



Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

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Diocese of Springfield responds to Jeff Anderson news conference

The following can be attributed to Diocese of Springfield in Illinois spokesperson, Andrew Hansen:

First, the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois and Bishop Thomas John Paprocki want to again offer our profound sadness and deep sorrow for the shameful wrongs and evils perpetrated during a dark chapter in our Church history where innocent believers were abused at the hands of some clergy. The extreme hurt some of our clergy caused decades ago is a disgrace, and it grieves all of us to see the suffering these sins have caused. The Diocese of Springfield pledges continued efforts to bring healing to the victims and survivors of this evil.

In terms of today's report from Mr. Jeff Anderson, the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois has already published a website (promise.dio.org) with the names of 19 priests with credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor, none of whom are in active ministry, and 13 of whom are deceased. Some of those names clearly noted as deceased on this website appear as "status unknown" in Mr. Anderson's report, despite his claims to have diligently and thoroughly reviewed all publicly available information. Further, Mr. Anderson claims that many credibly accused priests are still active in ministry, although there are none in the Springfield Diocese and Mr. Anderson was only able to identify one among his statewide list of nearly 400. The facts are clear in the Diocese of Springfield that the majority of instances of abuse occurred more than 30 years ago, and only one instance has occurred in the past 20 years.

Mr. Anderson's report includes four additional names, which are not included on the diocese's list of priests with credible allegations of abuse. Here are the facts regarding those names:

- Father Frank Martinez is a priest of the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa and was in the Springfield Diocese for six weeks in 1985, from Oct. 7 to Nov. 19, at which point he resigned his position as a hospital chaplain. There are no records of allegations of abuse by Father Martinez during his six weeks here.
- The allegations involving Father Stanislaus Yunker and Father Louis Schlangen were related to alleged events of more than 30 years ago. When the diocese was made aware of these allegations, diocesan officials reported it to civil authorities and no charges were brought. In addition, the Diocesan Review Board, which is comprised of predominantly lay people not employed by the diocese with professional backgrounds in areas such as state and local law enforcement, criminal and civil law, education, and psychology, and a victim and survivor of clergy abuse, reviewed the allegations and did not find them credible.

- Regarding the case of Father Richard Niebrugge who died 1983, a lawsuit was filed against him in 2004. That lawsuit was dismissed by the courts. There was no attempt, as Mr. Anderson claims, to cover up these allegations. They were publicly filed and civilly litigated.

Mr. Anderson claims simultaneously that his report only includes names of priests already publicly accused, while also saying that this report is new. The report is an impressive professional marketing brochure, but it does not represent, as Mr. Anderson suggests, a thorough and diligent review of the publicly available facts, and it is highly misleading and irresponsible.

If Mr. Anderson, or any member of the public, has new information about any instance of abuse, the diocese encourages them to contact civil authorities, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse Hotline at 1(800)-25-ABUSE, and the Diocese's Child Abuse Reporting and Investigation number at (217) 321-1155.

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