

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Francis of Assisi Parish,

At the three masses this past weekend I informed you that had received a letter from Bishop Cote "In the spirit of accountability and transparency and on the recommendations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Review Board, the Diocese of Norwich is providing a list of clergy who have had allegations of substance made against them alleging sexual abuse of a minor.

An "Allegation of substance" means:

An allegation in which the accused has pled guilty or nolo contendere or been prosecuted and found guilty in a civil criminal court of any incident of sexual misconduct of a minor; and/or
An allegation has been investigated and has been determined to be reasonable, plausible, probable, and bearing the semblance of truth; and/or
An allegation that is corroborated with other evidence or another source; and/or
An allegation that has been acknowledged or admitted to by the accused.

The names presented of the accused clergy with allegations of substance is based on the review of all clergy records by a team of volunteer lay people with law enforcement and canonical experience. The publication of names will be updated as any new information becomes available.

The names of those clergy in the Diocese of Norwich who have been accused over the past 65 years, since the establishment of the diocese on August 6, 1953, will be posted on the diocesan website, www.norwichdiocese.org at 2 p.m. on Sunday, February 10th, and published in this month's Four County Catholic, our diocesan newspaper."

As your pastor it pains me greatly to review this list and recognize so many priests I have known during my almost 44 years as a priest of this diocese. While I was never stationed with any of them, I had contact with many of them for various reasons.

Two burning questions that many people, including we priests have, is, "Where did the money come from to settle the lawsuits?" and "Did it come from our weekly collections?"

Bishop Cote makes it very clear that most of the money came from insurance companies. He states that a million dollars came from the general fund. It not come from funds that people give with specific intentions. The same is true for our parish. If someone gives money for repairs to the church or hall, that money must be used for that purpose and no other.

This scandal has permanently damaged the Church in many ways and the scars will last forever. This is a very sad example of massive failure of church leadership. It should be very obvious to all that church leadership cannot operate in a bubble and think they can solve problems they themselves have created. I think most of our current bishops know this and are taking steps to bring in outside help to rectify problems. Pope Francis is well aware of this tragedy and it will very interesting to see the results of this month's meeting in Rome regarding this catastrophe.

We will be inserting a copy of Bishop Cote's letter in this week's bulletin.

Sincerely yours,

Father Russ Kennedy, Pastor