

**PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
ATTORNEY GENERAL KATHLEEN G. KANE**

Press Release

Grand jury: Hundreds of children sexually abused by priests in Altoona-Johnstown diocese

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Editor's note : *The following news release contains graphic content related to the sexual abuse of children.*

ALTOONA — A statewide investigating grand jury has determined that hundreds of children were sexually abused over a period of at least 40 years by priests or religious leaders assigned to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane's office announced today.

The widespread abuse involved at least 50 priests or religious leaders. Evidence and testimony reviewed by the grand jury also revealed a troubling history of superiors within the Diocese taking action to conceal the child abuse as part of an effort to protect the institution's image. The grand jury, in [a 147-page report made public today](#), stressed this conduct endangered thousands of children and allowed proven child predators to abuse additional victims.

"The heinous crimes these children endured are absolutely unconscionable," said Kane, who addressed the media this morning at a news conference at the Blair County Convention Center. "These predators desecrated a sacred trust and preyed upon their victims in the very places where they should have felt most safe.

"Just as troubling is the cover-up perpetrated by clergy leaders that allowed this abuse to continue for decades," Kane added. "They failed in our society's most important task of protecting our children."

The grand jury's findings followed two years of exhaustive investigation by the Office of Attorney General, which brought this matter to the grand jury in April 2014. While Attorney General Kane stressed the investigation is ongoing, none of the criminal acts detailed in the grand jury report can be prosecuted. This is due to the deaths of alleged abusers, deeply traumatized victims being unable to testify in a court of law and the statute of limitations for the crimes being exhausted.

As a result, the grand jury in its report made a series of recommendations, such as abolishing the statute of limitations for sexual offenses against minors and urging the state General Assembly to suspend the civil statute of limitations on sexual abuse claims.

The grand jurors also urged victims of crimes, such as child abuse, to report criminal activity to law enforcement. Attorney General Kane also urged victims and others with information concerning the Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown to contact the Office of Attorney General. Those with information may contact the office by dialing 888-538-8541, a toll-free, dedicated hotline established for this case.

"This is by no means the end of our investigation. We will continue to look at this matter and consider charges where appropriate, which is why it is so important for those with information to come forward," Kane said. "At

the very least we must continue to shine a light on this long period of abuse and despicable conduct."

Execution of search warrant uncovers "secret archive"

The grand jury reviewed more than 200 exhibits and heard testimony from numerous witnesses, which created thousands of pages of transcribed testimony. A substantial amount of the physical evidence was uncovered when investigators with the Office of Attorney General executed a search warrant last August at a Diocese office and uncovered materials that included the Diocese's "secret archive."

The materials included numerous files for priests accused of sexual misconduct. As the grand jury noted in its report, boxes and filing cabinets were filled with documents detailing children being sexually violated by the Diocese's own members. Also among the seized items detailing the abuse were: handwritten notes of Bishop James Hogan, letters and documents sent to Bishop Joseph Adamec, several sexual abuse victim statements, correspondence with offending priests and internal correspondence related to these matters. All told, approximately 115,042 documents were removed from the Diocese.

The evidence was instrumental in detailing the actions of Bishops Hogan and Adamec, the men who led the Diocese between the mid-1960s through 2011. The bishops allegedly were at the forefront of the cover-up the grand jury details in its report.

The evidence also shows several instances in which law enforcement officers and prosecutors failed to pursue allegations of child sexual abuse occurring within the Diocese.

Priest sent on sabbatical to avoid criminal investigation

The grand jury found the case of Joseph Gaborek, 70, to be "a particularly heinous example of the Diocese exercising authority and influence to cover up the sexual abuse of a child at the hands of a Diocesan priest."

The grand jury reviewed evidence that Gaborek, who was assigned to St. Michael's Church (West Salisbury) and St. Mary's Church (Pocahontas) in the early 1980s, sexually violated a boy after recruiting him to work at the parishes. The abuse was later reported to the Pennsylvania State Police, the grand jury stated.

The grand jury determined that Bishop Hogan spoke to police investigating the case and assured a police investigator he would send Gaborek to an institution. Further review of the evidence showed Gaborek was sent on sabbatical to a school for boys where there was no psychological or psychiatric treatment available, the grand jury determined. He was later reassigned to another parish.

The Diocese's own files detailed Hogan's intervention in the police investigation. A portion of one such file noted Gaborek "would have been prosecuted and convicted of [sexual contact with a 16 year old boy] except that the bishop intervened and he was sent to Michigan for treatment and then placed in another parish upon his return."

Bishop acted to avoid scandal rather than protect children, grand jury finds

The grand jury report details another troubling example of abuse allegedly perpetrated by Martin Cingle, 69, a priest who was ordained in 1973 and later was assigned to various parishes within the Diocese. Evidence uncovered during the investigation showed Cingle in 1979 groped the genitals of a child while sleeping next to the boy on a cot in his underwear, the grand jury report states.

The victim met in 2002 with Bishop Adamec. Records recovered from the Diocese show that Adamec sent Cingle for "treatment" after the victim came to him. The so-called treatment concluded after roughly one month. Among its findings, records show, was the determination that there was no evidence of "psychopathology in the psychological data," and that nothing in Cingle's history was consistent with an attempt to initiate sexual relations with a man. Cingle was returned to full-time ministry.

During his testimony before the grand jury, Cingle acknowledged he could have accidentally fondled the boy's genitals. The grand jury learned Cingle had told Adamec the same version of events, but the account does not appear in diocesan records. Cingle was left in the ministry until last year, when the Office of Attorney General demanded Cingle be removed from ministry immediately.

The grand jury determined the allegation made against Cingle warranted his removal, and that Bishop Adamec's reliance on so-called "treatment" was part of a desire to avoid scandal. The matter was never reported to law enforcement.

At least 15 boys abused by monsignor

The grand jury deemed Francis B. McCaa, now deceased, to be "a monster." McCaa, a monsignor, was assigned for more than 20 years to the Holy Name Church in Ebensburg, where he groped and fondled the genitals of at least 15 boys, many of whom were altar boys, the grand jury found. The victims were reported to be between 8 and 15 years old.

One McCaa victim said the abuse occurred during confession. In other instances, the victims stood together while being abused, the grand jury found. At least one victim committed suicide.

Bishop Hogan in this case also kept detailed notes of his meeting with two prosecutors who worked for the Cambria County district attorney's office. The notes show another case in which Hogan intervened in a child abuse investigation involving a member of the Diocese, and had McCaa transferred to work as a chaplain at a West Virginia hospital.

Investigators conducted interviews with the prosecutors involved in the McCaa case, which also confirmed their inaction and the decision to move McCaa to another location in lieu of pursuing criminal charges, the grand jury alleges.

OAG credits FBI for assistance with investigation

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown's parishes are located within eight counties — Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clinton, Fulton, Huntingdon and Somerset. There are more than 90,000 Catholics in the area the Diocese covers, according to the grand jury.

This Office of Attorney General assumed jurisdiction of this matter upon a formal conflict referral by Cambria County District Attorney Kelly Callihan. The matter was presented to the grand jury by Deputy Attorney General Daniel J. Dye of the Office of Attorney General's Criminal Prosecutions Section. The office's Bureau of Criminal Investigations also spent a significant amount of time gathering the evidence that was presented to the grand jury.

The Attorney General's investigators also were aided greatly by behavioral experts with the Federal Bureau of

Investigation, Critical Incident Response Group, Behavioral Analysis Unit.

Attorney General Kane thanked all who took part in the investigation for their commitment and hard work.

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Supplemental materials:

[Grand jury report](#)

[Timeline created by FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit](#)