Frequently Asked Questions

List of Clergy Accused of Sexual Abuse of a Minor

Please note: These Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQ's") pertain specifically to the release of names of clergy about whom a credible and substantiated claim of sexual abuse of a minor has been made. A separate FAQ document may be found on the Diocese’s website https://richmonddiocese.org/ which provides more information about Bishop Barry C. Knestout’s and the Catholic Diocese of Richmond’s pastoral response to the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church.

1. Why is this list being published now?
   Bishop Knestout wanted to reach out to both victims and the laity. He announced plans to release this list after a comprehensive and independent audit of clergy, Safe Environment Office, and Diocesan Review Board files. The audit was completed in February 2019.

2. What prompted both Dioceses in Virginia to release the list of names on the same day?
   The Catholic Diocese of Arlington was established in 1974 from territory previously served by the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. Bishop Knestout and Bishop Burbidge agreed to release their lists in conjunction with the hope they could better insure the names of all clergy serving in the Commonwealth, and against whom such credible and substantiated allegations were made, were included on one or both lists. Certain priests are alleged to have committed abuse in present-day Richmond territory, but were later incardinated in Arlington. These names may appear on both lists. Other priests are alleged to have committed abuse in present-day Arlington territory, but before the creation of the Arlington Diocese. If those priests were later incardinated in Arlington, their names may appear on the Arlington list. We encourage those interested to review both lists.

3. Who decided which clergy would be included on the list?
   Bishop Knestout decided which clergy would be included on the list after careful review of all information available to him and in consultation with his canonical advisors and the Diocesan Review Board.

4. What are the criteria for being on the list?
   The list includes names of clergy against whom a credible and substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor was made. For purposes of the list, an allegation was considered credible and substantiated if it was supported by a preponderance of the evidence. This determination was made after carefully
considering many factors and circumstances including, but not limited to admissions, convictions, arrests, settlements of civil claims, detailed, consistent and plausible complaints, number of victims, priest’s assignment history, adverse actions against the priest by Church authority, and whether the name was published on other lists of known abusers. The facts and circumstances that could substantiate a credible allegation varied from case to case.

This analysis was made more difficult by the fact that most child sexual abuse occurrences happen in the absence of witnesses. After careful analysis, a name was added to the list if the greater weight of evidence suggested it was more likely than not that the abuse occurred. This does not mean it was proved to have occurred.

5. **Is every priest or deacon who had an allegation of abuse made against him on the list?**

Only those against whom a credible and substantiated allegation was made, as defined above, are included on the list.

6. **How many priests have served in the Richmond Diocese and how many have had a credible and substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor made against them?**

To the best of our knowledge, over 1,000 priests have served in the Diocese since its inception in 1820 and for whom there are files. More than forty priests have been determined to have credible and substantiated claims against them. The records indicate the first credible and substantiated incident of sexual abuse of a minor made known to the Catholic Diocese of Richmond occurred in the 1950s. The most recent incident of sexual abuse of a minor made known to the Catholic Diocese of Richmond as of February 13, 2019, occurred in the 1990’s.

7. **How are Bishop Knestout and the Catholic Diocese of Richmond confronting child sexual abuse?**

The first and primary concern regarding child sexual abuse is responding to the needs of the victims and survivors. Bishop Knestout and the Catholic Diocese of Richmond remain committed to facing the sexual abuse crisis in the Church with courage, faith, hope and love, as well as action. More information on the Diocese’s pastoral response may be found at [https://richmonddiocese.org/diocese-response](https://richmonddiocese.org/diocese-response) and in the Frequently Asked Questions at [https://richmonddiocese.org](https://richmonddiocese.org).

8. **Are there any priests or deacons that have a credible and substantiated allegation of abuse of a minor serving in ministry in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond?**

None of whom we are aware. After a thorough and comprehensive review of the clergy files, the files in the Safe Environment Office, and the Diocesan Review Board files, Bishop Knestout is unaware of any priests or deacons serving in ministry or in any other capacity who have a credible and substantiated allegation of sexual abuse. Should victims come forward with allegations against clergy in active ministry, Bishop Knestout will respond in accordance with our commitment to addressing allegations of sexual abuse and protecting God’s children found on the diocesan website.

9. **Will the list of clergy with allegations of sexual abuse of minors be updated, and if so, how often?**
Yes. Any credible and substantiated allegation of child sexual abuse by clergy received by the Diocese will be reported publicly unless the safety of the victim could be compromised.

10. **Does the Diocese continue to support a priest removed from ministry as a result of an allegation of sexual abuse?**
   It depends upon the conclusion of the Church process. If a priest is laicized/dismissed, the Diocese no longer has financial responsibility and offers no financial support. Only the Holy See/Vatican can remove a priest from the priesthood.

   The Bishop can suspend a priest from ministry. However, when a priest is suspended from public ministry, Church law and Catholic teachings compel the Diocese to provide “sustenance” or support for the priest’s living and healthcare expenses. His other sources of income are taken into consideration.

11. **Why are religious order priests and priests from other dioceses on a separate list?**
   A bishop does not have equal authority over all priests working within his diocese. Some priests may be members of religious communities under the authority of those communities’ leaders and are referred to as religious order priests. Also, priests of other dioceses may work within another diocese with the permission of their bishop.

   When order priests or priests from other dioceses are assigned to work in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, the Bishop of Richmond has authority over their public ministry. Nonetheless, the obligations of supervision and discipline remain ultimately with his specific superior or bishop. For these reasons, religious order priests and priests of other dioceses appear on lists separate from priests incardinated to the Catholic Diocese of Richmond to reflect these fundamental distinctions.

12. **How can I report abuse? What procedures and/or resources are in place to help abuse victims?**
   The Catholic Diocese of Richmond urges individuals who have been sexually abused by a priest, deacon, religious, lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese to report abuse directly to law enforcement, including Child Protective Services (CPS) at 1-800-552-7096, and by calling the Attorney General’s Clergy Abuse Hotline at 1-833-454-9064.

   Individuals are also encouraged to contact the 24-hour confidential Victim’s Assistance Reporting number at 1-877-887-9603 or email vac@richmonddiocese.org to report sexual abuse.

**Glossary of Terms Used:**

*Clergy* – Ordained bishops, priests, or deacons.
**Deacon** – Ordained to ministry of service, may be married. May preside at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. May preach at Mass or other services. May not preside at Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, or Anointing of the sick.

**Diocesan Priest** – Ordained to serve in the Catholic Church under a bishop who exercises supervision, provides assignments and offers support.

**Religious Order Priest** – Ordained to serve in the Catholic Church as a member of a particular religious community whose work may include duties within the diocese.

**Incardinated** – A canonical action by which a priest or deacon becomes a member of a particular diocese or religious order.

**Minor** – Any person younger than age 18.

**Removed** - A canonical action imposed by the Holy See (Vatican/Rome) through which no public active ministry is to occur, yet there remains obligation for supervision and support from the Diocese.

**Laicized/Dismissed** – A canonical action imposed by the Holy See through which no public ministry is to occur. No obligation for supervision by and financial support from the diocese or religious community remains.

**Dispensed** – A canonical action imposed by the Holy See at the request of the priest so that he is no longer obliged to public ministry. No obligation for supervision and financial support remains.

**Suspended** – A canonical action imposed by the diocesan Bishop in which no public ministry is to occur, pending the possibility of removal by the Holy See.

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