

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT OF THE MOST REVEREND DENNIS J. SULLIVAN,
BISHOP OF CAMDEN,
UPON RELEASING NAMES OF CREDIBLY ACCUSED CLERICS

In keeping with a promise made by the Roman Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, I am today releasing the names of 56 priests and one deacon of the Diocese of Camden who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors. The other bishops from New Jersey are simultaneously releasing the names of priests from their dioceses.

In the Diocese of Camden, these 56 priests are a small percentage of the more than 800 priests who have faithfully served the people of South Jersey since the diocese was founded in 1937.

As to the names on the attached list, it includes those who admitted to the abuse, those who were found guilty after a trial in the church courts or the civil courts, and others against whom the evidence was so overwhelming as to be virtually unquestionable. Most of these incidents occurred in the 1970's and the 1980's and involved male teenagers. It should also be noted that the majority of these priests, all of whose names have been provided to local law enforcement authorities, are dead.

In many cases, a single allegation from 30 or 40 years ago was the only such charge that had ever been made against the priest, and was received after he had died. Thus, he was unable to respond to the allegation.

Not included in this list are four allegations from the 1960's and 1970's that are being referred to the Diocesan Review Board for a determination as to their credibility. The Review Board, which consists mainly of laypeople who are not employed by the Diocese or any of the parishes, will be presented with all of the available evidence, and I have full confidence in its recommendations as to whether a supplemental report to include the names of other priests or deacons will be warranted.

A thorough reading of this list finds that it is in accord with in-depth reviews, such as the research study conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York, and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, which appear to confirm that the pervasiveness of this phenomenon was in the latter part of the 1900's. For example, the last credible report of abuse of a minor by a priest in ministry in the Diocese of Camden occurred in 1995. This is not in any way to excuse what had happened – and it certainly is not to excuse the failings of bishops and other leaders in the Church at that time.

To be certain, the darkest stain on the Catholic Church in the last century was the sexual abuse of minors by priests. Unfortunately, we have all learned that this “filth,” as Pope Benedict correctly called it, was more pervasive than anyone imagined, or even thought possible.

We know the release of these names may cause others who have been abused to come forward. With that in mind, the Dioceses of New Jersey encourage victims to register with the recently announced Independent Victim Compensation Program when that program is launched in the coming months. The program will handle submissions, evaluations, and settlements of

individual claims of sexual abuse of a minor. The program will operate independently of the participating dioceses. The Administrators of the program will have complete autonomy to determine eligibility of individual claims and the amount of compensation for victims who present a claim.

The dioceses worked together to establish a common statewide protocol for the Independent Victim Compensation Program to facilitate access to the program by victims. All victims, no matter when the offense occurred, will be eligible to participate in the Independent Victim Compensation Program.

The priest sex abuse scandal is not new, and neither is the Church's response to it. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops established the Charter for the Protection of Children in 2002, and it has been implemented throughout New Jersey since that time. In addition, in New Jersey, since December of 2002, a Memorandum of Understanding has been in place that facilitates the reporting of child sexual abuse to local county prosecutors. This diocese has done all in its power to make our schools, parishes and ministries safe havens for everyone, and it will continue to do so.

As we have done often, we pray that God will continue to look after the victims and survivors of the priest sex abuse scandal. We ask that He give them hope, provide them with healing and bring comfort to their wounded souls.