

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING RECENT ALLEGATIONS

Statistics on Investigation:

Number of priest files investigated for list released on January 31, 2019: **2,424**

Number of priests with credible allegations of sexual misconduct with a minor: **31**

Percentage of priests with credible allegations: **1.27%**

What information is the Diocese releasing?

The Diocese of Dallas (“Diocese”) is releasing the names of priests against whom a credible allegation(s) of sexual abuse of a minor since 1950 has been made and reported to the Diocese. At this time, the list only includes the names of priests who are the subject of a credible allegation that occurred within the Diocese of Dallas. The list was compiled from the Diocese’s records.

How was this list put together?

In early 2018, a team of former state and federal law enforcement experts began to review diocesan personnel files to identify credible allegations of the sexual abuse of minors within the Diocese. In August 2018, this group’s mandate expanded to include the review of the files of all active and former priests in the Diocese dating back to 1950 to identify any allegations of the sexual abuse of minors. When the review team identified an allegation of the sexual abuse of a minor by a priest in the Diocese of Dallas, that allegation was forwarded to the Diocesan Review Board. The Diocesan Review Board then evaluated the allegation and other available information, and made a recommendation to Bishop Burns as to whether the allegation was credible. Bishop Burns accepted the Board’s recommendations and, as Chief Pastor of the Diocese, communicated the list released on January 31, 2019 to the Catholic faithful of the Diocese.

What is the definition of credible allegation?

A “credible allegation” is one that, after review of reasonably available, relevant information in consultation with the Diocesan Review Board or other professionals, there is reason to believe it is true.

What about priests who are members of a religious order or who belong to another Diocese?

As is common throughout the Church, the Diocese of Dallas is served by a number of priests who are members of religious orders, and others who belong to (or, are

“incardinated” in) another diocese. Before these priests are allowed to serve in ministry in the Diocese of Dallas, they must submit a letter of good standing from the superior of their religious order or their home diocese, and must have completed approved Safe Environment training. Priests on the list released on January 31, 2019 by the Diocese who were members of a religious order or incardinated in another diocese at the time of the abuse are identified as such. Many other dioceses and a number of religious orders have published their own lists of clergy who are the subject of allegations of sexual abuse. For example, the list of the Central and Southern Province of the Jesuits can be found here: <http://jesuitscentralsouthern.org/news-detail?TN=NEWS-20181204113745> .

What is the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”?

The [*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*](#) (“Charter”) is a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The Charter was established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002, and revised in 2005, 2011, and 2018. The Bishops’ annual meeting at which the Charter was first approved took place in Dallas, and so the Charter is sometimes referred to as the “Dallas Charter.”

What is the definition of a “minor” for purposes of the list?

A “minor” is anyone under the age of 18 at the time the alleged abuse occurred.

Have the priests included on the list been reported to law enforcement?

Yes. It has long been the policy of the Diocese of Dallas to report allegations of the sexual abuse of minors to Texas Child Protective Services as required by state law. In addition, the Diocese has also provided the list released to the Catholic faithful on January 31, 2019 to local law enforcement.

Will the Diocese continue to disclose the names of clergy, and others, against whom a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor has been made?

Yes. The list released on January 31, 2019 reflects the information reasonably available to the Diocese at the present time. The Diocese continues to encourage all victims of abuse to first report that abuse to law enforcement, and then to contact the Diocese’s Victims Assistance Coordinator to access pastoral resources. As Chief Pastor of the Diocese, Bishop Burns is committed to prudent, ongoing disclosure to the faithful of those priests who are the subject of a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor.

Why is the Diocese releasing this information now?

The list is being published as part of the Diocese’s ongoing commitment to transparency and to encourage persons sexually abused by clergy, or by anyone working on behalf of the Church, to come forward. Additionally, the disclosure of the list is made as part of the Diocese’s ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of children and to promote healing for all victims of abuse.



Why does the list only go back to 1950?

A primary goal of Bishop Burns' disclosure on January 31, 2019 is to help those victims of abuse heal by publicly acknowledging and expressing remorse for their pain. The date of 1950 was selected with a focus on those victims who may still be living, and to reflect the availability of historic files that might contain allegations of abuse.

Does inclusion on this list mean a priest is guilty of committing a crime?

Although Bishop Burns has also provided this list of names to law enforcement, inclusion on this list does not indicate that a priest is guilty of, has been convicted of, or has admitted to the alleged abuse.

If a priest who has a credible allegation performed a sacrament for me (Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage or Convalidation, [first or any] Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, Penance), is that sacrament considered valid? In other words, did it "count"?

Even if a priest has been removed because of a credible allegation, or is no longer functioning as a priest (suspended or laicized), sacraments that were administered are valid. A sacrament is a personal, saving action of Jesus Christ. This said, we note that, however worthy or unworthy that ordained person may be, the sacrament is valid as long as the priest is validly ordained and deputed by the Church. It is worth noting that all of the faithful have a right to "spiritual goods," especially the Word of God and the sacraments. The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the body of Christ, and to give worship to God. ([Sacrosanctum Concilium](#) (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), n. 59)

What area is encompassed by the Diocese of Dallas?

The Diocese of Dallas currently encompasses an area of 7,523 square miles stretched across Dallas, Collin, Ellis, Fannin, Grayson, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro, and Rockwall Counties. Its 69 parishes and five missions serve approximately 1.3 million Catholics and a larger North Texas community of more than four million people. The Diocese of Dallas was established in 1890 and formerly encompassed a 120,000 square mile area spreading from Texarkana to the Panhandle, and El Paso, Culbertson, and Hudspeth Counties. Over time, the Dioceses of El Paso, Lubbock, Amarillo, Tyler, and Fort Worth were carved out of the Diocese of Dallas. In some instances, priests disclosed in the list released on January 31, 2019 became priests of these new dioceses when they were founded, and their names have also been disclosed by those dioceses.

Why isn't the priest who abused me listed?

The list released on January 31, 2019 was compiled from a sweeping review of all available files of priests who have served in the Diocese of Dallas since 1950 and the recommendations of the experts who comprise the Diocesan Review Board. Despite the Diocese's best efforts to produce a complete and accurate list, the size and age of the



Diocese make it difficult to guarantee that all historic abuse has been captured. The Diocese encourages any victim of abuse, whether that abuse is reflected in the Diocese's list or not, to first report the abuse to law enforcement and to then contact the Diocese's Victims' Assistance Coordinator, Barbara Landregan, at (214) 379-2812. Future updates to this list may reflect allegations received after January 31, 2019.

Is the Diocese of Dallas trying to keep information about clergy sexual misconduct involving minors a secret?

No. The list Bishop Burns released on January 31, 2019 to the faithful of the Diocese is the result of a sweeping search of the Diocese's records by outside investigators to identify allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests in the Diocese dating back to 1950. The January 31st disclosure is unprecedented in this diocese and reflects Bishop Burns' public commitment to transparency and accountability. In addition to this latest step to ensure the protection of our children and to hold accountable those priests who have violated the trust placed in them, the Diocese of Dallas has a robust Safe Environment program to prevent, detect, report, and address misconduct by clergy and lay employees and volunteers. The Diocese continues to report new allegations directly to law enforcement and Child Protective Services, to present those allegations to the Diocesan Review Board when necessary, and to remove from ministry any person who is the subject of a credible allegation of the sexual abuse of a minor.

The church has claimed to have been addressing these issues for decades. Why should we suddenly believe they are really going to address them now?

In the short time he has been in Dallas, Bishop Burns has made the protection of children in the Diocese a top priority. In addition to our ongoing efforts to maintain a safe environment through training, reporting, and awareness, Bishop Burns engaged a team of independent, outside investigative experts Dallas to review the files of all priests since 1950 to determine whether any prior sexual abuse of minors by clergy has not been addressed. Those files containing allegations of abuse were then reviewed by the Diocesan Review Board, a group of lay (non-clergy) men and women that includes members of local law enforcement, a clinical psychologist who specializes in treating victims of sex abuse, a physician, and an attorney. Bishop Burns also formally petitioned Pope Francis to hold a synod (a meeting of the worldwide church) to address the tragedy of sexual abuse of minors within the Church once and for all. Specifically, Bishop Burns has asked that the synod address care for the safeguarding of children and the vulnerable, outreach to victims, and the lifestyle of clergy. He has also called on the assembly to address abuse of power, clericalism, accountability, and the understanding of transparency in the church. Pope Francis summoned the heads of national bishops' conferences from around the world to Rome for a meeting to address the sexual abuse of minors in February 2019.

What ongoing Safe Environment training are clergy required to take?

Priests and deacons are required to take the same Safe Environment training required of all those who work with minors in the Church in order to recognize the warning signs of grooming and sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

What is the Diocese of Dallas doing to make sure its efforts to prevent abuse go far enough?

The Diocese periodically reviews its Safe Environment programs to identify opportunities for improvement and to implement lessons learned from our own experiences and those of other organizations. Such a review is currently in progress.

Are there priests now serving in our diocese with credible allegations of sexual abuse against them?

No. In addition to our own Safe Environment policies, the Diocese of Dallas follows the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) issued in 2002, which states that a cleric must be removed from active ministry following a credible allegation of sexual abuse against a minor.

My children are involved in church activities. How do I know that they are safe?

The church has put in place several programs to better screen individuals who are involved in churches, schools and other activities and has done extensive training on these issues. In the last decade, we have taken extensive measures to effectively screen candidates to the priesthood, including criminal background checks and repeated psychological screenings before ordination. We also train all who work in the Catholic Church to recognize the signs of grooming and abuse in order to maintain a safe environment, and equip our children with training to report behaviors that may be cause for concern. More than 125,000 individuals have completed Safe Environment training since 2008. All priests and deacons are also required to take this on-going training. We continue to examine best practices from organizations around the country to identify innovative ways to ensure the protection of our children.

What should I do if I suspect a priest or employee at my parish has engaged in sexual misconduct involving a child?

First, notify local law enforcement. Second, notify the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services through the Texas Abuse Hotline (1.800-252-5400 or www.txabusehotline.org). Finally, if the allegation involves a member of the clergy or an employee of a parish or the Diocese, please notify the Diocese of Dallas Victims Assistance Coordinator, Barbara Landregan, at (214) 379-2812.

What happens when a clergy member or parish employee is accused of sexual misconduct involving a minor?

Upon learning of an allegation that clergy or a lay employee has engaged in sexual misconduct involving a minor, we notify law enforcement and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. The clergy or employee is then removed from their position while civil authorities investigate the case and determine whether any available evidence warrants criminal charges. Decisions regarding criminal prosecution are left to law enforcement. At the same time, the church conducts its own investigation to determine whether, in addition to potentially-criminal conduct, there is evidence that the clergy or employee has violated the church's expectations for conduct. When that investigation is complete, a decision is made regarding any further action involving the clergy or employee. When appropriate, the Diocese consults the Diocesan Review Board, which is comprised of lay people and experts in the field, and requests a recommendation regarding further action. Under the standards of the church's 2002 [*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*](#), as updated in 2011 and in 2018, clergy who are found to have engaged in an act of sexual abuse involving a minor are permanently removed from ministry.

Who are the members of the Diocesan Review Board?

The Diocesan Review Board, a group of lay (non-clergy) men and women, includes members of local law enforcement, a clinical psychologist who specializes in treating victims of sex abuse, a physician, and an attorney. The members are not employed by the Diocese, and represent a variety of disciplines and occupations pertinent to issues surrounding the sexual abuse of minors. Board members remain free to identify themselves to the public, but as a professional courtesy, the Diocese does not disclose the identities of the Diocesan Review Board members.

Is a similar policy and practice in place for employees and volunteers who work with children?

The process for handling an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor against a non-clergy volunteer or employee is similar to the process for handling allegations against clergy. The allegation is reported to civil authorities and the employee or volunteer is removed from ministry work with minors. If the allegation is determined to be credible, the employee or volunteer will be removed from their position and from the Diocese's list of Safe Environment-cleared individuals.

What measures are in place for overseeing bishops and cardinals?

Bishops and Cardinals fall under the jurisdiction of the Holy See (the Vatican). Currently, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is working with the Holy See to develop new channels for reporting complaints against bishops, as well as advocating for more effective resolution of future complaints. These goals will be pursued according to three criteria: proper independence of such investigations, sufficient authority to punish those found to have engaged in misconduct, and substantial leadership by laity.

Have you audited parishes to identify evidence of financial misconduct?

Parishes are audited by an external auditor annually. In addition, we have instituted a review of all cash-handling procedures for all parishes. We are doing additional training with all parishes on this issue and have plans to implement additional safeguards with parish finance councils, which are made up of parishioners.

What safeguards have been put in place throughout the diocese to prevent theft from happening?

We have an ongoing auditing program that includes both external and internal audits and reviews of procedures. We have instituted a review of all cash handling procedures for all parishes. We are doing additional training with all parishes on this issue and have plans to implement some additional safeguards. We have also just concluded training sessions with pastors, business managers, and finance councils around the Diocese regarding the importance of their roles and responsibilities.

Does the Diocese of Dallas still enter into confidential settlements with victims?

No, settlements with victims of sexual abuse of minors do not include confidentiality provisions. However, while the terms of settlements are not confidential, out of respect for the privacy of victims, the Diocese does not make the terms public. The victims are free to do so if they wish.

Are my donations used to pay for settlements?

The Diocese has insurance to address monetary claims for victims. Donations to fundraising initiatives such as the Bishop's Appeal, Our Faith...Our Future Capital Campaign, and the Bishop's Invitational Golf Tournament are not contributed to the Diocese insurance fund.

Why should I continue to support diocesan initiatives when it has become apparent that you have no financial controls?

Support for diocesan initiatives is important because the needs of the underserved people those initiatives support still exist. And we do have financial controls in place. In addition to their own finance policies and lay finance councils, parishes are subject to internal controls mandated by the USCCB, which require additional review and approval of large transactions. Parishes are also subject to yearly external audits, audit results are reviewed, and problems found during audits are investigated.

Some people are advocating giving only to their local parish.

Every dollar given to the Diocese's Annual Appeal, Bishop's Golf Tournament, and Our Faith...Our Future capital campaign helps people in our community. As a donor, please know that diocesan initiatives like the Bishop's Annual Appeal providing financial assistance to numerous ministries, the capital campaign Our Faith...Our Future funding capital projects throughout the Diocese, and the Bishop's Invitational Golf Tournament

benefiting deserving students with tuition assistance are unaffected by these allegations, and gifts to those efforts are not used for expenses related to allegations of misconduct.

Some have suggested people stop donating to the church and give to independent non-profits. Do you agree?

No. Please consider the important programs your donations are funding. These programs are specifically designed to serve our underserved. Your brothers and sisters still need the food, shelter, education, a chance for a better, future, priests for Sacraments, and hope that diocesan ministries provide. This is what Catholics do. Decreased participation in these programs hurts our brothers and sisters who need these programs the most.

How can the church make real change at this point?

The church must reform at every level. Bishop Burns has committed that, both in the Diocese of Dallas and in his efforts with church leadership in the Vatican, he will dedicate his efforts to help purify the Church. This is Christ's church—not the Vatican's. People are imperfect, but Christ gave us a perfect church, in which we can sanctify, protect and heal.

What can I as a Catholic do during this difficult time?

During this time, it is easy to feel helpless, but there are many things we can do as Catholics that are productive.

PRAY - Prayer obtains grace from God. Grace is something that we all need to make right decisions and to grow in holiness. So, increase your prayer life, spend more time reading Sacred Scripture and draw nearer to God during this time. Pray for victims of sexual abuse, pray for justice to prevail in these matters, and pray for the mission of the church to proclaim the Gospel. And please pray for our priests daily, especially your parish priests, and offer encouragement to them as they are saddened and angered by the tragic and evil actions of some priests and by Church leaders who failed to protect those under their care.

Here are words from Pope Francis that also talk about what we the Church can do to during this trial:

Every one of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need. This change calls for a personal and communal conversion that makes us see things as the Lord does. For as Saint John Paul II liked to say: "If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he wished to be identified" ([*Novo Millennio Ineunte*](#), 49). To see things as the Lord does, to be where the Lord wants us to be, to experience a conversion of heart in his presence. To do so, prayer and penance will help. I invite the entire holy faithful People of God to a penitential exercise of prayer and fasting, following the Lord's

command. This can awaken our conscience and arouse our solidarity and commitment to a culture of care that says “never again” to every form of abuse.

Penance and prayer will help us to open our eyes and our hearts to other people’s sufferings and to overcome the thirst for power and possessions that are so often the root of those evils. May fasting and prayer open our ears to the hushed pain felt by children, young people and the disabled. A fasting that can make us hunger and thirst for justice and impel us to walk in the truth, supporting all the judicial measures that may be necessary. A fasting that shakes us up and leads us to be committed in truth and charity with all men and women of good will, and with society in general, to combatting all forms of the abuse of power, sexual abuse and the abuse of conscience.

In this way, we can show clearly our calling to be “a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race” ([*Lumen Gentium*](#), 1).

Excerpt from “[Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the People of God](#)”, August 20, 2018

PARTICIPATE – Be an active participant in your parish’s Safe Environment program, take advantage of the Diocese’s resources for equipping parents and children, and most importantly—report any suspected misconduct to law enforcement and to the Diocese’s Victims Assistance Coordinator.

PERFORM ACTS OF CHARITY - It is important that we continue our pastoral outreach to others, especially those most in need. Our service, charity, and good works help us to grow in the virtues of humility and generosity of soul, and bring the healing light of Christ to those whom we serve.

RESPECT OTHERS - We certainly can acknowledge our emotions and share our opinions in light of the issues within our Church. In the process, we must respect each other and let nothing divide us, so that we may live as members of God’s holy family.