



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Families of Students in Catholic Schools and Religious Education Classes across the Diocese of Sioux City:

As you may know, the Diocese of Sioux City has shared publicly a list of priests who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. The cases have been investigated by the Diocesan Review Board with the first occurrence dating back to 1948 and the latest in 1995. We conducted a news conference, shared the information with the media, and posted the information on the diocesan website: www.scdiocese.org

The news media will cover this issue extensively and your son/daughter will likely ask questions about it. Below is information I hope you will find helpful when you talk with your children. Addressing the issue is important as we work together to create a culture of transparency, openness and accountability in our diocese.

- Questions will likely be asked about how the Catholic Church handled allegations of sexual abuse of minors in the past. Reports are often critical of the church and church leadership. *Reassure your student that significant changes and reforms were implemented in 2002 in how allegations are addressed.*
- In our diocese, questions have been asked about the handling of similar cases and the failure to share information with the public. Decades ago, when the abuse occurred, it was believed that abusers could be sent for treatment and return to ministry. Sadly, we know that is not true. Many returned and abused again. It is a tragic and shameful time in our history. *Be honest and open about this and let them know that allegations today are referred to local law enforcement authorities.*
- Twenty-eight priests are listed as having been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. 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 and the latest was in 1995. Twenty-two of the priests are deceased, five live out of state, and one individual who left the priesthood continues to live in Iowa.

Today, we have a strong and robust program in-place to protect youth in our schools and parishes, all of which should be shared with your children. The program includes:

DIocese of Sioux City

1821 JACKSON STREET • SIOUX CITY, IOWA 51105
(712) 233-7555 • FAX: (712) 233-7557

- Every allegation of misconduct is immediately relayed to local law enforcement to investigate and review. The Diocese of Sioux City cooperates fully with authorities in the investigation.
- Every allegation is forwarded to the review board for their independent assessment as well. Even if local authorities determine the allegation does not meet the criteria for further investigation or criminal charges, the review board may act.
- All volunteers and employees working with the diocese undergo a comprehensive background check to ensure there is no history of misconduct or improper behavior. The diocese prohibits anyone with such a history from working with the church.
- All diocesan volunteers and employees take the VIRTUS training program. This training empowers everyone working in the diocese to be effective advocates for our youth.

We continue to seek ways to improve safeguards and do everything in our power to protect children, for whom Jesus had a special love.

We understand the posting of these names may open old wounds, or even create new hurt. However, we believe our faith compels us to shine a light on this darkness so we can heal together and send a clear message to the victims: *We believe you and care about you.*

Publishing this list is the beginning of what we intend to be 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 survivors. As leaders in faith, we must do everything we can to atone for and help remedy our church's sins, but we are also committed to minimizing the chances of repeating them.

I personally recognize the pain and trauma of survivors and, like many of you, feel anger and shame for the church I help lead in our diocese. I ask for your prayers for victims as they struggle to heal. May they may find comfort in God's love, and in ours.

Finally, I invite you to join me on Thursday, February 28 at 6:00 p.m. as we celebrate a Mass of Renewal at the Cathedral. If time or distance is a challenge and you cannot attend, please check with your parish about their plans.

Your Brother in Christ,



Most Reverend R. Walker Nickless
Bishop of Sioux City