



# DIOCESE OF METUCHEN

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

February 13, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This week the Diocese of Metuchen joined with the four other Roman Catholic dioceses of New Jersey, in keeping our commitment made in November 2018, to release the names of those clergy who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. The list can be found on our diocesan website: <https://diometuchen.org/clergy-abuse-resources>.

A cleric's name is included on the list if they meet at least one of the following criteria: The accused admitted guilt; there has been a determination of guilt in a criminal court, civil court or by an ecclesiastical process; or the Metuchen Diocesan Review Board found the allegation(s) to be credible. A Diocesan Review Board is made up of primarily lay persons, experts in their respective fields, and tasked with reviewing the accusations for credibility.

The lists of credibly accused clergy, compiled separately by each diocese, were released simultaneously in a good faith effort to show our joined commitment to transparency, accountability, and most importantly, journeying toward healing for those whom have suffered abuse. It is our conviction that the release of these names is the just and right action to take.

As your bishop, I am moved to ask once again for forgiveness for the sins and crimes of commission and omission, which have scourged the Body of Christ, our Church. The victims of sexual abuse and misconduct perpetrated by clergy need and deserve our support, prayers and compassion.

I want you to know that I am told the accused clergy named on this list have been previously disclosed, on a case-by-case basis, to the faithful of our diocese, in the parishes where the priests served, law enforcement agencies and the county prosecutors' offices. Each of the cases have been addressed, with two of the cases currently under investigation. I assure you the clergy named on this list are no longer able to minister.

We have done our best to ensure this report is as complete as possible, but if anyone has additional information relating to misconduct or abuse involving clergy, I urge you to contact law enforcement and our Diocesan Response Officer, Deacon Vincent Brigande, at (732) 562-2413 or by cell at (908) 930-4558.

As you may know, the Diocese of Metuchen underwent a similar thorough audit of clergy files in 2002. That audit, conducted by an outside law firm and our diocesan chancellor, closely examined all clergy files to review any reasonably available and relevant information pertaining to allegations of sexual abuse. As a result, the diocese turned over to law enforcement every alleged case of sexual abuse or misconduct, including cases that pre-dated the founding of the diocese in 1981. Since that time, it has been our practice that the Diocese of Metuchen turn over to the county prosecutors' offices every single reported claim of sexual abuse as soon as we are made aware. We do not try to investigate the matters by ourselves. Out of an abundance of caution, I recently requested another review of our archives to prepare this list which was done by an independent, outside law firm. No new cases were found.

In addition to the mandatory background checks and child abuse prevention classes already in place, the Roman Catholic dioceses of New Jersey have established a statewide Victims' Compensation Program for the submission, evaluation and settlement of individual claims of sexual abuse of a minor. All victims, no matter when the offense occurred, are eligible to participate in the program which will operate independently from any of the participating dioceses. The administrators of the program, Kenneth R. Feinberg and Camille S. Biros, will have complete autonomy to determine eligibility of individual claims and the amount of compensation for victims who present a claim. Mr. Feinberg and Ms. Biros ran similar programs after the 9/11 World Trade Center disaster as well as for the (Arch)dioceses of New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Rockville Centre and some other dioceses. We are currently in a 30-day period for comments about the protocol by stakeholders.

According to a 2011 published report conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the vast majority of cases where clerical sexual abuse or misconduct took place, many of which took place before our diocese was founded, were reported to have happened between the 1960s and the 1980s. Our list of 10 priests and 1 deacon includes a review of the files of the 344 diocesan priests who have served in the history of our diocese.

I recognize we cannot change the past, but I am heartened the Church is taking steps forward to prevent similar abuses and the gross abuse of power in the future. Formation for seminarians has evolved to include the human aspect of development, rather than exclusively focusing on academics, theology and spirituality, and as such, the number of abuse incidents began to diminish. Likewise, since the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was adopted in 2002, the number of reported cases of credibly accused clergy has dropped significantly. In addition, the diocese has made substantial progress by work of our training programs, background checks, and zero-tolerance policies, which are carefully designed to protect those entrusted to our care and to prevent harm to our children in the future. Our children are our greatest gifts – each of them sacred and deserving of protection, respect and dignity.

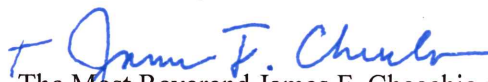
As sad as this day is for the Church, I remember daily that God has called me to this diocese, to be here with you and to walk down this road back to Him with transparency, justice and truth to promote healing, confidence and renewal. The challenges the Church faces now may seem daunting, but we must not fear the days ahead; Christ walks with us. Together, we will journey toward a new day. While we did not create these problems ourselves, we are to be part of the solution.

It is also comforting to remember the countless good and faithful priests who continue to serve day in and day out with faith, generosity and love for God, His Church and all of you. Let us not forget to pray for our good seminarians, too, who are being well-formed and look forward to serving our local Church with zeal. They are a sign of hope to us even now.

I ask for your prayers, most especially for the healing of all who have been directly hurt by these sins and crimes. Know of my gratitude and love for you and of my continual prayers for you, and I ask that you remember me in your prayers, too, as we strive, together, to be pleasing to Almighty God in all things.

With renewed best wishes, I remain

Yours in Christ,



The Most Reverend James F. Checchio, JCD, MBA  
Bishop of Metuchen