News



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Washington — February 14, 2019

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Dioceses in the state of New Jersey made public Feb. 13 the names of priests whom they said had been "credibly accused" of sexual abuse of minors, and one of the names is former U.S. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick.

The former U.S. cardinal's name appears in the list from the Archdiocese of Newark with a footnote that says McCarrick "has been included on the list based on the findings of the Archdiocese of New York that allegations of abuse of a minor against then Father McCarrick were credible and substantiated."

The longest list is from the Archdiocese of Newark, which lists 63 priests among the total of 188, which includes clergy from the dioceses of Trenton, Paterson, Camden and Metuchen. The Diocese of Metuchen also notes in its disclosure that its first bishop, then-Bishop McCarrick, is "currently involved in a church trial by the Holy See for the abuse of a minor when he was a priest of the Archdiocese of New York."

"The revelations of clergy sexual abuse of minors throughout this past year have provoked feelings of shock, anger, shame, and deep sorrow throughout our Catholic community," Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark said in a news release accompanying the list from his archdiocese.

"Victims, their families, and the faithful are rightfully outraged over the abuses perpetrated against minors. Additionally, the failure of church leadership to immediately remove suspected abusers from ministry is particularly reprehensible," he said.

Newark's list was based on records dating back to 1940, he wrote, and all names were reported to law enforcement agencies. Many of the accusations from the New Jersey dioceses are from decades ago and many of the men are listed as deceased.

"I wish to express my genuine sorrow to the victims and their families who were so profoundly betrayed," said Tobin. "On behalf of our church, I beg your forgiveness."

Metuchen Bishop James Checchio in a letter published Feb. 13 on his diocese's website said that "abuse at the hands of trusted people, in these cases those who are meant to be spiritual fathers, has done untold damage to those victimized."

"Abuse gets power from silence and avoidance," he wrote. "I believe that the measures we are now taking are part of the continuing process to build a healthy and transparent culture of life in our parishes and institutions. I pray, too, that the efforts we make as Catholic Christians to protect children and prevent abuse, will resound in all areas of society – families, schools, youth and sporting organizations – in which children depend on trustworthy adults to guide them and care for their overall well-being."

Trenton Bishop David O'Connell, in publishing names of priests accused in his diocese, wrote that "this preliminary list will be updated as more information becomes available. I do this with the greatest sadness and with a heavy heart."

All dioceses have approved and support an independent compensation program to pay eligible victims who were sexually abused by clergy while minors in their localities. The fund is overseen by Kenneth Feinberg and Camille Biros, who are working on similar programs in the dioceses of New York and Pennsylvania.

"This program will allow those sexually abused as minors by clergy to seek compensation in a compassionate, expeditious and transparent manner," wrote Tobin. "While no degree of financial compensation can adequately address the suffering endured, we want this to be a genuine expression of our remorse and our desire to comfort and compensate those victimized by this abuse."

He added that the disclosure of names "is not an endpoint in our process."

"It is an expression of our commitment to protecting our children, and a new level of transparency in the way we report and respond to allegations of abuse. We must protect our children, first, foremost, and always," he said.

In releasing the names, prelates in the state's dioceses said they wanted to encourage greater transparency in a path toward healing. They encouraged additional victims to come forward.

"Why release this list?" wrote Bishop Arthur Serratelli of Paterson. "The most important reason is that we recognize the great harm done by persons who were supposed to represent Christ to the world and instead committed heinous acts against minors."

Camden Bishop Dennis Sullivan said in his statement releasing the list from his diocese that sexual abuse of minors by priests is "the darkest stain on the Catholic Church in the last century."

"Unfortunately, we have all learned that this 'filth,' as Pope Benedict correctly called it, was more pervasive than anyone imagined, or even thought possible," he wrote.

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