News



In this Feb. 19, 2019, file photo, from front to back, Samuel Aquila, archbishop of the Denver diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, Very Rev. Randy Dollins, vicar general, and Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser listen about the plan to have a former federal prosecutor review the sexual abuse files of Colorado's Roman Catholic dioceses at a news conference in Denver. Nine more Catholic priests, including one well known for helping Denver's homeless, have been identified as sexually abusing children in Colorado in a follow-up report released Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020, by Weiser. (AP File/David Zalubowski)

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Nine more Catholic priests, including one well known for helping Denver's homeless, were found to have sexually abused children in an updated report on sex abuse in Colorado's Catholic churches released Dec. 1 by state Attorney General Phil Weiser.

The late Rev. Charles B. Woodrich, known as Fr. Woody, and the other eight were not previously identified in an initial report released in October 2019 based on a review of church records in the Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo dioceses under an agreement between Weiser's office and the church.

Six of the newly named priests are dead while the others were previously removed from the priesthood or retired. A day shelter for the homeless had been named in honor of Woodrich several years after his death in 1991. But his name was removed from the Haven of Hope's name earlier this year after its leaders learned of the allegations against him, board President Don Gallegos said in a statement.

The latest report looked at abuse reported to Weiser's office or a reparations program funded by the church since the release of the first report. It found evidence to back up claims of the abuse of 46 more children by a total of 25 priests, 16 of whom were named in last year's report as having substantiated claims of sex abuse made against them. In all, 212 children were found to have been abused by 52 diocesan priests between 1950 and 1999, but mostly in the 1960s.

Both reviews, conducted by former U.S. Attorney Bob Troyer, did not look at alleged abuse by priests from religious orders or those visiting from other dioceses.



In this Monday, Oct. 7, 2019, file photo, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser speaks during a news conference in Denver. (AP File/David Zalubowski)

The review was launched after a Pennsylvania grand jury alleged in 2018 that more than 300 priests had abused at least 1,000 children over seven decades there, raising questions about the scope of abuse in other states. Unlike Pennsylvania, Colorado does not give the power to convene a grand jury to its attorney general, so Weiser and the church agreed to a voluntary review of its records. The church also established and funded a reconciliation and reparations program to provide payments to people who had been abused by priests. It was administered by Kenneth Feinberg and Camille Biros, who oversaw victims' compensation for the 2012 Aurora theater shooting and the Sept. 11 attacks and also ran similar programs for those abused by clergy in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and California.

The program has authorized the payment of $7.3 million to 79 people, according to its final report on Dec. 1.

In a joint statement, Denver Archbishop Samuel Aquila, Denver Bishop Jorge Rodriguez, Colorado Springs Bishop Michael Sheridan and Pueblo Bishop Stephen Berg said they hoped Troyer's review and the reparations process have provided justice and healing for survivors.

"We remain heart-broken by the pain they have endured, we again offer our deepest apologies for the past failures of the Church, and we promise that we will always

pray for continued healing for them and their families," they said.

The church agreed to make changes recommended by Troyer, including providing victim-assistance coordinators and encouraging people to report abuse directly to law enforcement. The church's reputation would be jeopardized if it did not follow through on their commitments, Weiser said.

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