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Allouez, Wis. — March 1, 2019

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Green Bay Bishop David Ricken announced in a letter to parishioners of St. Francis Xavier Cathedral that former Bishop Aloysius Wycislo's name will be removed from the Cathedral Center, a facility located north of the cathedral.

The 11,000-square-foot addition to St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, which includes the Diocesan Museum on the lower level, was dedicated by former Green Bay Bishop David Zubik June 24, 2004.

In a Feb. 23 letter to parishioners, Ricken said the removal of Wycislo's name from the building is part of the diocese's response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis.

"Let me make it very clear," he said, that the prelate, who was Green Bay's bishop from 1968 until his retirement in 1983, was never himself "accused of any kind of sexual misconduct." He explained that removing his name is a response to his failure to adequately address clergy abuse claims. Wycislo died in 2005.

As the church "is grappling again with the pain of past clergy abuse (and) as we consider what more we can do to bring about healing," Ricken wrote, "I have come

to a decision regarding Bishop Aloysius Wycislo and the Cathedral Center that bears his name. With the release of the disclosure list, it is clear that a majority of the problems and challenges in the Diocese of Green Bay occurred during the 1960s and '70s."

He continued: "In reviewing publicly available records and articles regarding allegations against priests during Bishop Wycislo's tenure, I have come to the conclusion that it does not serve the interests of the diocese or the Cathedral for Bishop Wycislo's name to remain connected with the St. Francis Xavier Cathedral Center."

Ricken said that "Bishop Wycislo's many contributions to the diocese, particularly in implementing the reforms of Vatican II, are laudable, but the decision on his name "allows those members of our community who may have concerns surrounding Wycislo's reported handling of clergy complaints to move forward on a path to healing."

Ricken said the facility should now be called the Cathedral Center.

"I hope this action will continue the healing process for those who have been hurt," he said.

In preparing for the announcement, Ricken said he notified the cathedral's leadership, as well as the major donors who supported the construction of the center. "In the coming days, you will see signage removed from the exterior and interior of the building and the new name begin to be used," he said.

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"I know this may come as a shock, and for that I apologize. Removal of Bishop Wycislo's name from the center will help the healing process begin for so many who have suffered for so long," said Ricken. "I ask for your support and your prayers as the parish community of St. Francis Xavier Cathedral turns another page in its long history in the Diocese of Green Bay. I know that together, and with God, we will move forward in positive ways."

On Jan. 17, the Diocese of Green Bay released the names of 47 diocesan priests with substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of a minor since 1906. Of the 47 priests,

23 were found to have had substantiated allegations sometime between 1968 and 1983, the years Wycislo served as bishop. He died on Oct. 11, 2005, at age 97.

In announcing the removal of the bishop's name from the Cathedral Center, Ricken also emphasized that he continues to implement steps to accountability that he proposed last fall.

The decision in Green Bay about removal of a former bishop's name from a church structure follows similar actions in other dioceses.

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, removed the name of former Bishop Michael Bransfield from the gymnasium at Central Catholic High School in Wheeling in February.

In August 2018, the Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, removed the names of every bishop since 1947 from every building and room in the diocese named in their honor. Harrisburg Bishop Ronald Gainer said the action was taken because his predecessors failed to protect children from sexual abuse by priests.

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Lucero is news and information manager at The Compass, newspaper of the Diocese of Green Bay.