



DIOCESE OF STEUBENVILLE

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Bishop Releases Names of Priests Accused of Abuse

STEUBENVILLE –The Diocese of Steubenville has voluntarily released Oct. 31, the names of 16 priests and a seminarian who have been credibly accused or admitted to sexual abuse of a minor and removed from active ministry. The list dates back to the beginning of the formation of the diocese in 1944, and most of the allegations involve cases from decades ago. Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton said by releasing these names, “It will help survivors of sexual abuse find the strength to come forward and these innocent victims can begin the process of healing. I pledge to do everything possible to protect our youth.”

The list of those credibly accused was developed with the assistance of the diocese’s Child Protection Review Board and the diocesan attorney. The diocese’s Child Protection Review Board, which was established to assist the bishop in complying with the requirements of the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,” is comprised of mostly laypeople, including civil legal professionals, counselors, and its members, who assess all allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests, seminarians and deacons in this diocese. The list of names of priests who have served in the Diocese of Steubenville and have been credibly accused of at least one act of sexual abuse of a minor consists of:

- Cletus Altermatt, suspended from ministry in 1952 (deceased);
- Elwood Bernas, suspended from ministry in 1986;
- Robert A. Brown (deceased);
- Vincent Danko, suspended from ministry in 1971 (deceased);
- H. Christopher Foxhoven, suspended from ministry Oct. 27, 2018;
- Harold Goschke, suspended from ministry in 1957 (deceased);
- Kenneth Harris, suspended from ministry in 1963 (deceased);

- Michael Hellmer, suspended from ministry in 1989 (deceased);
- John “Jack” Holmes, suspended from ministry in 1989 (deceased);
- Anthony Jablonowski, suspended from ministry in 2003, dismissed from the clerical state by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006;
- Robert F. Marrer, deceased;
- Joseph A. Martinkosky, suspended from ministry in 1991;
- John Nadzam, suspended from ministry in 2004 (deceased);
- Walter Plimmer, suspended from ministry in 1956 (deceased);
- Francis Rothbauer, suspended from ministry in 1998 (deceased);
- Joel Wright, pre-theology seminarian who never became a candidate for ordination; dismissed as a seminarian in January 2016, convicted in July 2016.
- Gary Zalenski, suspended from ministry in 2007, dismissed from the clerical state as a result of an ecclesiastical trial in 2014.

A retired priest who was removed from active ministry in May 2018, because of allegations of sexual abuse of a minor, is not on the list because Belmont County law enforcement authorities are currently investigating the case. Any religious order priests were not included, because they are under the jurisdiction of their religious order superiors.

The list of names will also be given to prosecuting attorneys in the counties where the alleged abuse occurred. The list will be updated, when necessary, and will be available on the diocese’s website, www.diosteub.org. For the purposes of this list, a “credible accusation” against a priest, deacon or seminarian of the Diocese of Steubenville is an accusation that, after a thorough investigation and review of available information, appears more likely true than not, in the judgement of the diocesan review board, and is accepted as credible by the bishop.

Any situation where an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is reported after the death of the accused cleric will be presented to the review board for a full investigation. Such allegations are difficult to be investigated to the fullest extent possible, because the accused is deceased and, therefore, it can be difficult to arrive at a decisive conclusion regarding the allegation. Because the cleric was deceased when the allegation was reported to the diocese, no canonical penal process could take place. The Diocese of Steubenville stands firm in its commitment to investigate any allegation of sexual abuse by a member of the clergy and to listen to, and support, anyone who has been abused. The bishop encourages everyone to report suspected cases of sexual abuse of minors by personnel of the Diocese of Steubenville to the diocese and local civil authorities. In the Diocese of Steubenville, contact Father James M. Dunfee, vicar general, at (740) 282-3631, or jdunfee@diosteub.org.

Bishop Monforton said, “I say to the victims and to all, for the actions of those with the care of souls who have acted in these horrible ways, as your bishop, I am very sorry.”