

Diocese publishes names of priests accused of abusing minors

Diocese of Nashville

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By Staff reports

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The Diocese of Nashville, as part of its ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability, and pastoral care, is publishing the names of the 13 former priests who served in the diocese who have been accused of sexually abusing a minor.

Of the 13, nine are dead and two are in prison. None are in active ministry.

The names are being released after consultation with the Presbyteral Council and Diocesan Review Board, which is made up almost entirely of lay people not employed by the diocese. Files on abuse cases were shared with the Davidson County District Attorney General's office nearly 20 years ago.

The names are those of priests against whom an allegation of abuse was made either while an active priest or following his death. Following the report, an investigation was commenced, after which a review of the facts and information obtained took place. Following this review, a recommendation was made to the bishop at the time and the bishop decided whether or not an individual priest should be dismissed from the priesthood of the Diocese of Nashville if in active ministry.

Dismissal from the priesthood is a canonical process under Church law that is completely separate from matters under civil or criminal law. In 1985 Tennessee state law began requiring that anyone who reasonably expects that abuse of a minor is taking place must make a report to civil authorities. The diocese's policies and practices have supported and followed that law since it took effect.

The priests, who were ordained between 1940 and 1973, served as priests between the 1940s and 1990s. At the time most were ordained, the Diocese of Nashville covered the entire state of Tennessee. The Dioceses of Memphis and Knoxville were established in 1971 and 1988, respectively, and some of the 13 were incardinated in those dioceses. One of the men was a Benedictine priest from Cullman, Alabama, who was serving in the diocese at the time the abuse occurred.

Their names and assignments in the Diocese of Nashville, according to official records of the Diocese of Nashville, are listed below. While diocesan priests have formal assignments, they often have duties in other parishes of the diocese so any of the men could have potentially worked in other parishes or locations.

- **Father Edward James Cleary.** Born April 18, 1914; ordained May 18, 1940; died Nov. 10, 1997.

His assignments included: Assistant Pastor of the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Nashville; Assistant Pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Memphis; Assistant Pastor of St. Mary's Church in Nashville; Professor at Father Ryan High School in Nashville; Administrator Pro Tem at Resurrection Church in Cleveland, Tennessee; Chaplain, U.S. Army Air Corps; Pastor, St. Paul Church in Whitehaven.

- **Father James William Murphy Jr.** Born Sept. 12, 1922; ordained April 3, 1948 incardinated into Diocese of Memphis 1971; died Oct. 11, 2016.

His assignments included: Assistant Pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Memphis; Assistant Pastor of St. Thomas Church in Memphis; Director of the Ladies of Charity for the West Tennessee Deanery; Blessed Sacrament Church in Harriman; St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Cookeville; Pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Union City; Administrator of St. John Vianney Church in Gallatin; Pastor of St. Anthony Church in Memphis; Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Church in Alcoa and attached mission; Pastor of St. James Church in Memphis.

- **Father James Arthur Rudisill.** Born May 16, 1926; ordained May 19, 1951; retired Feb. 10, 1995; died Feb. 8, 2008.

His assignments included: Assistant Pastor of St. Ann Church in Nashville; Assistant Pastor of Christ the King Church in Nashville; Assistant Pastor of Holy Name Church in Nashville; Chaplain of Scouting for Middle Tennessee; Chaplain of the Catholic Business Women's League in Nashville; Assistant Pastor at Sacred Heart Church in Memphis; Youth Director for the West Tennessee Deanery; Pastor of Holy Angels Church in Dyersburg; Pastor at St. Rose of Lima Church in Murfreesboro; Pastor at Notre Dame Church in Greeneville and its mission in Rogersville; Moderator of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women for the Chattanooga Deanery; Associate Pastor and Pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Chattanooga; Chaplain Knights of Columbus Council 610 in Chattanooga; Pastor at St. Catherine Church in Columbia; Dean of the Southwest Deanery; Pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Hohenwald, Christ the Redeemer Church in Centerville and St. Cecilia Church in Waynesboro.

- **Father Edward Albert Walenga.** Born Nov. 2, 1926; ordained May 30, 1953; died Nov. 27, 1983.

His assignments included: Assistant Pastor of Little Flower Church in Memphis; Assistant Pastor at Holy Ghost Church in Knoxville and Professor at Knoxville Catholic High School; Assistant Pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Chattanooga and Chaplain to Newman Clubs; Pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Humboldt; Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus Council in Jackson; Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Cookeville; Pastor of St. Patrick Church in McEwen and Dickson mission; pastor of Notre Dame Church in Greeneville and St. Henry Mission in Rogersville; Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Springfield and the St. Michael Mission in Cedar Hill; Pastor of St. John Vianney Church in Gallatin.

- **Father Roger R. Lott,** a Benedictine Monk/Priest in Cullman Alabama; ordained in 1954; removed from duty and placed in a restricted setting by his order in 1996; died May 22, 2011.

In the 1950s, Father Lott was in residence at the Cathedral serving in the Diocese of Nashville while pursuing a degree at Peabody College in Nashville.

- **William Floyd Davis.** Born Aug. 17, 1929; ordained May 26, 1956; incardinated in the Diocese of Memphis 1972; died Oct. 26, 2011.

His assignments included: Assistant Pastor of Christ the King Church in Nashville; Administrator of the Church of the Assumption in Nashville; Pastor of the Church of the Assumption; Administrator of St. William Church in Millington; Assistant Pastor of St. Louis Church in Memphis and teacher at Catholic High School for Boys in Memphis; Pastor of Notre Dame Church in Greeneville and its Rogersville mission; Pastor of St. Patrick Church in McEwen and St. Christopher Church in Dickson

- **Joseph L. Reilly** Born Dec. 16, 1928; ordained May 26, 1956; dismissed from the priesthood of the Diocese of Nashville 1965; died March 9, 1981.

His assignments included: the Cathedral of the Incarnation; Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Chattanooga, St. Michael Church in Memphis and St. Henry Church in Nashville.

- **Paul Frederick Haas.** Born Dec. 14, 1933; ordained May 23, 1959; dismissed from the priesthood of the Diocese of Nashville May 24, 1977; died June 7, 1979.

His assignments included: Assistant Pastor of the Cathedral of the Incarnation; Assistant Pastor of St. Ann Church in Nashville and teaching at Father Ryan High School; Assistant Pastor of St. John Church in

Memphis and teacher at Memphis Catholic High School for Boys; Assistant Pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Memphis. In addition to assignments in diocesan records, he is also known to have served at St. Jude Church and Notre Dame High School in Chattanooga and in the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas, and the Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky.

- **Paul Wiley St. Charles.** Born June 23, 1939; ordained May 21, 1966; Incardinated into the Diocese of Memphis; dismissed from the priesthood of the Diocese of Memphis 2004; died Dec. 27, 2009.

His assignments included: Assistant Pastor at Sacred Heart Church in Knoxville; Assistant Pastor of St. John Church in Memphis; Chaplain for Scouting in the Memphis area; Moderator for the Ladies of Charity; Director of the Catholic Youth Office for the Memphis area and part-time professor of Catholic High School for Boys in Memphis.

- **William Claude Casey.** Born Jan. 4, 1934; ordained May 2, 1969; incardinated in the Diocese of Knoxville Sept. 8, 1988; dismissed from the priesthood of the Diocese of Knoxville 2010; currently incarcerated.

His assignments included: Associate Pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Chattanooga; Pastor of Notre Dame Church in Greeneville; Diocesan Director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference; Pastor of St. Dominic Church in Kingsport; Dean and Episcopal Vicar of the Kingsport Deanery; Director of Vocations for the Kingsport Deanery; Pastor of St. John Neumann Church in Knoxville.

- **Edward Joseph McKeown.** Born March 18, 1944; ordained Jan. 31, 1970; dismissed from the priesthood of the Diocese of Nashville March 1, 1989; currently incarcerated.

His assignments included: Associate Pastor of St. Edward Church in Nashville and part-time professor at Father Ryan High School; Associate Pastor at Holy Rosary Church; Associate Pastor at St. Joseph Church in Madison; Administrator of Blessed Sacrament Church in Harriman, St. Ann Church in Deer Lodge and St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Lenoir City; academic duties at Notre Dame High School in Chattanooga; Administrator of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in South Pittsburg, in residence at St. Augustine Church in Signal Mountain; Associate Pastor at St. Augustine Church in Signal Mountain; Administrator at St. Bridget Church in Dayton; Pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church in Harriman and its mission; Pastor of St. Thomas Church in Lenoir City and St. Ann Church in Deer Lodge.

- **Ronald W. Dickman.** Born July 13, 1944; ordained June 5, 1971; dismissed from the priesthood of the Diocese of Nashville 1991.

His assignments included: Director of Camp Marymount; Associate Pastor of St. Edward Church and full-time professor and later principal at Father Ryan High School; Associate Director of Vocations for the Nashville Deanery; Diocesan Director of Vocations; Associate Pastor of St. Henry Church in Nashville; Associate Pastor of St. Ignatius of Antioch Church; Catholic Charities of Tennessee; St. Mary Villa in Nashville.

• **Franklin T. Richards.** Born March 18, 1947; ordained Jan. 26, 1973; dismissed from the priesthood of the Diocese of Nashville March 1, 1989.

His assignments included: Associate Pastor of Christ the King Church; Associate Pastor of St. Henry Church; Pastor of St. Patrick Church in Nashville; Principal of Knoxville Catholic High School; Pastor of the Seymour Catholic Community; Associate Pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Clarksville.

The Tennessee Register does not include the title “father” with the names of priests who have been dismissed from active ministry.

The diocese instituted its safe environment program and began conducting background checks in 1986. In the late 1980s, the diocese began to conduct a series of seminars and informational sessions as well as developing educational programs for students, teachers, and parents on the issue and prevention of child sexual abuse.

Over the years, the diocese has worked in cooperation with Our Kids, the Rape and Sexual Abuse Center, Catholic Charities, and the victims advocacy group You Have the Power, to enhance a broad safe environment program.

In 1992, 10 years before the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was adopted in response to the clergy sex abuse crisis in Boston, the diocese adopted a safe environment program that included a process to review individuals regarding their fitness for ministry and investigating allegations of abuse.

Those procedures had been used on a trial basis in the late 1980s, and Bishop Edward Kmiec promulgated them for the entire diocese in early 1992.

The Diocese of Nashville is one of several dioceses across the country that have decided to release the names of priests credibly accused of sexually abusing minors in the wake of the Pennsylvania grand jury report last summer that outlined allegations from six dioceses in that state.

The Pennsylvania allegations, some of which go back as far as 70 years, involved 301 priests and more than 1,000 victims.

The report also included efforts by Church leaders to cover up the abuse.

In 2002, when the clergy abuse scandal erupted in the Archdiocese of Boston and other dioceses around the country, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

The Charter, which was revised in 2005, 2011 and 2018, was adopted to provide a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy, stipulating zero tolerance for anyone credibly accused of even a single incident of abuse of a minor, permanently removing them from ministry.

It also established: lay Review Boards to investigate allegations against priests, deacons, lay employees and volunteers of the Church and to recommend policies to prevent further abuse; education programs to detect and prevent abuse; background checks for anyone who works with minors; and guidelines for reconciliation, healing and accountability.

Since 2002, the diocese and its insurance company have spent approximately \$6.5 million on counseling and pastoral assistance to victims of abuse. The total includes a \$1.1 million settlement in lawsuits related to Edward McKeown.

The diocese has been audited several times since the adoption of the Charter and has been found to be in full compliance with the Charter every time.

“We’ve grown better because of the Charter,” Bishop J. Mark Spalding told the Tennessee Register in August after the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report. “So many more people are open to speaking up, open to reporting and open to holding people accountable. That doesn’t mean we’re perfect.”

“One slip is one slip too many,” he added. “One failure to implement the Charter undercuts the whole thing.”

In the wake of the Pennsylvania grand jury report and the revelations of credible allegations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of abuse of minors and sexual misconduct with seminarians, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released a plan to address the new abuse scandal that will be considered at the conference’s meeting in Baltimore Nov. 12-14.

The plan calls for a full investigation of the questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick by a group of laypeople identified for their expertise, a procedure to make it easier to report abuse and misconduct by a bishop, and efforts to develop better procedures to resolve complaints against bishops.

Pope Francis is calling the presidents of every Catholic bishops’ conference in the world to Rome in February to discuss the prevention of the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

Tennessee law requires and the diocese for many years has urged anyone who reasonably suspects that abuse is taking place to report it to the civil authorities.

For more information about reporting abuse and the diocese’s Safe Environment policies for the protection of children and youth, visit www.dioceseofnashville.com/child-safety.