

NEWS RELEASE

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Diocese of Sioux City Releases List of Credibly Accused Priests

SIOUX CITY, Iowa (February 25, 2019) — Today, during a news conference at the Diocese of Sioux City offices, Bishop R. Walker Nickless released a list of 28 priests who have been credibly accused of the sexual abuse of minors while serving in the diocese. Joining Bishop Nickless were Father Brad Pelzel and Mark Prosser, Storm Lake's Police Chief and a member of the Diocesan Review Board.

The seven-member Diocesan Review Board reviewed and investigated allegations and determined if they were credible. This effort also included the diocese's law firm reviewing the files of every priest who has served in the diocese since it first began in 1902. The review board, which was created in 2002, investigates all allegations reported to the diocese and determines if they are credible.

The Diocesan Review Board looked at all allegations of sexual misconduct and determined the first credible one dated back to an incident in 1948, with the latest occurring in 1995. Diocese officials said there have been other allegations since that time, but none has been deemed credible by local law enforcement and/or the review board. The list released today is available on the diocese website at www.scdiocese.org.

"On behalf of the Church, I am profoundly sorry and apologize to each victim. I am grateful for the courage each victim has demonstrated by coming forward and I am committed to helping each of them heal," offered Bishop Nickless. "Publishing this list is the beginning of a new chapter in the history of our diocese. We want it to usher-in a climate of openness and transparency, resulting in the protection of our youth and accountability for clergy and church leaders.

Nickless and other diocese leaders explained that only priests with allegations of sexual abuse of minors that the board determined to be "within the realm of possibility" were included on the list. As a part of this review, the board considered any objective information that was available, including consistency of the testimony of witnesses, physical evidence, and accuracy of the details, such as the placement of the accused at the time the allegation is said to have taken place. In addition, the board considered other corroborating evidence from files, or other possible witnesses.

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The priests named on the list have not been charged or convicted in a civil or criminal case, but the diocese is working with church and civil authorities to determine appropriate civil, religious and legal responses for all priests who are listed. In addition, none of the priests on the list are currently involved in the ministry, or work with any youth, nor will they be permitted to do so in the future.

The list originally contained 29 names; however, the diocese received notification that one of the priests has appealed to Rome, and therefore his information is being withheld pending resolution. Twenty-two of the named priests are deceased, five live out of state, and one individual who left the priesthood lives in Iowa. A total of 515 priests have served in the Diocese of Sioux City since its inception in 1902.

“My colleagues and I at the diocese categorically condemn all cases of sexual abuse and misconduct,” said Bishop Nickless, who has served the church for 46 years. “Sexual abuse is in direct conflict with our mission and the promises we make as priests. I ask for your prayers for victims as they struggle to heal. May they may find comfort in God’s love, and in ours.”

Diocese leaders acknowledge the list could grow as other credible accusations against priests are made. Given this, they encourage anyone who has been sexually abused by a priest or clergy member from the diocese should call local authorities and contact their Victim Assistance Coordinator by calling 1-866-435-4397 or 712-279-5610.

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Diocese of Sioux City

Formed in 1902, the Diocese of Sioux City encompasses 24 counties in northwest Iowa. The mission of the diocese is to nurture the Body of Christ through our Baptismal call to proclaim, celebrate, serve and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. More information on the diocese can be found at www.scdiocese.org.