



Clergy Abuse

Salina Diocese releases list of substantiated allegations of clergy sexual abuse of a minor

Salina — On Aug. 14, 2018, the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report was released. The report exposed a great scandal within the Church and incited Catholics and clergy alike, to demand greater transparency and accountability from the leaders of the Catholic faith. On Sept. 18, 2018, the Diocese of Salina informed Attorney General's office that newly appointed Bishop Gerald Vincke would be retaining the independent outside counsel of Cottonwood Law LLC. of Hillsdale, Mo. to conduct a thorough review of clergy personnel files and identify any potential cases of clergy misconduct with minors. Bishop Vincke had been serving in that role as the Bishop of Salina for less than a month when he opened the investigation of the clergy files.

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From September 2018 to January 2019, Courtney Boehm from Cottonwood Law conducted an audit of the diocesan clergy files. Boehm was selected for her expertise in criminal law and her independence from the Salina Diocese. At the time of the audit, Boehm was the Marion County Attorney and has since been appointed a district court judge in the 8th Judicial District which consists of Dickinson, Geary, Marion and Morris counties. Boehm reviewed 109 clergy files from clergy serving in the late 1800s to present day. The files reviewed consisted of any member of the clergy with allegations of misconduct against them. Upon the completion of the review, Cottonwood Law submitted a comprehensive report to Bishop Vincke. The report summarized the contents of each clergy misconduct file and the allegations that were made against each priest. The entirety of this comprehensive report was immediately turned over to the Attorney General's office, who then forwarded it to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI).

Within the report, the auditor recommended which cases needed to be reviewed by the Lay Review Board. The Lay Review Board, formed in February 2019, is a group that reviews any allegation made against a member of the clergy and includes mental and medical health professionals, social service providers, canon law professionals, law enforcement officials and two priests. In order to be as thorough and transparent as possible, Bishop Vincke asked that files recommended by Boehm be reviewed, including those that were previously reviewed. During the month of February 2019, the Lay Review Board met and discussed the cases recommended by Cottonwood Law. Upon the completion of the Lay Review Board's review of the Cottonwood Law report, 14 cases of diocesan clergy abuse of a minor were found to be substantiated.

The Diocese of Concordia was founded in 1887. The Diocese of Concordia then became the Diocese of Salina in 1944. During a span of 132 years, with approximately 300 diocesan priests having served in the Diocese of Salina, 14 diocesan priests were identified to have substantiated allegations of abuse of a minor. A substantiated allegation is one that has been corroborated with witness statements, documents, emails, photos, texts, or by another source, such as law enforcement. None of the 14 priests are in active ministry today. Of the 14 priests, 12 are deceased and the remaining two are laicized. At this time, the Diocese of Salina is only releasing the names of clerics with substantiated allegations of abuse of a minor. Any cleric with an allegation of abuse of a minor that is unsubstantiated has been excluded from the list. If new information is provided that leads to the substantiation of a case, the Diocese of Salina will update the list of clergy abuse of minors accordingly.

Just as the Salina Diocese conducted an internal audit, so did the Order of Franciscan Minors Capuchin Province of St. Conrad, headquartered in Denver. The Capuchins are a religious order who have had a strong presence within the Salina Diocese, particularly in the Hays and Victoria area. Father Christopher Popravak, Provincial of the Denver Province of Capuchins, shared the results of the Capuchin internal audit with the Salina Diocese. Of the approximately 30 Capuchins who have served in the Salina Diocese, 13 priests/brothers were found to have credible allegations of abuse of a minor. The names of these priests/brothers have been included within this edition of The Register, along with additional information provided to the Diocese of Salina by the Capuchin Province.

"This is a difficult time for the Church," said Bishop Vincke in a letter entitled Why I Said Yes, released to the public in September 2018, "This purification of the Church by God is painful, but much needed. We need the eyes of faith as we suffer through this. 'Faith is not a light which scatters all our darkness, but a light which guides our steps in the night and suffices for the journey (Lumen Fidei #57).' Jesus is with us as light in the midst of darkness."

Bishop addresses release of list of substantiated allegations

In September of 2018, shortly after I arrived in Salina, I asked that an independent review be completed on our priest files. In this edition of The Register, you will find the results of that investigation. There are 14 diocesan priests who have substantiated allegations of abuse of a minor. Additionally, you will also find the results of the independent investigation conducted by the Order of Franciscan Minors Capuchin Province of St. Conrad, headquartered in Denver. They are 13 Capuchins who have served in our diocese at some point within their ministry and who have credible allegations of abuse of a minor.

I begin by offering my apologies to all people who are victims of clergy abuse and to the families of any person who was abused. My heart aches for you. I am sorry for any time in the past when the diocese did not appropriately respond to the plea of an individual who was a victim of abuse. There have been times in the past when the Church failed to address the needs of the people who are victims in favor of protecting the reputation of the priest. I am sorry for any time in the past when the Church attempted to solve the issues on their own instead of informing the proper law enforcement of an allegation. By our omission, we commit terrible injustice to all people who are victims of abuse. We realize that the majority of the clergy abuse occurred decades ago; however, the wounds of the abuse are very deep. I have made mistakes, too. I haven't always given the people who are victims of clergy abuse my best attention and prompt response.



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[Text of Bishop's message.](#)

I am also very sorry to the faithful, who like me, wonder, "How could this happen?" I know for many of you, the clergy abuse scandal has caused great pain and angst. I also apologize to any of you who were hurt by my decision to allow Theodore McCarrick to live at the St. Fidelis Friary in Victoria.

For the sake of transparency, I would like to identify some of the most prominent mistakes the Diocese of Salina has made in the past with regard to clergy abuse of minors.

First of all, the independent investigation showed that our clergy files were not well organized. Myself and members of my staff have already taken steps to remedy this situation. This is one mistake. But, I would like to share with you the mistakes the Diocese of Salina made with regard to four separate priest cases.

There were times when allegations against Msgr. William Merchant were not properly investigated. In looking at Msgr. Merchant's file, I was disheartened to discover that these allegations were mishandled. In 1968, the Salina Diocese received two allegations of abuse of a minor against Msgr. Merchant. A more thorough investigation of these allegations should have been done. In 1999, another allegation of abuse of a minor was made against Msgr. Merchant. It appears that a thorough investigation into this allegation was conducted until 2002, when the alleged victim reached out again. In 2002, the Salina Diocese investigated the allegation. Since then, several individuals have made allegations of abuse of a minor against Msgr. Merchant. I believe that the Salina Diocese has taken the proper course of action with the allegations that occurred following 2002.

In 2002, an allegation of abuse of a minor was made against Father Roger Hough. The Lay Review Board and local law enforcement investigated the allegation. The Lay Review Board recommended that Father Hough be removed from active ministry and placed under restrictions. This recommendation was not acted upon until 2005. In 2005, restrictions were placed on Father Hough. Additionally, the Lay Review Board submitted a report to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome to ensure the permanency of the disciplinary and restrictive measures placed on Father Hough.

In 2001, there was an allegation made against Father John Walsh. At that time, prior to concluding a thorough investigation, Father Walsh was allowed to continue to minister apparently without restrictions.

Father Robert Schleiter, a priest of the Diocese of Wichita who was serving in the Salina Diocese, had substantiated allegations against him in the 1950s. He was immediately asked to leave the diocese, and he did. However, in the 1990s, an alleged victim contacted the diocese to report abuse, and the diocese did not respond appropriately. The same alleged victim contacted the diocese again in 2003. At this point, the diocese responded to his allegation.

It is difficult to share these failings with you. But, I think it is necessary. The Church needs to be open, honest and transparent. The Church has made mistakes. The Diocese of Salina has made mistakes. I am very sorry for the mistakes that we have made. It is my sincere desire that we can learn from our errors and let them happen again.

As a diocese, we have already made progress ensuring that we respond appropriately and effectively to any allegations of misconduct that are made against the clergy. Every year, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops contracts an independent group to audit every single diocese in the country to ensure that any allegations against a member of the clergy have been handled correctly. We have consistently passed these audits since 2004. Additionally, we ensure that every Salina diocesan seminarian goes through a thorough background check and psychological evaluation before entering into the seminary. While in the seminary, annual human formation reports are submitted to my office for review. Our diocese requires any person who works with minors to undergo formation training (please see FAQ's for more details). And lastly, in order to serve outside of their own diocese, all members of the clergy must have a letter of suitability from their bishop stating that they are "a priest in good-standing."

I ask for your continued support and prayers for our diocese. Personally, I am praying for healing. I have offered numerous Masses in my chapel for the people who are victims of clergy abuse, and I have visited 29 parishes in our Diocese and offered a Mass of Healing. I will be visiting the remaining 57 parishes throughout the rest of 2019.

I am sincerely grateful that the individuals who are victims of abuse and their families have spoken out. Thank you for keeping the Church accountable. Your courage will bring about the purification that we need. If you are a victim of abuse and have not reported it, please do so (please see FAQ's for more details).

I also want to thank the priests who have served so faithfully. Sometimes, our fear and anger towards the priests who have done great evil makes us forget that many of the Catholic priests have lived lives of prayerful sacrifice. I would also like to thank Cottonwood Law, the Lay Review Board and the diocesan staff who assisted in creating this special report. The time and sacrifice of these individuals has been tremendous. Lastly, thank you to the parishioners of the Salina Diocese for your faith and understanding. I pray that, by our example, the Church is brought to greater healing and purification.

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In Christ's service,



Bishop Gerald L. Vincke

Substantiated allegations for diocesan clergy of sexual abuse of a minor

Because transparency is essential to the healing process following the clergy sexual abuse scandal in the Church, the Salina Diocese is publishing this list of substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of a minor (or vulnerable adult). This list is complete as of the publication of this issue of The Register. Any new allegations of misconduct will be investigated. A current and updated list of substantiated allegations will be maintained on the diocesan website, <https://salinadiocese.org>.

<p><u>Bachand, Louis</u> Year of birth: 1931 Year of ordination: 1957 Last known status: Deceased 1991 Estimated time frame of abuse: late 1950s-early 1960s Abuse reported: 2011 Diocesan action: Priest was deceased at time of reported allegation. Diocese conducted an investigation. Pastoral assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Concordia</i> • <i>St. Francis Xavier, Junction City</i> • <i>St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Osborne</i> • <i>St. Thomas Hospital, Colby</i> • <i>St. Ann's Home, Concordia</i> • <i>Mount St. Joseph Home, Concordia</i> More than one allegation: No</p>	<p><u>Dion, Maurice</u> Year of birth: 1917 Year of ordination: 1944 Last known status: Deceased 2004 Estimated time frame of abuse: 1960s-1970s Abuse reported: 2002 Diocesan action: Diocesan investigation was ongoing the time of the priest's death. Allegations were not substantiated until after the priest had passed away Pastoral assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>St. Francis of Assisi, Norton</i> • <i>St. Peter, Aurora</i> • <i>St. Anthony, Miltonvale</i> • <i>St. Peter, Meredith</i> • <i>St. John the Baptist, Clyde</i> • <i>Immaculate Conception, Leoville</i> • <i>St. Edward, Belleville</i> • <i>St. George, Munden</i> • <i>St. John the Baptist, Hanover</i> • <i>SS. Peter and Paul, Clay Center</i> More than one allegation: Yes</p>
<p><u>Dreiling, Christian</u> Year of birth: 1887 Year of ordination: 1915 Last known status: Deceased 1960 Estimated time frame of abuse: 1930s Abuse reported: 1939 Diocesan action: Diocese conducted an investigation. In 1940, he was placed on diocesan and court-ordered leave, which lasted eight years, due to criminal activity. During his leave, Father Dreiling received five years of treatment. Treatment was found successful, and Father Dreiling was re-instated to ministry from 1948 to his death. Pastoral assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Henrietta, Texas</i> • <i>St. Martin of Tours, Seguin</i> • <i>Sacred Heart, Oberlin</i> • <i>SS. Philip and James, Phillipsburg</i> • <i>Sacred Heart, Selden</i> • <i>St. Michael, Collyer</i> • <i>St. John Hospital, Salina</i> • <i>Sacred Heart, Park</i> • <i>Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina</i> • <i>Little Flower Home, Concordia</i> More than one allegation: Yes</p>	<p><u>Hough, Roger</u> Year of birth: 1936 Year of ordination: 1964 Last known status: Deceased 2018 Estimated time frame of abuse: 2001-2002 Abuse reported: 2002 Diocesan action: Diocese conducted an investigation removed priest from ministry in 2005. He was ordered the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome to live a life of prayer and penance. Pastoral assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Concordia</i> • <i>St. John the Baptist, Hanover</i> • <i>St. Mary, Queen of the Universe, Salina</i> • <i>St. Paul, Delphos</i> • <i>St. Mary, Glasco</i> • <i>St. Peter, Meredith</i> • <i>St. Theresa, Mankato</i> • <i>St. Mary, Jamestown</i> • <i>St. Thomas, Stockton</i> • <i>St. Isidore, Manhattan</i> • <i>St. Ignatius of Loyola, Kanopolis</i> • <i>St. Joseph, Brookville</i> </p>

- *St. Mary, Holyrood*
 - *SS. Peter and Paul, Clay Center*
 - *St. Mary, Clifton*
 - *St. Michael, Kimeo*
 - *St. John the Baptist, Clyde*
 - *St. Joseph, St. Joseph*
 - *St. Agnes, Grainfield*
 - *Sacred Heart, Selden*
 - *Immaculate Conception, Leoville*
 - *St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Osborne*
 - *St. Mary, Downs*
- More than one allegation: No

Mattas, Louis

Year of birth: 1928

Year of ordination: 1960

Last known status: Deceased 2011

Estimated time frame of abuse: mid 1960s and early 1980s

Abuse reported: 2005 and 2007

Diocesan action: Diocese conducted an investigation. The 2005 allegation was unable to be proven. The 2007 allegation was substantiated. Father Mattas was ordered by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome to live a life of prayer and penance.

Pastoral assignments:

- *St. Michael, Chapman*
- *St. Columba, Elmo*
- *St. Patrick, Gypsum*
- *St. Joseph, St. Joseph*
- *St. Isidore, Cuba*
- *St. John the Evangelist, Logan*
- *St. Mary, Densmore*
- *St. Mary, Russell*
- *St. Ignatius Loyola, Kanopolis*
- *St. Mary, Holyrood*
- *St. Joseph, Brookville*
- *St. Mary, Queen of the Universe, Salina*
- *St. John the Baptist, Beloit*
- *St. Francis Xavier, Junction City*
- *St. Augustine, Washington*
- *SS. Peter and Paul, Morrowville*
- *St. Andrew, Abilene*

More than one allegation: Yes

Merchant, William

Year of birth: 1911

Year of ordination: 1938

Last known status: Deceased 1975

Estimated time frame of abuse: 1960s-1970s

Abuse reported: 1968, 1999, 2000-2004

Diocesan action: The 1968 and 1999 allegations were investigated at that time. The 2000-2004 allegations investigated.

Pastoral assignments:

- *Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina*
- *St. John Hospital, Salina*
- *St. Mary of the Assumption, Clifton*
- *St. Bernard, Clara*
- *SS. Peter and Paul, Morrowville*
- *St. Francis Xavier, Junction City*
- *Immaculate Conception, Leoville*
- *Sacred Heart, Selden*
- *SS. Peter and Paul, Clay Center*
- *Seven Dolors, Manhattan*
- *Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina*
- *St. Joseph, Brookville*

More than one allegation: Yes

Moeder, John

Year of birth: 1931

Year of ordination: 1957

Last known status: Deceased 2012

Estimated time frame of abuse: late 1970s

Abuse reported: 2018

Diocesan action: Priest was deceased at time of reported allegation. Diocese conducted an investigation.

Pastoral assignments:

- *Sacred Heart, Plainville*
- *St. Andrew, Abilene*
- *St. Phillip, Hope*
- *Seven Dolors, Manhattan*
- *Sacred Heart, Esbon*
- *St. Mary, Smith Center*
- *St. Mary, Jamestown*
- *Nazareth Motherhouse, Concordia*
- *St. Anthony, Miltonvale*
- *St. Peter, Meredith*

O'Donohoe, Thomas

Year of birth: 1887

Year of ordination: 1910

Last known status: Deceased 1951

Estimated time frame of abuse: 1943-1945

Abuse reported: 2004

Diocesan action: Priest was deceased at time of reported allegation. Diocese conducted an investigation.

Pastoral assignments:

- *St. John the Baptist, Beloit*
- *Diocese of Wichita*
- *Nazareth Motherhouse, Concordia*
- *St. Paul, Angelus*
- *Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Concordia*
- *Archdiocese of Detroit*
- *Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina*
- *St. Thomas Hospital, Colby*

More than one allegation: No

- *St. Joseph, McDowell Creek*
 - *St. Edward, Belleville*
 - *St. George, Munden*
 - *St. Isidore, Cuba*
- More than one allegation: No

Reif, Robert

Year of birth: 1939
 Year of ordination: 1967
 Last known status: Laicized 2006
 Estimated time frame of abuse: 1970s-1980s
 Abuse reported: 1986, 2002, 2005
 Diocesan action: Diocese conducted an investigation. Suspended from ministry and sent away for treatment from 1986-1987. Was granted a leave of absence in 1988 and did not return to the Diocese of Salina.
 Pastoral assignments:

- *St. Andrew, Abilene*
- *Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina*
- *SS. Philip and James, Phillipsburg*
- *St. Francis, Claudell*
- *Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Goodland*
- *St. Isidore, Manhattan*
- *Sacred Heart, Park*
- *St. Anthony, St. Peter*

More than one allegation: Yes

Scheer, Allen*

Year of birth: 1962
 Year of ordination: 1995
 Last known status: Convicted and Laicized 2012
 Estimated time frame of abuse: 2012
 Abuse reported: 2012
 (*abuse occurred with a vulnerable adult/person with disabilities, as defined by Substantive Norms for Mc Grave Delicts, Art. 6, § 1, 1°)
 Diocesan action: Diocese conducted an investigation. Removed from ministry in 2012 and began laicization process.
 Pastoral assignments:

- *St. Mary, Queen of the Universe, Salina*
- *St. Theresa, Mankato*
- *St. Mary, Smith Center*
- *Sacred Heart, Esbon*
- *SS. Philip and James, Phillipsburg*
- *St. John, Logan*
- *Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina*

More than one allegation: No

Schleiter, Robert

(Diocese of Wichita)
 Year of birth: 1926
 Year of ordination: 1954
 Last known status: Laicized 1969; Deceased 1995
 Estimated time frame of abuse: 1950s
 Abuse reported: 1957, 1980, 2003
 Diocesan action: Diocese conducted an investigation. Priest was asked to leave the Salina Diocese in 1957, and he did. In 1980, no response to the allegation. In 2003, the same individual who reported in 1980 reported again, and the diocese responded appropriately.
 Pastoral assignments:

- *SS. Peter and Paul, Cawker City*
- *St. Mary, Downs*
- *St. Francis, Claudell*
- *Diocese of Wichita*

More than one allegation: Yes

Senecal, Eugene

Year of birth: 1912
 Year of ordination: 1940
 Last known status: Deceased 1975
 Estimated time frame of abuse: 1960s-1970s
 Abuse reported: 1994, 2002
 Diocesan action: Priest was deceased at time of report. Diocese conducted an investigation.
 Pastoral assignments:

- *Immaculate Conception, Grinnell*
- *Sacred Heart, Park*
- *St. John the Baptist, Hanover*
- *St. Peter, Aurora and missions*
- *Sacred Heart, Oberlin and missions*
- *Immaculate Conception, Minneapolis*
- *St. Michael, Kimeo and missions*
- *St. John the Evangelist, Herington*
- *St. Paul, Angelus*

More than one allegation: Yes

Van Speybroeck, Arthur

Year of birth: 1875
 Year of ordination: 1902
 Last known status: Left Diocese of Salina sometime after 1908
 Estimated time frame of abuse: 1907
 Abuse reported: 1907
 Diocesan action: Diocese conducted an investigation. Priest left Diocese of Salina after the allegation.
 Pastoral assignments:

- *St. John the Baptist, Herington*
- *Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Concordia*
- *St. Joseph, St. Joseph*

Walsh, John

Year of birth: 1929
 Year of ordination: 1955
 Last known status: Deceased 2009
 Estimated time frame of abuse: 1972-1978
 Abuse reported: 2002
 Diocesan action: Diocese conducted an investigation. Priest retired immediately following the allegation.
 Pastoral assignments:

- *St. Francis Xavier, Junction City*
- *St. John Hospital, Salina*
- *St. Martin of Tours, Seguin*
- *St. Francis Cabrini, Hoxie*

• *Immaculate Conception, Grinnell and missions*
 More than one allegation: Yes

• *St. Joseph, Damar*
 • *Holy Ghost, Sharon Springs*
 • *St. Peter, Wallace*
 • *St. Thomas, Stockton*
 • *St. Francis, Claudell*
 • *St. John the Baptist, Clyde*
 • *St. Mary of the Assumption, Clifton*
 • *St. Joseph, St. Joseph*
 • *Sacred Heart, Park*
 • *St. Agnes, Grainfield*
 • *St. Francis of Assisi, Norton*
 • *St. Joseph, New Almelo*
 • *St. Michael, Chapman*
 More than one allegation: No

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Capuchin Province of St. Conrad publishes names of friars accused abusing minors and vulnerable adults

[Click here to go to the Capuchins website for more information.](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Many are shedding tears these days, including myself, because of the great harm caused to minors and vulnerable adults by priests, deacons and religious brothers. On behalf of the Capuchin Franciscans I must beg your forgiveness for the trust betrayed by our abusive friars.

The knowledge has caused me personal grief. I am good friends with one of the victims, a student of mine who I taught at TMP-Marian. It took the individual years to come forward and let me know what had happened. Sometimes victims are filled with shame and guilt. These feelings, though, should not be the shame and guilt rightly belongs with the friars, especially those who caused the harm.

From an early age I became aware of the disastrous effects of sexual abuse. When I was in the minor seminary back east, a classmate came to me and shared the horrible truth that he was being abused. The offender was not a priest or friar. The offender was the groundskeeper. I encouraged the young seminarian to report the abuse. He did.

The groundskeeper was fired. I don't know whether the abuse was ever reported to authorities. The young man was asked to leave the seminary. I never saw him again. It grieved me then, it grieves me now.

Years later, when the Boston Globe made their revelations, I read that abuse victims can become victimizers themselves. Hurriedly I searched the internet and learned to my horror, that the former seminarian had become a priest and had, in fact, committed abuse himself. He was imprisoned for that. So many people have been harmed. There is so much grief: the grief of victims, the grief of families of victims and families of abusers, the grief of scandal-stricken parishioners, and even the grief of priests and friars who are faithful, dedicated servants but who are reeling with the constant disclosures about so many perpetrators. We cannot allow this to ever happen again.

I don't believe that we friars will ever fully comprehend the great harm done to the victims of sexual abuse. I understand that there are people very disappointed with the Church for not taking concrete steps to address these terrible crimes. Apologies are not enough. In fact, after a point, apologies sound meaningless unless accompanied by protective measures. Worse still, apologies may have the effect of opening deep wounds of the survivors.

I hope that people refer to our webpage (www.capuchins.org) to see what positive actions we have taken to prevent this kind of sexual abuse from ever happening again. Many of the steps we are taking are mirrored across this country.

As believing Christians and as ministers of the Gospel of Christ, more is expected of us. We must not only be above reproach, we must be instruments of holiness in our Church and in our world. Franciscans especially are called to be channels of God's mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

We want to reach out to any who may have experienced abusive treatment at the hands of our brother Capuchins. Please come forward and report the abuse if you haven't already. We want to work towards reparation of the harm done. We want to help restore faith in the Catholic Church and in the witness of those who follow the Gospel in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

I myself have tried to accompany victims in their healing process, as have other provincial ministers. We have not always done this well. Some victims we have disappointed, even angered by our ineptitude. We need to do better.

We Capuchins also have a history of working to promote the conversion of abusers. Not everyone knows that the attacker of 11 year old Maria Goretti, Alk Serenelli, lived out his final days in a Capuchin friary. In his crazed passion, the young Alessandro repeatedly stabbed Maria. Maria died the following day, and he said words, "I forgive Alessandro Serenelli." Serenelli was imprisoned for that heinous crime. Capuchins helped him live a life of penance and conversion after

release. He lived to see Maria become a saint. In a public act of reconciliation, Maria Goretti's mother forgave Alessandro and together they were present at her canonization.

St. Maria Goretti is often seen as the patron not only of those who were abused, but also of those guilty of abuse.

Let us pray through her intercession for the healing of those who have been deeply wounded and for the conversion of all those involved.

Dear God, we ask you to help all those who suffer from abuse. Help them find healing and peace in their lives. May Maria Goretti, who was strengthened by your Grace, join with us in prayer for the healing of all victims of abuse, particularly those abused as children or young adults.

Grant us your love that we might reach out to them in your name with hope in times of trial. As Maria prayed for her attacker, grant us the grace to pray for the conversion of all involved with the abuse: that they might seek your mercy through prayer and penance.

Loving God, pour into our hearts and lives your healing spirit, that the sacredness of every human person might be respected and protected as the precious gift of God. Help us to live in the peace which Maria Goretti had found in Christ and in the love of his mother Mary.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Prayer taken from Aleteia.org/2018)

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Christopher Popravak O.F.M.Cap.

Provincial Minister

Frequently asked questions, Diocese of Salina clergy abuse list

Q. What information are you releasing on this list?

A. This list contains the names of diocesan clergy members against whom an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor has been substantiated.

Q. How do you define "sexual abuse of a minor"?

A. Sexual abuse of a minor includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation of a minor or other behavior by which an adult uses a minor as an object of gratification. The term "sexual abuse of a minor" is not necessarily limited to the definitions of sexual abuse under civil or criminal law. The use, creation or possession of child pornographic images constitutes sexual abuse of a minor. For the purpose of diocesan policies, a minor is any person below the age of 18 years. In addition, a person who habitually has the imperfect use of reason is to be considered equivalent to a minor — referred to as a "vulnerable adult" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Normae de Gravioribus Delictis, Article 6, § 1, 1°. Promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI, May 21, 2010).

Q. What are the criteria for inclusion on the list?

A. Clergy members' names are included on this list if there was a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor against them. Their inclusion does not necessarily mean they were found guilty of a crime or are liable for civil claims. Many of the allegations received by the diocese are from decades ago and reported many years after the alleged abuse, sometimes after the death of the accused.

Q. What do you mean by a substantiated allegation?

A. When a complaint is received, the diocese starts with the presumption that the allegation is being brought forward in good faith, and therefore thoroughly investigates all allegations. An allegation is considered "substantiated" when it is corroborated with witness statements, documents, emails, photos, texts, or another source, such as law enforcement. If the accused member of the clergy admits to the allegation, the accusation is substantiated. Allegations of abuse occurring significantly in the past, even if the accused is deceased, can also be substantiated when there is sufficient corroborative evidence that supports the veracity of the allegation.

No matter how long ago the alleged abuse occurred, every effort is made to determine if the allegation can be substantiated.

Q. How many clergy files were reviewed, what time period did they cover and how many clergy with substantiated allegations were diocesan priests of the Diocese of Salina?

A. The Diocese of Concordia, now the Diocese of Salina, was established on Aug. 2, 1887. During that time, more than 600 priests have served in the diocese including both diocesan and religious clergy. Of the more than 300 diocesan clergy files, there were 63 misconduct files; all misconduct files were reviewed. Of those 63 files, 14 files contained substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of a minor.

Q. What percentage of all diocesan clergy had a substantiated allegation?

A. 4.67 percent

Q. What happens to an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a member of the clergy once it is received?

A. The diocese initiates an investigation into all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by a member of the clergy. If the allegation concerns a current act of abuse, law enforcement is contacted immediately in accordance with Kansas state law and diocesan policy. Under these circumstances, the accused is immediately put on leave and the diocesan investigation may be suspended until civil law enforcement has completed its investigation. The diocese fully cooperates in all criminal investigations conducted by civil authorities and will conduct its own investigation when it is certain that it will not interfere with any investigation being conducted. Even if the civil authorities determine not to pursue an investigation, the diocese will conduct its own investigation.

Allegations of sexual abuse of a minor are also communicated to the Diocesan Lay Review Board (LRB) in accordance with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policy. The diocese utilizes two investigators to perform internal investigations of allegations of sexual abuse. These investigators have extensive law enforcement and investigative backgrounds from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. The investigator's reports are presented to the LRB to inform their deliberations and provide the known facts on which to base a recommendation.

The LRB's members include mental and medical health professionals, social service providers, civil and canon law professionals, law enforcement officials, two priests.

The LRB is not an investigative body, but it is presented with the results of the investigation conducted by the investigators. Following its review of the case, the LRB submits its findings and recommendations to the bishop. The LRB makes recommendations with respect to all aspects of the case, including, when applicable, recommendations concerning the accused cleric's suitability for continued ministry.

If the allegation is not able to be substantiated, consistent with the recommendation of the LRB, the cleric may be returned to active ministry.

Q. Is this list complete?

A. This is a complete and accurate representation of all substantiated allegations against diocesan priests received by the diocese which involve the sexual abuse of a minor. They have each been substantiated by the LRB based on the information currently available in the diocesan files.

The list is based on the extensive file review conducted by attorney Courtney Boehm of the independent law firm of Cottonwood Law, LLC. The diocese has received some allegations of abuse occurring significantly in the past that could not be substantiated due to the lack of specificity regarding the allegation or corroborating information contained in diocesan files. These unsubstantiated allegations of past abuse do not pertain to anyone currently serving in priestly ministry.

If new allegations are made and substantiated by the LRB, the names of the diocesan clergy involved will be published in The Register and added to this list, which will be maintained on the diocesan website.

Q. Why was Cottonwood Law chosen to review the files?

A. Cottonwood Law, out of Hillsboro and specifically attorney Courtney Boehm, was chosen for her expertise in criminal law investigations, and that neither Cottonwood Law nor attorney Boehm have a direct connection with the Diocese of Salina. At the time of the audit, Boehm was the Marion County Attorney and has since been appointed a district court judge in the 8th Judicial District which consists of Dickinson, Geary, Marion and Morris counties.

Q. Why were some of these names not made public before now so that criminal charges could be made?

A. Many of these names have been made public previously. But some of these allegations were reported decades after the alleged abuse — in some cases the accused was deceased. In other instances, the victim requested that the matter not be publicized. The publication of this list, therefore, encompassing more than 100 years of records, is an effort to make all substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of minors — even historical ones — public in the same way that the diocese has made current ones.

Q. Why are you releasing this list now?

A. In light of the confusion and concern caused by the Pennsylvania grand jury report and the Theodore McCarrick scandal this past summer, there has been a call for greater transparency on the part of the Church regarding not just present allegations, but historical allegations as well. The diocese is releasing this list as part of that effort toward greater transparency.

Q. Are any of the men on this list still in active ministry?

A. No cleric with a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is permitted to exercise any form of public ministry.

Q. What is the diocese doing to prevent sexual abuse within the Church?

A. The Diocesan Safe Environment Program has three components. First, all Church clergy, seminarians, employees and volunteers are required to undergo criminal background checks. Second, persons who work with or around children are required to participate in ongoing child safety training and to keep it current. Children, too, are required to undergo personal safety training. Third, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) engages an independent firm that conducts an annual safe environment audit of the diocese. The most recent on-site audit was conducted in October 2018 by the independent firm StoneBridge Business Partners.

The diocese currently utilizes CMGConnect, an online training platform of the Catholic Mutual Group. CMGConnect presents the "Safe Haven — It's Up to Us" adult awareness training to Diocesan clergy, seminarians, employees and volunteers.

Since 2003, the diocese has instructed and completed background checks on more than 11,909 adults, and has passed every independent audit — both on-site and on-site — conducted since the audits were instituted by the USCCB in 2004.

Q. What topics are included in CMGConnect training?

A. CMGConnect training contains a required curriculum to provide ongoing training to all personnel regarding how to prevent, detect and respond to suspected sexual abuse of minors. This training is required for all clergy, seminarians, employees and volunteers. Additionally, there is special age-appropriate training provided to children. The platform also provides a multitude of optional training which includes bullying, online safety, social media safety, establishing appropriate boundaries and others. The CMGConnect platform is used by dioceses throughout the United States and Canada.

Q. What training do seminarians, or new employees, clergy and volunteers of the diocese receive regarding the Diocesan Safe Environment Program?

A. All adults — clergy, seminarians, employees, and volunteers — are required to undergo CMGConnect training. Aspiring seminarians must complete the CMGConnect training upon acceptance to seminary studies. All children in Catholic schools or religious education programs also undergo personal safety training annually.

Q. What steps has the diocese taken to ensure that those who apply for seminary are suitable for ministry?

A. The application process for admission to seminary studies for the diocese is extensive and includes lengthy interviews, multiple references, national criminal

background checks, national sex offender registry checks and a psychological assessment that includes a psychosexual evaluation. Only men willing and live the chaste and celibate life that is required of them move forward in the application process. While in seminary, men are closely supervised by a former team and routinely evaluated by the diocese.

Q. Everywhere in the news, sexual abuse by perpetrators in all walks of life is being reported. But it seems that some critics have singled out the Catholic for criticism on this matter. Why is that?

A. One instance of sexual abuse by a member of the Catholic clergy is too many. As the Church, we should hold ourselves and, in particular, our clergy to highest standards. As a result of a series of articles in the Boston Globe on the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy, the Catholic Church has undergone intense scrutiny on this issue. This led in 2002 to the adoption by the Catholic Bishops of the United States of the "Charter for the Protection of Children and People." The charter mandated policies and protocols regarding the Church's response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, as well as stark safe environment programs aimed at preventing future abuse. We are grateful to victims and the secular media who called the Church to exercise greater accountability and transparency in this area.

Q. How did the diocese deal with 14 priests on this list?

A. Of the 14 priests listed: four priests died prior to the abuse being reported; three priests were laicized; three priests were removed from ministry, two of whom were mandated to a life of prayer and penance by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome; one priest died during the investigation; one priest left the diocese for another; one priest continued to minister after the initial allegation was not properly investigated and died before subsequent reports were made and one priest was removed from parish ministry, received five years of treatment and was only allowed to minister at the nursing home where he resided.

Q. How does the diocese ensure that priests from other dioceses, ministering here either short or long-term, are not a threat?

A. Every cleric from another diocese seeking to exercise ministry in the Diocese of Salina has to present from his bishop or provincial, confirmation that he is a priest or deacon in good standing.

Q. Does the diocese work with law enforcement to investigate reports of abuse?

A. All allegations of the sexual abuse of a minor are reported to the appropriate law enforcement and child protection agencies as required by Kansas state law and the Diocesan Safe Environment Policy. Moreover, the diocese fully cooperates with law enforcement in the process of ensuing investigations.

Q. What should I do if I know of a minor that is being abused or if I've been abused by a representative of the Diocese of Salina?

TO REPORT ABUSE

Any allegation of the abuse of a minor, may be reported to the Kansas Protection Report Center (1-800-922-5330), the KBI Crime Hotline (1-800-KSCRIM ClergyAbuse@kbi.ks.gov). The Diocese of Salina fully cooperates in all criminal investigations related to abuse perpetrated by a member of the clergy or a Church official.

For the safety of children and the healing of those who have suffered abuse, the Diocese of Salina provides the following means of reporting abuse:

- Abuse Response Hotline (785) 825-0865
- Abuse Response Email reportabuse@salinadiocese.org
- Abuse Response Online Submission Form https://salinadiocese.formstack.com/forms/sexual_abuse_report

Reports will be responded to promptly by the Diocesan Assistance Coordinator. All reports are confidential with the exception of those involving the abuse of minors, which will be immediately reported by the diocese to the proper authorities, as required by Kansas State Law and Diocesan Policy.

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Listening session scheduled April 2 in Hays

Bishop Jerry Vincke and Provincial Minister Father Christopher Popravak, O.F.M.Cap., will host a listening session regarding clergy abuse.

The listening session will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 2 at St. Nicholas of Myra Church in Hays.

The public is invited to attend. Questions may be submitted anonymously in advance (email address is below), or at the listening session.

pledgetoheal@salinadiocese.org

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Victims share their story

This article was written by three individuals who were abused by a Salina diocesan priest.

The Merchant of Manhattan

Storytelling is an ancient and universal activity of all human societies. Every culture has its own stories which are shared as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation and instilling moral values. Sometimes, we erroneously think of certain stories as being fictional, with an element of exaggeration and

even a bit of fantasy. However, the story we are about to tell you is true, the characters are real and the events in the story did take place.

Of course, every compelling story has a setting, characters, a plot, conflict or a point of greatest tension and resolution. Allow us to tell you our story.

Setting:

The story primarily takes place in Manhattan during the 1950s and 1960s. Seven Dolores Grade School and Msgr. Luckey High School figure prominently in the story.

Characters:

The central figure is Msgr. William H. Merchant, a Catholic parish priest associated with Seven Dolores Church and Superintendent of Seven Dolores Grade School and Msgr. Luckey High School from March 14, 1954 to 1968.

The three other main characters are your storytellers. Each of us were raised in a Catholic home by loving parents, were altar boys, attended Seven Dolores School and graduated from Msgr. Luckey High School. We were well acquainted with Monsignor Merchant.

Your own Bishop Vincke makes a late, but important, entrance into the story.

Plot:

The plot is relatively simple: Msgr. Merchant was a pedophile and sexual predator who ruthlessly exploited grade school and high school children over an extended period of time. In our collective opinion, Msgr. Merchant's avocation was masquerading as a Catholic priest while pursuing his true vocation as an aggressive sexual predator. His position as the Superintendent of Schools offered him a replenishable supply of victims to satisfy his perversity.

Conflict:

There is no single point of greatest tension or conflict in this story; rather, there were numerous points of tension and conflict. We will spare you the sordid details of Msgr. Merchant's criminal behavior other than to tell you he molested and sexually assaulted male children. This is an incontrovertible fact. We spent our formative years in a toxic environment created by Msgr. Merchant. This was a man charged with nurturing the moral values of children, but instead, he engaged in despicable, self-indulgent sexual gratification with a sense of entitlement and total impunity.

Is this story an isolated occurrence? The record is abundantly clear on this matter: The John Jay Report, a reputable study commissioned by the Catholic Church, states that sexual abuse between 1950 and 2002 was such that "the problem was indeed widespread and affected 95 percent of the dioceses and 60 percent of the religious communities." It also states 4 percent of all Catholic priests were active sexual predators. The current number of Catholic priests accused of sexual abuse and canon and criminal sexual crimes is estimated to be 6,275. We can only conclude it was priests like Msgr. Merchant who were the progenitors of the calamitous situation now facing the Catholic Church.

You don't need to solve the mysteries of Stonehenge to conclude sexual abuse in the Catholic Church has been institutionalized, rationalized, hidden, disguised and tolerated by many in leadership positions. It is astounding to us there are still those who adhere to the notion the Church should not be pilloried in the square; such a notion stretches the boundaries of irony beyond recognition.

Resolution:

We are not certain there will ever be a definitive resolution to this story.

Msgr. Merchant died of unknown causes. He was never disciplined, censured, laicized, prosecuted or punished for his sex crimes.

Your storytellers attended college, secured undergraduate and advanced degrees and went on to have relatively normal and satisfying personal and professional lives. We all moved to different states for employment reasons. But make no mistake about the stain and residue of pain, embarrassment and shame inflicted upon us by Msgr. Merchant ever coming clean. It will not.

Epilogue:

After more than half a century, we decided to pen a letter to your bishop regarding Msgr. Merchant. We did so with a considerable amount of reservation and low expectations. We assumed Bishop Vincke would dismiss or ignore our correspondence. We know it has been a long-standing practice and policy of the Catholic Church to sanitize the harsh realities of alleged sexual abuse by the clergy by letting the lawyers do the dirty work of attacking and disparaging the very victims of abuse.

We could not have been more wrong about the Most Reverend Gerald Vincke. He was quick to respond, candid, explained his understanding of events surrounding Msgr. Merchant and offered his genuine apology. You are fortunate to have a bishop with such an abundance of integrity and moral courage. He is a true spiritual leader. Take care of him, for it is unlikely you will ever again find someone of his quality.

We are assuming there are other individuals within the Diocese of Salina that have also suffered at the hands of a Catholic priest. If you are among them, we offer our recommendation and encouragement that you communicate directly, if possible, with Bishop Vincke. Besides leading from the front, the bishop is an individual of superior intelligence, honesty, compassion and a refined sense of discretion. Your bishop knows it is very difficult to leave the shadows of sexual abuse for the light of dealing openly with this type of issue. Nevertheless, with trust in his guidance it can be done.

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The Merchant of Venice is a play written by William Shakespeare in which Antonio defaults on a large loan provided by the money lender, Shylock. At trial Shylock demands his "pound of flesh" as specified in the loan agreement if default occurred. Shylock explains the pound of flesh "will feed my revenge." Yet storytellers seek neither a pound of flesh nor revenge. Rather, we desire the truth to be known about Msgr. Merchant with the expectation it might assist o

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My brother: A priest and a sexual abuser

Special to The Register

How does one handle the news of learning that your brother, a priest, had sexually abused young men during his years as a priest? Before I expose my truth, I ask that you please allow me to give you a bit of context of who I am, a little about my family and what loving someone unreservedly means to me. This is my truth. It is me trying to understand and practice the mercy of God. Christ calls each of us to forgive and to love totally. I am mindful that God has a place in for everyone. This is my personal journey to building my home in heaven where hopefully one day God will unite all of us, even the greatest sinner among

I grew up in a very loving home. In our home we prayed the rosary as a family, went to weekday Mass, helped in the Church when the good sisters and parishes asked, some of us sang in the choir, my brothers served Mass and I went to Catholic high school. Best of all, we were blessed with a priest in our family. As siblings often do, we had our occasional fight; however, it was up to us to make our own entertainment. I have a lifetime of laughable memories. When we are together it is always fun. We have a unique bond and our love runs deep.

My parents were incredibly loving, supportive and kind. The strong love and faith that mom and dad had cannot be measured or explained. It was their love and faith which nourished and carried them through life. I am blessed to have been a recipient of such wonderful love and faith. This is instilled in me and carried daily. This faith is my compass and guide. It is what shields me in the roughest most troubling moments that life can throw your way. It is really the corners who I am.

Growing up with a brother as a priest provided benefits. There were moments of being introduced to someone special, invited to an event and one could have opened opportunistic doors. Of course, having a priest in the family also meant you were likely to meet other priests, sisters and the occasional Cardinal, Archbishop and Bishop of a diocese. I do recall the times a local priest or sister would drop into our home unannounced and my mom being her loving, kind and generous soul would invite them to eat with us. Dad would seat them close to him. Having a priest or sister at the table meant our best behavior was expected that which I thought was good in my mind. You have to understand that by having a priest or sister come to your home was unique and a gift.

As a kid, I would bank these visits and use them as my own protective life insurance! My brother may have been a pious priest in my eyes, but me, well, I have fun. When trouble came knocking — and almost always in school — it is then I would pull out the little held life insurance policy and say, "Oh Father/ Mom, I am so sorry, I promise to not do that again." I knew that I would be forgiven, and this would just make me laugh inside. I willingly admit that I am thankful to this very day to have had my brother in my back pocket, even though he wasn't in earshot of my mischievous behavior. Another benefit to having a brother as a priest is having him available to say Mass in the home. When I moved away from home, and when we gathered as a family, my brother would always have a Mass for me. It was especially great on a weekend for Sunday Mass. The homily was shortened at our request!

I shall now fast forward the clock. In 2002, the Spotlight team from The Boston Globe wrote a lengthy expose on the clergy sexual abuse in Boston. At the time I was married, had a son and I was really enjoying life. Having a brother as a priest, this story of course, made me pause and think. As a mother of a young son and I were very involved in his school. As a part of the volunteer program, we had to provide credentials, be fingerprinted and we had to succumb to a background check. This was all for the safety of the children that were in our care.

My husband and I grew to understand the importance of the sexual priest misconduct and pedophile behavior that was a concern since we lived in a city. It was important to us to protect our own son and explain to him that nobody was to touch his body inappropriately. And we spoke about this as naturally as if we were speaking about the rain falling outside. Sadly, it was a part of our lives. Mind you, it wasn't an everyday conversation, but one which we discussed through our son's growing years.

Unfortunately, this brings me to a very real moment in my life. One summer, both my brother and I were visiting home at the same time. It was during that time when I noticed something about my brother. He looked at my son in a very different way. This one glance gave me an uneasy, nervous feeling in my stomach. I cannot explain this feeling (call it a mother's intuition), but I knew from that moment forward that I didn't want to leave my son alone with my brother. I will tell you that I did not act upon that feeling at that time, but it stuck with me.

As time passed, I started growing suspicious of my brother. My love never wavered, and our relationship did not change. As a family, we still attended those Masses with great joy. My son loved having a priest in the family, because he, too, learned the perks quickly (free help in religion class!). I loved having my brother in my corner and trusted that he was praying for us and saying his private Masses for us. Our relationship as siblings carried on as normal, with weekly conversations. During that time, I never questioned his indifferent behavior, which was becoming increasingly noticeable to me.

As time passed, there were other incidents that I noticed, which I cannot speak of freely. It was in 2015, after seeing the movie, Spotlight, it struck me that it was plausible that my brother might be someone who sexually abused another individual. Too many things were adding up. I did not for a minute want to believe this could even be remotely possible. I even questioned my questions. My thoughts and questions were mine. I took ownership of what I thought to be true and never uttered a word to anyone within my family. It stayed between my husband and I.

Unfortunately, that unimaginable day arrived. The thought of my brother being someone who could sexually abuse an individual would not leave my mind. I had to have an answer. It was a hot summer day, and I made arrangements to meet with the person who I felt 100 percent certain could give me the answer I wanted.

seeking.

I met the person at an outdoor shopping center. I felt that being out and in the open would somehow ease things. I invited and asked the person if they would sit on the bench for a rest. My stomach was hurting, I was anxious, but I had to ask. Without any mincing of words I looked at the person and said, "May I ask a question? Is my brother responsible for sexually abusing individuals during his time as a priest?" Without hesitation, the person looked at me with sorrowful eyes and simply uttered, "Yes." That moment hit hard. I can still see it today. It is something one does not forget. It was the hard truth. It is a moment you cannot want to believe. I had this huge pride in my brother, and I loved being able to tell everyone that I had this wonderful brother, the priest. And, yes, at times he was on a pedestal. My joy turned to sorrow, anger and frustration. I felt so deceived. My heart sunk, my gut was in a mixture of knots and weaves and I wanted to

I took some time to digest what I finally knew to be true. I asked myself, "How do I continue to love my brother?" Sexually abusing anyone is wrong and what he did was criminal — plain and simple. He does not get a pass because he is a priest. What about the individuals that were abused? What must they be going through? I certainly cannot even begin to fathom their story, nor the shame and sorrow they felt.

It crushed me to think that this secret had been hidden. It marks an indelible sorrow on my heart. I think about the deception. I am an individual who does not condone, nor accept this behavior. I grapple each day trying to understand why the person responsible cannot admit to this terrible, terrible sin. I was taught Catholic at a very young age to say "I am sorry" and to ask for forgiveness and admit my wrongfulness. Aren't we all from the same Catholic Church? How do we get past this failure?

I have been angry and frustrated at times at my Church and have wanted to run in the opposite direction. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about what my brother has done. How can I carry on? I think about the numerous homilies where we were the audience and he spoke of Christ's love and forgiveness. I think of my parents, who are both deceased. When my brother was ordained as a priest, my parents were overjoyed. What are they thinking now? Does God get angry in heaven?

We know from scripture that Jesus got angry. How do I channel this disappointment and anger? What would I choose to do? As often as I thought of running from the Church, I knew this was not an option. I loved my Church, my parish and the people within. This was my home, and prayer was all I had; this was taught to me at a very young age. If prayer could carry my parents, it definitely could do the same for me. And so, with great hope, I continue to pray.

My love for my brother runs deep. I do not understand what he did, and I will mention again that I do not condone this act. I hate the sin of sexual abuse, but I cannot hate him. That is the truth.

My Catholic faith teaches that we are all called to forgive those who have sinned against us. As a Catholic, we all know that this is hard. My mom used to say, "The hardest part to forgiveness, is remembering and still forgiving."

Lent is upon us. I decided that during these 40 days I would just let God guide me. You see, I need God in my life to help me find peace. I need to find that place where loving my brother is complete and whole, where questions no longer linger in my mind. Our conversations are no longer as frequent as they once were. I need my space to heal. I tell him that I love him. He doesn't respond back with the same affectionate tone as he once did. I find that ironic. We sat and listened to many homilies about love and forgiveness, and now I feel that he is not practicing his own words. Truthfully, that kind of makes me laugh. I did learn things from his homilies. I have told him that I hold him accountable for teaching me how to love and forgive. He doesn't say much when I use his words, but I value what was taught.

Loving someone is hard, especially when they have hurt and failed you. The priestly sexual abuse that has happened within our world is unacceptable. To the victims, I express my deepest sorrow. I am sorry for what has happened.

It is my belief that we need to be honest and open about the wrongfulness. This will only make us a stronger and better Church. My brother spoke in his homilies that we only have one life on this earth. We have to make things right here. It is then that extraordinary things will happen. I hope I can make a difference by sharing my story with you. The take away is to love unconditionally and without judgment, for one day we will all be judged. Again, something I learned in his homilies. Thank you, my dear brother.

Let us pray together.

"Lord, heal those who have been sexually abused. Help them to find consolation in times of distress and sadness. Strengthen their heart with joy and hope. O God, help abusers, help them to seek truthfulness and be honest with themselves. Build up the many hurt lives. Wipe away any burden so that they can once again be carefree. Enlighten our final journey home where we will exult with you in the heavenly kingdom. Let the trumpets blare with glory and the angels welcome us with open arms. Sorrow will be with us no more. Amen."

This article was written by a woman whose brother was a priest that abused minors while he was serving in the Salina Diocese several decades ago.

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Abuse of loved one leaves myriad of ripples

Special to The Register

I will never forget the day that I learned that my cousins had been sexually abused by a close family member. I remember where I was, who I was with, but all I remember how I felt. I felt my heart instantaneously break. These were children who had been taken advantage of by an adult. These were children who do not understand why this happened to them. As much as I was angry at the man who had done this horrible act to these innocent children, I was more worried

how to help my cousins and their parents. Their lives were turned upside down with interviews, investigations and fear which controlled their lives for many months. Just because these children were no longer being abused does not mean that their lives went back to normal. They needed help from professionals to begin a journey of healing.

So often, when people talk about the abuse scandals within the Catholic Church, they tend to forget about the victims and focus on the one committing the crime. Answering these heinous crimes with hate and venom does not serve the victims or promote healing. We, as children of God, need to love and care for members of the flock who have been hurt. Victims of abuse suffer more than is ever imaginable to those who have not. Healing is not just going to church and praying which is incredibly important for both the victim and their family. Healing also means seeking professional help from counselors and support groups as well as finding support and love from family, friends and community members. When a person is wounded, the entire Body of Christ is wounded too. Therefore, we need to seek healing, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake of the entire Body of Christ, the Church. Let us not forget that this world we live in is not perfect and evil is real, but do not lose hope, for that is where the devil finds his way in. The only way we — children of God, victims, family, friends and loved ones — can find solace is by having faith, possessing hope and loving unconditionally.

This article was written by a young lay woman from the Salina Diocese.

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When will it end? Addressing abuse is essential for Church

Special to The Register

“When will it end?”

This is the question that has been asked by a number of parishioners with the latest report of clergy who have abused the good nature of another by sexual exploitation. It is with hope that not only the abuse will end, but also that the need to report is never again necessary.

Having been a priest for almost 46 years and a pastor for almost as long, anyone who is involved in people's lives know how devastating it is when one has been abused. Abuse truly has a life long effect. Many of the times, a series of counseling sessions can certainly assist one in being reconciled with oneself, that coming to a point in realizing that you are still a worthwhile human being, known by God, never forgotten, even though there was someone close that you and they abused your confidence. The sin is not on you, it is on the abuser; however it hardly feels like that.

Since I have been at St. Andrew in Abilene, I have felt the need to address this question to the congregation on two separate occasions. I wonder myself, “will it end?” While the issue has been difficult to address, as well as to admit that one of my brother priests have harmed another in such a way, it is yet a significant part of the healing process. As a pastor and priest, it is realized this issue exists in many, many different congregations, in the family and in the workplace.

I appreciate our bishops and the Holy Father addressing this issue. While the Catholic Church is a high profile entity that makes headlines, it is my hope that the Catholic Church and its leaders step out in front of this issue and be the driving force for healing, not only within the Church, but perhaps for our country as well. When the woman was caught in adultery, Jesus invited the one without sin to cast the first stone. They all walked away, with only the woman and Jesus left in the crowd. Perhaps each of us may realize that no one is without sin and we have the need to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. We can only pray for God to touch all.

Father Don Zimmerman was ordained as a priest for the Salina Diocese on June 2, 1973. He is the parochial administrator at St. Andrew Parish in Abilene.

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Called to serve during fiery times

Special to The Register

I couldn't believe what I was seeing, during the long Lent of 2002, as news story after news story was shown on TV about the abuse of trust and abuse of authority and the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests. I was a college student at that time, and I had grown up in the Church all my life. This wasn't the Church I knew or the priesthood I had witnessed by many faithful priests all those years.

I remember those days, praying through those news broadcasts to God through tearful eyes and clenched teeth that God needed to call now, more than ever, men to become Catholic priests. Men that now would gain no esteem from others, no honor from the world. Only suspicion and ridicule from their peers, and if no one else will answer that call, then call me.

Oh, how right I was. When I decided to enter the seminary, former girlfriends said I must be homosexual, friends told me that there are other ways to serve God, strangers said I must be a molester. The truth was that I knew words would not heal the wounds the Judas priests had created, but instead the Church needed men capable of running into a burning building to help others. I had believed for a while that Jesus had plucked me like a brand from the fire, and now he was asking me to go back into the blaze.

Joining the seminary in 2004 meant background checks, psychological exams and being asked my sexual orientation at my seminary entrance interview. Hundreds of seminarians that had heard the same call in the midst of the flames. I met dozens of priests committed to teaching men to become wounded and that the wounds of others would be our life long work.

Only once, when I was a 27-year-old seminarian, did a priest in another diocese break the boundaries and make a pass at me. I reported him to the seminary and got a call from Bishop Paul Coakley saying that he believed me and the offending priest's bishop also believed me. I saw that priest a year later as a 28-year-old priest, and he told me I had it all wrong; that I had ruined his priesthood, that many unjust things had happened to him because of what I reported.

For a day and a half, I was torn up with doubt if I had really destroyed his priesthood. I talked to my pastor at the time, and he said that he knew the offending priest and he had been in and out of the priesthood many times already. What a relief! Someone knew the offending priest's name. I wasn't carrying this sin by myself, but someone knew and believed me. That's why it's so important these names be published.

Those in a 12-step program have a saying, "We are only as sick as our secrets." These names have been a secret for too long! The victims have been carried with shame and guilt that they don't deserve to carry because they didn't create it. The cross that they have been carrying is now being put on the shoulders of those that should bear it. We also are now carrying that cross with them so that they are no longer alone.

The Catholic Church has a long history, and often times the Church is judged based on the actions of those in it that do not follow Christ's teachings. This is another one of those times. The Catholic Church has been declared dead and buried many times in its history. The problem is that when God sees something he loves dead and buried, he doesn't leave it there. Instead, he brings about its resurrection. In many ways, that resurrection has been happening since the priest I reported has left the priesthood.

Background checks and trainings are in place for all Church employees who work with children. Any employee that has a new allegation against them is turned over to law enforcement. We are going through another long Lent, and I would rather be going through the pain of setting this broken bone straight than any time in Church history.

Father Joshua Werth was ordained as a priest for the Salina Diocese on June 6, 2009. He is the pastor at St. Bernard Parish in Ellsworth and St. Ignatius Parish in Kanopolis. He is also the chaplain at the Ellsworth Correctional Facility.

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Evil will not prevail

Special to The Register

As a seminarian studying to become a Catholic priest, I have wrestled with many questions concerning the sexual abuse crisis: "How did this happen? How can it have been prevented?" And "What can be done now to ensure a crisis like this does not occur again?" Each new list of accused priests deepens the wounds of the Church as these lists acknowledge that many lives have been damaged due to these crimes and that the whole Church must deal with the consequences. However, in the midst of this bleak time for the Church, a ray of hope remains in the darkness: Jesus Christ.

One way that Christ has shined forth as a ray of hope is in my desire to answer questions about the crisis. One monk in the seminary reminded me that in the search to find answers it is important to remember that evil is the ultimate source of this crisis. The devil is seeking to destroy the Church by damaging the victims, the souls of priests, and the faith of the people of God. At times it may seem as though the devil is doing a pretty good job. But in the midst of all of this, it is important to remember the words of Jesus Christ: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it." Despite the failure of some priests to live the Gospel message, the vast, vast majority of priests are valiantly cooperating with the Holy Spirit to bring healing to the world and souls to Christ. These men who have remained faithful to their calling are a great source of hope for me as a seminarian and encourage me to persevere in following God's will.

Another way in which the sexual abuse crisis has impacted me is in the way it has shaken my confidence. I find it unlikely that hardly any of the priests who sexually abused victims entered the priesthood believing they would commit such acts. This leads me to ask, "As a priest, will I be able to avoid doing evil that brings scandal to the Church?"

Once again the answer to these fears of failure is the hope found in Jesus Christ. Only through his grace can I find the ability to faithfully serve as a priest. The foundation of my prayer this year has been one of surrender which I learned from Bishop Jerry Vincke: "Holy Spirit, I give you permission to do whatever you wish with me." Through my surrender to him, God has transformed these worries into a deeper reliance on him.

Finally, hope shines forth because in my experience, seminaries today take this crisis very seriously and are attempting to address it in the formation of the seminarian. Seminary formation consists of a very holistic regimen in which a man's human, spiritual, pastoral and academic qualities are all developed. We realize that it is important for a man to completely develop in order to live a healthy, holy life. Men in the seminary are closely evaluated to discern if they have developed appropriate skills to lead others to Christ. The work being done in the seminary today helps me to hope that one of my fellow seminarians was correct when he said, "We will be the generation that brings healing." Please pray that God gives us the grace to do just that.

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Catholic Diocese of Salina

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