

Responses to The Archbishop's Release of list of Clergy names with Credible Abuse

--As you know, the Archdiocese last week released a list of names of all St. Louis Catholic clergy with *credible* allegations of sexual abuse of a minor going back about 50 years. This follows a release of names done by the Pennsylvania Attorney General for churches in that state, and the release here is part of the ongoing effort to cooperate with all legal entities, and to be part of healing and renewed efforts to eliminate these abuses.

--This is upsetting to deal with again, but as you also know, there was nothing new in this release. It again covered 50 years of accessible history. About a third of those listed are deceased, and all the rest have been removed from ministry for many years.

-- Practices continue to monitor the behavior of priests and other ministers, and access to situations that could be provide opportunity for abuse or even be subject to misinterpretation. Every day in our parish office, coaches and other athletic leaders, teachers, and all volunteers in the school and parish are screened and have background checks run.

--Another fact which is important to understand is that the incidence of clergy who commit these terrible acts of abuse of minors is roughly in the same percentage as that of the national male population. Studies continue to show that about 5% of American men are prone to acting out actions abusive of minors, for reasons not clearly understood. The percentage of priests involved in abusive actions follows this average or is slightly below. For instance, in the Pennsylvania release of names, 3% of the total number of priests over that time period were named as credibly accused. This is not any kind of excuse, nor cause for relief. We should expect that the number of involvement by priests would be zero, as well as the general population. However these numbers of incidence tell us that neither priesthood nor celibacy dispose a person any more than others to the evil of child abuse. The vast majority of those who abuse children, as regular news reports show, are married men.

This leaves us back to realize that as long as human beings are involved in any kind of ministry, screening and vigilance will be required to lessen and eliminate the abuse of minors. Fortunately studies by outside groups like the John Jay Study show a drastic reduction of clergy abuse of minors since the year 2000, since more rigorous screening and vigilance have been established.

The Missouri Attorney General will release its own list of St. Louis Clergy with credible allegation of abuse, in the near future. If there are any discrepancies with the list published by the Archdiocese, the differences will be reconciled.