News





Virginia Bishops Michael Burbidge of Arlington and Barry Knestout of Richmond are pictured in a combination photo. On Feb. 13, 2019, the two dioceses released lists of priests with credible and substantiated allegations of sexual abuse against a minor. (CNS/Bob Roller)

by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Arlington, Va. — February 15, 2019

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Virginia's two Catholic bishops, Arlington Bishop Michael Burbidge and Richmond Bishop Barry Knestout, released lists Feb. 13 of the clergy credibly accused of child sex abuse in their respective dioceses.

In Arlington, Burbidge said releasing the list fulfills a commitment he made to publish these names "in the hope that providing such a list might help some victims and survivors of clergy sexual abuse to find further healing and consolation."

"The publishing of this list will bring a range of emotions for all of us," he said in a letter to Catholics of the diocese that accompanied the list. "Embarrassment, frustration, anger and hurt are all natural emotions to experience in a time such as this. I share those emotions."

The complete list of 16 names can be found on the diocesan website, www.arlingtondiocese.org. The list of priests credibly accused dates back to when the diocese was established in 1974.

In an open letter published with the Richmond diocesan list, Knestout said: "To the victims and to all affected by the pain of sexual abuse, our response will always be about what we are doing, not simply what we have done. We will seek not just to be healed but will always be seeking healing. We will seek not just to be reconciled but will always be seeking reconciliation."

The diocese names 42 priests who have "a credible and substantiated allegation of sexual abuse against a minor." The list and a question-and-answer sheet is available on the diocesan website, www.richmonddiocese.org.

The release of the names fulfills a promise Knestout made in his pastoral letter, "From Tragedy to Hope," issued Sept. 14, 2018.

The same day he celebrated the Diocese of Richmond’s first Mass of atonement for victims of abuse and apologized to victims of clergy sexually abuse, likening church leadership to Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees.

"Leadership was not listening to the cries of those who had suffered this abuse, who were blind to it, and who were often like Jesus' own condemnation of the Pharisees as whitewashed sepulchers – clean on the outside, but full of a dead man’s bones

within," he said in his homily.

In his Feb. 13 letter, Burbidge renewed his commitment to implementing the policies and protocols established by the U.S. bishops' "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People."

"These have proven to be effective in preventing abuse, standardizing reporting procedures to legal authorities and investigating allegations of sexual abuse of minors," he said.

To the victims and survivors of sexual abuse by clergy, he said he remains "open to meeting with you and hearing your stories. Having met with numerous victims and survivors of sexual abuse, both in group settings and in individual meetings, I continue to be inspired by your strength and your resolve."

"I am deeply sorry for what has happened to you. You can be assured and confident of my ongoing pastoral care," Burbidge added. "Through the mercy of God, may all who have suffered in the Diocese of Arlington as a result of clergy sexual abuse receive healing."

"May Mary, mother of the church, pray for us that we go forward under God’s guidance toward a future in which all of God’s children are safe and secure," he concluded.

The Diocese of Arlington covers about 6,500 square miles in central and northern Virginia. The Diocese of Richmond covers the rest of the state – about 36,700 square miles.

Advertisement