



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



Pastoral Letter Regarding the Release of Names by Other Texas Dioceses
and Why the Diocese of Fort Worth Has Made Public the Names of
Clergy Credibly Accused of Sexual Abuse of Minors Since 2007

January 31, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, the other fourteen Catholic dioceses in Texas and the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter are publicly releasing the names of clergy who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor in their respective dioceses. In 2005, the Diocese of Fort Worth became the first diocese in Texas to identify publicly priests who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor within the diocese, and that list has been posted on the Diocese's website since 2007. The disclosure of our list continues to be made as part of the Diocese of Fort Worth's ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of our children and its commitment to transparency, accountability, and further healing for victims. I support the other Texas bishops for taking like action.

Our list, which has been maintained and updated on our website since 2007, can be found at <https://fwdioc.org/list-of-clergy-with-credible-allegations.pdf>. It names seventeen (17) members of clergy with credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor while serving in our diocese since its establishment in August 1969. Of the 17 individuals identified on our list, eight (8) are priests who were ordained or incardinated into the Diocese of Fort Worth, one (1) is a permanent deacon who was ordained in the Diocese of Fort Worth, and seven (7) are priests from other dioceses or religious orders but who served in the Diocese of Fort Worth. There is also one religious brother on the list. Eleven are dead, and none are serving in ministry today. When an allegation of sexual misconduct against a minor is made against anyone who works for the Church, the Diocese of Fort Worth immediately contacts law enforcement agencies and cooperates fully with them in their ensuing investigations.

In the Gospel of Saint Matthew (18:1-7) we read that Jesus positions in the first place of importance in His Kingdom the person of a child; we further read the severity of His judgment for those who harm a child or who contribute to the harming of a child. The protection of our children is a seriously grave moral obligation and is of paramount importance to the Diocese. The Diocese of Fort Worth is committed to eradicating the evil of sexual abuse of minors. The Diocese of Fort Worth has taken and will continue to take affirmative steps to ensure the safety of our children.

Complacency is one of the chief enemies of a safe environment. Since its inception in 2002 and with the latest improvements in the last several years, our Safe Environment program requires that every

member of clergy, staff, choir members, catechists, teachers, seminarians, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, cantors, ushers, principals, school teachers, coaches, parents, and all volunteers, as well as me your bishop, are trained and retrained every two years on how to protect our children by learning the signs to identify child sex abuse. The Diocese of Fort Worth has 34,000 adults current in their safe-environment training.

We have learned through listening to the experiences of victims and survivors that sexual abuse of minors also is a threat that exists beyond the clergy and institution of the Catholic Church. It threatens families, athletics, our public schools, youth service organizations, the world of the media and entertainment, politics and law enforcement, as well as other churches and houses of worship of various faiths and denominations. It is the responsibility of the Catholic Church to be at the forefront of these efforts at eradicating the evil of sexual misconduct with minors in our society through both our words and our actions.

I am deeply sorry for any sexual abuse anyone has endured and suffered. I am deeply ashamed and sorry for any past failures of those entrusted with leadership in the Church to protect our children. I pray that healing and just reconciliation can be achieved for every victim of sexual abuse and that their perpetrators be brought to justice. As your bishop, I make a firm purpose of amendment to make every effort to prevent anyone from suffering such indignity ever again.

The Diocese of Fort Worth invites anyone who has information about abuse or who has been abused by any priest, deacon, employee, or volunteer of the Church to contact us so the Church can reach out to you or any victims. Please contact the Office of Victim Assistance at 817-945-9345; the Director of Safe Environment at 817-945-9334; or the Chancellor and Moderator of the Curia, Monsignor E. James Hart, at 817-945-9315. If a crime has been committed, we urge you to immediately contact the local law enforcement officials, and then contact the Diocese.

Please join me in praying for all who are victims and survivors of sexual abuse especially as perpetrated against minors. Let us work together in our society in eradicating this grave evil. I remain,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael F. Olson".

Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA
Bishop of Fort Worth

Please see my pastoral video which can be found on the Diocesan website at: <https://fwdioc.org/>