

Diocese of Baton Rouge

January 31, 2019

Protecting the Vulnerable: Diocese Releases Names of Clergy who are the Subjects of Credible Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor or a Vulnerable Adult

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. *What information are you releasing? Whose names are being listed?*

A. The list (“List”) being published at this time by The Roman Catholic Church of the Diocese of Baton Rouge (the “**Diocese**” or “**Diocesan**”) contains the names of priests and a bishop (collectively, “**Clergy**”) from the following four groups:

- Clergy who served within the Diocese of Baton Rouge and have been the subject of credible allegations (individually, a “**Credible Allegation**” and collectively, “**Credible Allegations**”) of sexual abuse of a minor (i.e., a person under the age of 18 years) or a vulnerable adult as defined in the [Sexual Abuse Policy](#) of the Diocese of Baton Rouge (the “**Sexual Abuse Policy**”), and which allegedly occurred within the Diocese of Baton Rouge. The List also includes the name of a seminarian against whom a Credible Allegation was reported to the Diocese of Baton Rouge and which was included among the records that were reviewed.
- Clergy who were the subject of Credible Allegations that occurred within the territory of the Diocese of Baton Rouge before its creation in 1961 and which were later reported to the Diocese of Baton Rouge after its creation as an independent diocese.
- Clergy who served in the Archdiocese of New Orleans in the territory which later became the Diocese of Baton Rouge and who the Archdiocese of New Orleans has publicly identified as either (i) alive and have been accused of sexually abusing a minor which led to their removal from ministry or (ii) deceased and who admitted or have been publicly accused of sexually abusing a minor.
- Clergy who served in the Diocese of Baton Rouge without any Credible Allegations having been made against them related to that service, but who have been publicly identified by the Archdiocese of New Orleans or the Jesuit Order (S.J.) on reports similar to the Diocesan List for reasons unrelated to the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Q. *How do you define “sexual abuse”?*

A. The Diocese of Baton Rouge must define sexual abuse as it is defined in the Canon Law of the Catholic Church, as follows: “an offense against the Sixth Commandment ... with a minor below the age of eighteen, or a vulnerable adult.” This definition includes not only physical sexual contact or actions, but also certain other misconduct such as words or actions which attempt to solicit a minor for sexual purposes, even if there is no subsequent sexual contact. Church law also includes under the heading of sexual abuse the acquisition, possession or distribution of child pornography, or the showing of pornographic images to minors.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge has adopted the principles and directives promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (“USCCB”) in its [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#). It includes a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing accusations of sexual abuse of minors and guidelines for reconciliation with victims, healing and accountability, and is available on the USCCB website (www.usccb.org).

Q. How do you define “vulnerable adult”?

A. A “vulnerable adult” is defined in the [Sexual Abuse Policy](#) as a person over 18 years of age who habitually lacks the use of reason. Such a person is unable to look after his or her own rights and interests. Canon law considers a person who habitually lacks the use of reason as equivalent to a minor.

Q. What are the criteria for inclusion on the List?

A. Each Clergy named on the List has had a Credible Allegation made against him.

Q. What do you mean by a Credible Allegation?

A. Credible means “believable.” A Credible Allegation is one which meets the foregoing definition and the Bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge believes, with moral certitude, after careful investigation and consultation with professionals, that an incident of sexual abuse of a minor or a vulnerable adult occurred, or probably occurred, with the possibility that it did not occur being highly unlikely. “Moral certitude” in this context means a high degree of probability but is short of absolute certainty.

All accusations are presented to the Diocese of Baton Rouge’s Independent Review Board, which examines both the initial accusation and the results of the Church’s preliminary investigation. The Independent Review Board offers its judgment regarding credibility, which is presented as a recommendation to the Bishop, who makes the final decision regarding the credibility of the allegation. Inclusion on this List does not necessarily imply that the accused individual has been found guilty of a crime or liable for civil claims.

Q. What is the Independent Review Board?

A. The Diocese of Baton Rouge established its Independent Review Board in 2002 in implementing the directives of the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#). The sole purpose of the Independent Review Board is to provide consultation to the Bishop in addressing all reports of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by current, former and deceased Clergy and others as provided in the [Sexual Abuse Policy](#). Most of the sixteen members of the Independent Review Board are laity, who include Catholic and non-Catholic professionals in the fields of medicine, mental health, education, law and law enforcement, as well as a priest canon lawyer and a pastor. By the analyses and recommendations of these professionals, the Independent Review Board helps to determine whether an accusation is credible by its recommendation to the Bishop.

Q. Is the List of those accused complete?

A. The Diocese of Baton Rouge has made every effort to ensure that the List is complete. In late 2018, the Diocese of Baton Rouge had all its Clergy personnel files from its founding in 1961 to the present carefully examined individually. This painstaking review was conducted by the independent law firm of Hebert, Spencer & Fry, L.L.P. with the assistance of staff of the nationally-recognized accounting and consulting firm of Postlethwaite & Netterville, APAC, consisting of two attorneys, three certified fraud and forensic examiners/investigators, a

human resources professional with 20 years of HR experience and a certified complex-project manager. Further, the List is dynamic as the receipt of a new allegation against Clergy will be given immediate attention and, if found credible, will be added to the List.

Q. *Why is 1961 used as the cut-off date?*

A. The Diocese of Baton Rouge was established in 1961 by Pope St. John XXIII from territory once comprising part of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Q. *Why are you releasing this List now?*

A. Those who have been victimized are vitally important to us. By providing the transparency which victims deserve regarding our Clergy, we hope to begin the process of restoring their faith and trust in God and His Church. By releasing the List, we want to embolden other victims previously unknown to us to overcome their hesitations and come forward. Finally, at this moment in time the People of God are justifiably questioning the trustworthiness of Church leadership. Many other dioceses and religious orders are, like the Diocese of Baton Rouge, expressing a sincere, repentant desire to make up for past mistakes and to demonstrate a genuine renewed commitment to do the right thing.

Q. *Are any accused priests or deacons still in active ministry?*

A. No priest or deacon of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, and to its knowledge no other Clergy, against whom a Credible Allegation has been made is currently serving in any ministry, even as a retired cleric.

Q. *If Clergy had harmed children, why were some reassigned to new locations after they offended?*

A. In many cases, the Diocese was unaware of the misconduct and did not learn of it until many years later. In the interim, Clergy were given new assignments since there was no awareness of the harm that they had already done. In a few cases, some limited ministry was permitted for those who admitted wrongdoing. The Diocese is gravely sorry for this failure. Bishops in the Church and experts in the psychological sciences handle these situations very differently now and especially since 2002 when the USCCB's [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) was adopted. Awareness of the nature and effect of abuse of minors has changed dramatically over the last 40 years.

Q. *If a priest has had a Credible Allegation made against him, is he allowed to continue in priestly ministry?*

A. Offenders are forbidden to present themselves as clergy and to minister or act on behalf of the Church. They are removed from public ministry and stripped of all clerical privileges and status. Law enforcement authorities are also informed in order to protect the public.

Q. *What are you doing to make sure that Clergy sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults doesn't happen now?*

A. The Diocese of Baton Rouge has had in place a strict zero-tolerance policy regarding instances of inappropriate conduct between its Clergy and any minor or vulnerable adult, even prior to the 2002 issuance of the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#).

The Diocese of Baton Rouge requires comprehensive training and background checks for all its Clergy and has implemented procedures to ensure to the greatest extent possible and to maintain every priest's and deacon's "suitability for ministry." It has strengthened its

screening processes for men interested in becoming priests or deacons. Before acceptance into a seminary or deacon formation, an aspirant undergoes in-depth screening, including psychosexual and social media screening, and a criminal background check. Our formation programs foster healthy development both in terms of the spiritual life of the priest and deacon, as well as his psychosexual health and well-being. Clergy at every stage of their formation, and throughout their ministry, receive training to promote ethical conduct in ministry and awareness and sensitivity of professional boundaries and safe environments.

Q. *What should I do if I've been abused by a Priest or Deacon of the Diocese?*

A. If you or someone you know has been abused by Clergy, or anyone else, you are strongly encouraged first to contact the appropriate law enforcement or child-protection agency in the location in which the incident took place. If the abuse involved Clergy, you are further encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese, Mrs. Amy Cordon, by calling a special telephone hotline at (225) 242-0250. The Diocese wants to assist with professional counseling and pastoral care if the victim is open to them. If the victim is currently a minor, the Diocese will immediately report the incident to civil authorities in every case as required by law.

Q. *What happens when a report is received? What makes it a Credible Allegation?*

A. When an allegation of abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult is made against any Clergy, the Diocese of Baton Rouge immediately reports it - verbally and in writing - to the appropriate law enforcement authorities, and the Diocese of Baton Rouge fully cooperates throughout all investigations.

In addition to investigations by civil authorities, an internal Church investigation will also take place, although if state or federal criminal charges are brought, the Church investigation likely will be suspended until after the one conducted by law enforcement concludes. The Diocese of Baton Rouge will always offer pastoral and therapeutic services to all victims and affected family members. The results of the Diocese's internal investigation are presented to the Independent Review Board, which by its discussions and recommendations helps the Bishop to make a decision regarding the credibility of an accusation if it is unclear from the outset, and regarding other steps which should be taken.

No Clergy who is the subject of a Credible Allegation is allowed to remain in public or diocesan ministry.

Q. *Does the Diocese work with law enforcement authorities to investigate reports of abuse by clergy?*

A. The Diocese of Baton Rouge reports all allegations of Clergy sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults to the appropriate district attorneys, child protection agencies and other law enforcement personnel, as required by applicable civil law, our [Sexual Abuse Policy](#) and Canon Law. Additionally, Diocesan officials fully cooperate with all investigations undertaken by secular authorities.