

Diocese of Las Cruces Statement on Lawsuit Naming Fathers Joseph Anderson and David Bentley

Las Cruces, NM (Wednesday, July 19, 2018) – The Diocese of Las Cruces learned on Monday, July 16, 2018, that it has been listed as a defendant—along with Holy Family Parish, the Servants of the Paraclete, and the Benedictine Monks, Inc of Wisconsin—in a recently filed civil lawsuit that alleges sexual abuse of a minor from 1994 to 2001 by Father Joseph Anderson and Father David Bentley. Father Bentley departed the Diocese in April, 2002, and Father Anderson died in May, 2002.

Although the Diocese has not yet been served with the lawsuit and thus cannot comment on its claims, it does state most emphatically that the sexual abuse of a minor is an abhorrent crime that is intolerable. The fact that some Catholic ministers, who are ordained to love and protect God’s children, have perpetrated such acts in the past is a painful wound for all Catholics. The Diocese first became aware of the allegations against Fr. Anderson and Fr. Bentley when it was made aware of the claims in the lawsuit. The Diocese shall cooperate completely and transparently in an effort to find the truth in this case. Should the facts bear out that anyone was a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of these priests, then the Diocese will do all it can to bring justice and healing to the victim. However, should the facts indicate that these priests were not involved in any crime, then the Diocese will be morally obligated to take actions which will restore their reputations.

The Diocese of Las Cruces, through its parishes and ministries, has always been a source of healing for victims of sexual abuse, children and adults, whether perpetrated by clergy, strangers, or by the victim’s family members. The Diocese encourages those who have been the victim of any type of sexual abuse and wish to find help and healing to contact Margarita Williams—the Victim’s Assistance Coordinator for the diocese—at (575) 523-7577 or MWilliams@RCDLC.org. Ms. Williams can then guide them to the appropriate counseling and avenues of healing.