



Archdiocese of Santa Fe
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NEWS RELEASE
Letter from Archbishop John C. Wester
to Introduce List of Accused
Priests, Deacons & Religious

ALBUQUERQUE – Tuesday, September 12, 2017—IMMEDIATE RELEASE—

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Nothing can be more important than the safety and well-being of our children. For over 25 years, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has been working to prevent sexual abuse of children. The archdiocese has continued to develop and expand upon its sexual abuse prevention policies and procedures over the years. Through our Victim Assistance and Safe Environment Program, we provide counseling for survivors of abuse. Our Independent Review Board, which is comprised of lay professionals in the fields of medicine, psychology, social work, civil or canon law, and members of the Church, reviews all allegations of clergy and religious sexual misconduct and makes recommendations to me.

While we have put good programs in place, we must continue to be vigilant – not only to prevent child sexual abuse but also to help victims of past abuse heal and recover from this tragedy. To the survivors of childhood clergy and religious sexual abuse, their families and loved ones, I am so deeply sorry for the pain and suffering you have endured. The history of this terrible abuse at the hands of those who were supposed to love and protect you is a deep source of sadness and shame for our Church. We as a Church must forever strive to support and assist you on your road to recovery.

Here at the archdiocese, we have been continually working to identify additional ways that we may aid in the healing process. Not long after I became your archbishop, I concluded that a critical step is for the archdiocese to publicly acknowledge and identify those clergy and religious who have been accused of perpetrating child sexual abuse within our archdiocese. We must practice openness and transparency whenever possible, as this is essential for rebuilding trust and healing wounds. While many of the accused names have already been made public or have been identified elsewhere, this is the first time the archdiocese has published such a list.

I have not made this decision lightly or in haste. There are many countervailing principles at stake. First, we must always do right by the victims and survivors of past abuse, whose healing and recovery may benefit from the archdiocese's public identification of the perpetrators of abuse. We

must also do what we can to ensure perpetrators of such abuse never harm anyone else. At the same time, we must be mindful of the rights of the accused, under both civil and canon law, to due process in defending themselves. A clergy or religious member who has been wrongly accused of child sexual abuse may never be able to prove his innocence or repair his reputation. In cases when the accused is already deceased when accusations are made, there is not an opportunity to fully investigate allegations of abuse.

The Archdiocese of Santa Fe's list of accused clergy and religious includes the following:

- The names of all accused clergy and religious who worked within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe who have been found guilty of sexually abusing a child, either by the Church (canon law), the State (criminal law), or both. In the case of criminal convictions, the cleric either has been convicted after a criminal trial or has pled guilty to a crime involving the sexual abuse of a child. In the case of canonical processes, the clerics whose names are included either have been dismissed from the clerical state at the end of the canonical process, or have been assigned to a life of prayer and penance, with no ministry possible.
- The names of all clergy and religious who worked within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe who have been laicized after having been accused of sexually abusing a minor.
- The names of all clergy and religious who worked within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe who have been publicly accused of sexually abusing a child, but who had already been laicized and therefore were no longer in active ministry by the time the accusations were received.
- The names of those deceased clergy and religious who worked within the boundaries of the Archdiocese who have been publicly accused of sexually abusing a child, but where criminal or canonical proceedings were not completed. In most of these cases, the accused priest had died before the allegations were received.

The foregoing categories include clergy and religious who were not incardinated in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, such as religious order priests and priests from other dioceses. Although those priests may have come from outside our archdiocese, any abuse committed by them within the Archdiocese of Santa Fe caused harm here in New Mexico to the victims, victims' families and to our parishes and communities, and I believe it is important to include them on this list.

We have not included on the list the names of clergy and religious who may have been the subject of an accusation, but where we never received any further information about or substantiation of those accusations. Nor have we included the names of those clergy and religious where the accusations against them were withdrawn or were found to be unsubstantiated after investigation. The list will be updated as new information becomes available.

It is my deepest hope that our publication of this list will serve as an important step in healing for survivors, their families, and our Church and communities. But we will not stop here. We are continuing to work on additional programs and services to aid in healing and recovery, and I look forward to announcing those initiatives shortly.

As always, if you or anyone you know has been the victim of childhood sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, please immediately contact a local law enforcement agency and our Victims' Assistance Coordinator, Annette Klimka at 505.831.8144 or aklimka@archdiosf.org.

(For the updated List of Priests, Deacons, Religious & Seminarians Accused of Sexual Abuse of Children, please click here. *Revised 03.28.23*)