child for sex, but most are listed as "sexually abusing a child."

The development comes as the Catholic Church in the United States finds itself grappling with the late July resignation from the College of Cardinals a beloved and respected retired prelate, now-Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, 88, of Washington, following decades-old allegations that he sexually abused seminarians and at least two minors. He has been removed from public ministry, as of June 20, and is awaiting a Vatican trial.