



DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

16 Nov 2020

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

On Tuesday, November 10, 2020, the Vatican released a long-awaited report on the investigation of Theodore McCarrick, a former cardinal and bishop. The report is over 450 pages long and can be found on the Vatican's website at <https://bit.ly/3kqK7jw>. Pope Francis took seriously the allegations of abuse committed by Theodore McCarrick and he was laicized on February 16, 2019. This action and the promulgation of "*Vos estis lux mundi*" echoes the seriousness of the Church's accountability and transparency of allegations against, bishops, priests and religious regarding abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. Such criminal and heinous behavior is never acceptable within our Church as we promote a safe environment in all our gathering spaces

In the past 6 years serving as Bishop of the Diocese of Fairbanks, I have traveled to all 46 parishes. I have had the extremely sorrowful and heart wrenching experience of listening to stories of individuals who were abused by clergy or Church personnel during their childhood or adolescent years. Many of these victims are in their mid to later adult years, the horror of this abuse is still alive in their memory today. I have apologized to them firsthand and extend a sincere apology to any person ever abused by clergy or Church personnel. If you have ever been abused by clergy or Church personnel and have not reported this, please contact your local law enforcement. You may also contact our Victim Assistance Coordinator, Cynthia Klepaski, at (907) 750-1132 or cklepaski@cbna.org. We will report it to law enforcement and make every effort to assist you.

In March 2010, the Diocese of Fairbanks emerged from bankruptcy brought on by allegations of sexual abuse. A non-monetary term of the bankruptcy plan required that the Diocese post on its website the names of all individuals against whom a complaint of corporal punishment or sexual abuse had been filed by one or more individuals. This included priests, religious, lay employees, and volunteers—in short, anyone associated with the Church. The list includes admitted, proven, or credibly accused perpetrators of corporal punishment or sexual abuse. There are 46 individuals listed on the website.

Today, the Diocese has a responsive and transparent process for handling any sexual abuse claims. The Diocese unequivocally condemns abuse of any kind, for abuse violates the dignity of the human person. The Diocese takes claims of abuse seriously, turns over evidence to law enforcement immediately, and cooperates fully with investigations of abuse. The Diocese also offers to assist survivors to help them move toward justice and healing. According to the confirmed bankruptcy plan, the Diocese only needs to maintain the website through 2020. In the interest of transparency, I have recognized the need to continue maintaining this website; however, the list on the website included only names of individuals accused in lawsuits or proofs of claim at the time of the bankruptcy. I felt that the process used to create the disclosure list at the time of bankruptcy did not include a thorough review of the records of the Diocese. To remedy this gap, in October of 2019, I hired Dr. Kathleen McChesney and her firm, Kinsale Management Consulting, to conduct an independent review of Diocesan files. The names of those identified in this review were then provided to the Diocesan

Review Board at two different meetings which concluded in May 2020. The board recommended to me which names should be added to the list; I approved all recommended names and they have been added to the listing of admitted, proven or credibly accused perpetrators of sexual abuse. This letter was briefed and discussed at the Diocesan Review Board on 12 Nov 2020. Due to COVID-19 and the methodical care required for this process, we are now ready to post this new listing.

We as priests, religious and Church personnel are committed to creating a Safe Environment for all to come and worship in our Churches. We continue to ask God's forgiveness and that of the people of God for times we failed. We will continue to pray for survivors and their healing. For those that have allowed me to walk on that sacred ground of their life, I am grateful and continue to carry them in my prayers and Mass intentions asking for ongoing healing through the intercession of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Sincerely in Christ,



†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska
Diocese of Fairbanks



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