



DIOCESE OF SIOUX CITY

Background Information

Nationally, the abuse of children and others by Catholic clergy has been widely publicized and is likely to continue to be covered by the media. The horrific revelation by a Pennsylvania grand jury in 2018, that an estimated 300 priests were accused of abusing around 1,000 children over a period of 70 years, was soon followed by the resignation of Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington, D.C., who is accused of sexually abusing young priests and seminarians as well as minors.

The Diocese of Sioux City has not been immune from such allegations, which have occurred in virtually every American diocese (and many dioceses in other countries). Recently, there have been media reports questioning the diocese's handling of allegations and the failure to share information broadly. These stories centered around a former diocesan priest who, in 1986, admitted to abusing 50 boys while serving in Sioux City. He relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico, but moved back to a retirement center in Ft. Dodge, Iowa, which generated significant media coverage. He now lives out of state.

Questions from members of the diocese, as well as media outlets, underscore the need for the leadership of the Diocese of Sioux City to be more transparent, open and accountable regarding the credible allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests. Therefore, the Diocesan Review Board investigated allegations, developed the list of priests with credible allegations, and Bishop Nickless is addressing this matter with the media, members of the diocese, and the general public.

The Dallas Charter

Despite current revelations reported in the media, the vast majority of cases of the sexual abuse of young people by the clergy occurred prior to 1985. Church officials were slow to recognize and acknowledge the problem, but in their June 2002 general meeting in Dallas the full body of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* commonly referred to as the Dallas Charter.

Its major mandates for all American dioceses included:

- Zero tolerance for sexual abuse against minors
- Mandatory reporting to civil authorities
- The creation of a Review Board at each diocese
- No secret financial settlements
- A variety of directives to help victims heal

Diocese of Sioux City Review Board

Every claim of sexual abuse or misconduct we receive is reported to local authorities and the Diocesan Review Board. The review board is comprised primarily of laypersons including individuals from law enforcement, the judicial system, health care, and others. Once an allegation has been made, the review board reviews the facts and may call for an investigation. Based upon their findings, the review board will make the determination if an allegation is credible or not credible.

If the allegation involves a priest currently in ministry, the Bishop will suspend the priest from duties until local authorities and the review board complete their respective investigations. About a year ago, there was an allegation made against a priest who was suspended, but the allegation was found not credible by local law enforcement and the review board.

The following individuals make up the current Diocesan Review Board:

Voting Members:

- Amy Bloch, LISW, CADA
- John Ackerman
- Martha Burchard, R.N.
- Joe Frisbie
- Mary Hanno
- Mark Prosser
- Verna Welte, R.N.

Resource Members (non-voting):

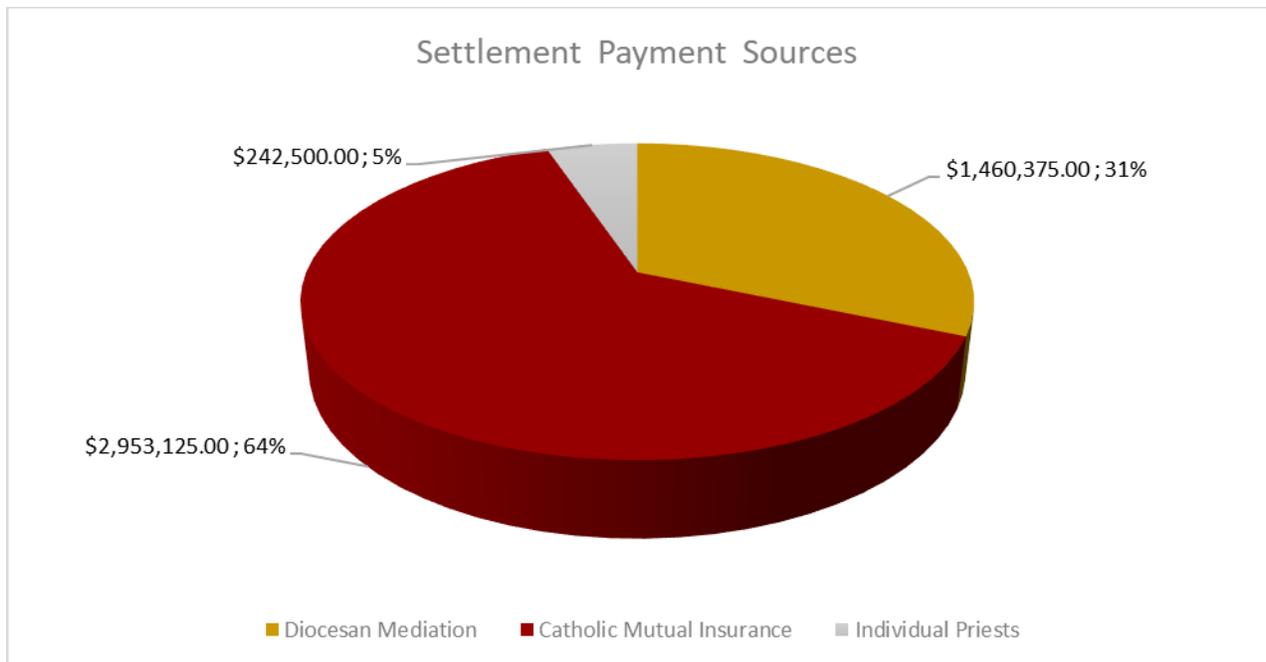
- Bishop: Most Reverend R. Walker Nickless
- Vicar General & Moderator: Reverend Brad Pelzel
- Legal Advisor: Michael Ellwanger
- Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator: Dan Ellis
- Director of Development and Communications: Susan O'Brien

The Victim Assistance Coordinator

The Dallas Charter called for each diocese to create the position of victim assistance coordinator. The Diocese of Sioux City's victim assistance coordinator is Angie Mack, an expert in the area of sexual abuse of children employed by MercyOne Siouxland. Angie is not a diocesan employee nor a Catholic. Her reports go to the review board and the bishop. She can be reached at 1-866-435-4397 or 712-279-5610.

Settlement

When a victim comes forward and makes an allegation the Church tries to help in the healing process. Understandably, some victims do not want to receive guidance or counseling from a member of the clergy. From 2002 to present, the Diocese of Sioux City, its insurance company (Catholic Mutual) and individual priests have paid out \$4,655,500 to 58 claimants, plus additional payments for counseling. These payments have generally been reported in various media outlets.



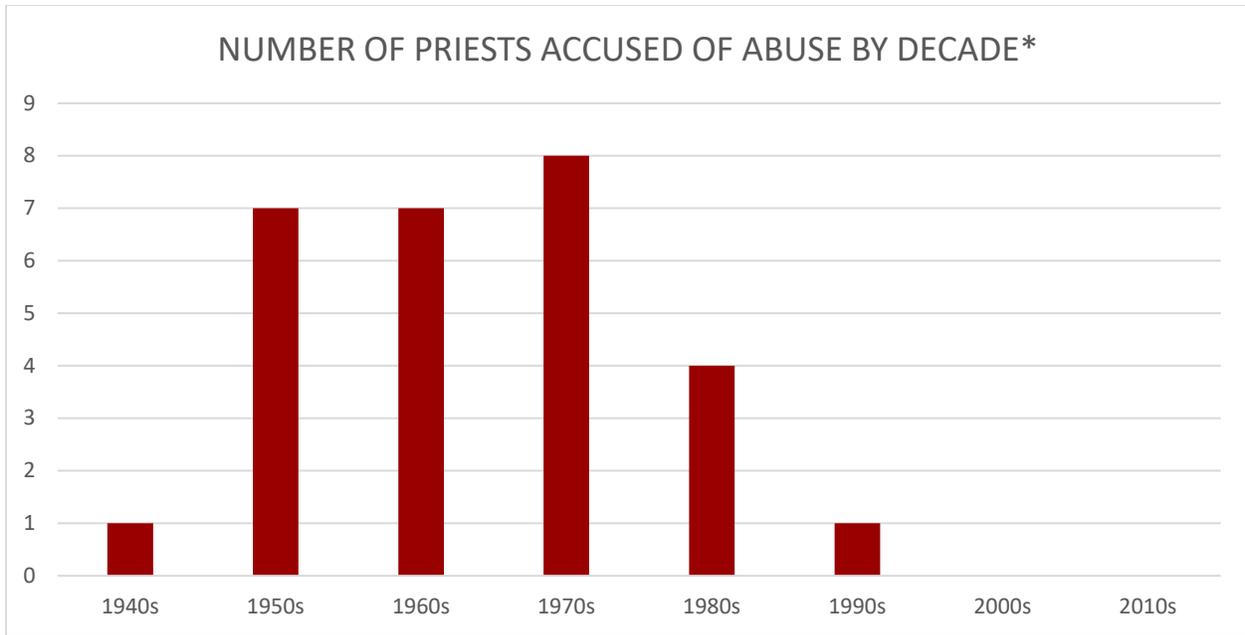
The Diocese of Sioux City List

The Diocese of Sioux City has released the names of credibly accused priests. The list includes 28 names. 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. The first credible allegation occurred in 1948; the latest in 1995. An estimated 515 priests have worked in the diocese since it was founded in 1902. Over half of the accused priests have one credible accusation by only one person.

Producing this list has been painful. Likewise, the list is likely not complete and is based upon allegations by victims who stepped forward. There may be additional victims who have not yet stepped forward and reported abuse from years ago. It has been challenging to determine all of the facts related to each case because the majority of the priests are deceased and some of the abuse is alleged to have occurred more than 50 years ago.

The list is of priests *accused, not convicted*, of abuse. Accusations against priests not involving sexual abuse with a minor were not included on the list. Priests with allegations of the sexual abuse of minors that the board determined to be “within the realm of possibility” – the most expansive definition used by any diocese – were included. The diocese is working with church and civil authorities to determine appropriate civil, religious and legal responses for all priests who are listed.

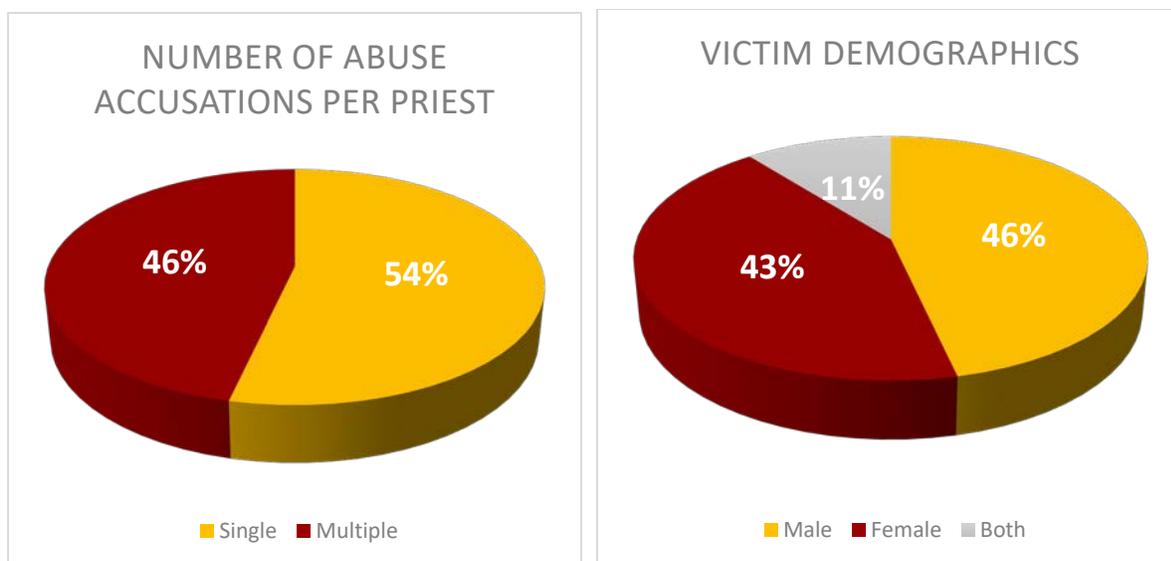
There are 28 names listed. Twenty-two of the individuals are deceased, five live out of state, and one individual left the priesthood and still lives in Iowa.



*Some priests were accused of abuse spanning multiple decades.

The graph shows the number of priests, by decade, who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse (sexual conduct by a member of the clergy against a minor). This means the Review Board considered any objective information that was available, including consistency of the testimony of witnesses, accuracy of the details, such as the placement of the accused at the time the allegation is said to have taken place and physical evidence. In addition, the Board considered other corroborating evidence from files or other possible witnesses.

The graph shows, for example, that in the 1960s, seven priests were accused of abusing minors. In the 1970s, eight priests were accused. A precipitous drop occurred in the number of first-time accused priests after the 1970s. Only one priest has been added to the list since the 1980s.



Fifteen of the priests had a single credible allegation of sexual abuse against them, and 13 had multiple allegations. Thirteen priests were accused of sexual abuse involving males, twelve of abuse involving females and three of abuse involving both sexes. Overall, there were 106 credible allegations of sexual abuse.

Historical Perspective

The Dallas charter also created a National Review Board, which among other things was assigned responsibility to oversee the completion of the study of the causes and context of the crisis. The board contracted with the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York to conduct the research. It issued its report in 2004, which you can see at: (www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/)

Among its key findings:

- The total number of American priests with allegations from 1950 through 2002 was 4,392 out of a total of 109,694 priests who served in ministry at some point during that time. That is equivalent to 4 percent of priests in ministry.
- Many of the accused priests died before action could be taken against them, and many cases of abuse went unreported.
- There was an increase in incidences until the late 1970s, followed by a sharp decline by 1985.
- Many accused priests began abusing years after they were ordained, at times of increased job stress, social isolation, and decreased contact with peers. Generally, few structures, such as psychological and professional counseling, were readily available to assist them with the difficulties they experienced. Many priests let go of the practice of spiritual direction after only a few years of ordained ministry.

Conclusion

Our main focus is on the victims, who were children or youth at the time of the abuse. As we know from the gospels, Jesus had a great love for children. But we also recognize the clergy sexual abuse crisis has been devastating for priests, deacons, seminarians and religious individuals. And it has been particularly painful for lay people, many of whom have been saddened or angered or who have left the church because of the scandal.

Publishing this list is the beginning of a new chapter in the history of our diocese. We want to usher in a climate of openness and transparency resulting in the protection of our youth and accountability for clergy and church leaders. As leaders in faith, we must do everything we can to atone for and help remedy our church's sins, and we are also committed to minimizing the chances of repeating them.

Our hope is that releasing the names of credibly accused priests will help the victims, and the church, in the healing process.

We will continue to add to the list as more victims step forward. Only through being transparent and accountable can we begin to heal and move forward together.

We ask for forgiveness and prayers that will heal and reiterate trust in God's all-inclusive love.