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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Archdiocese submits sexual misconduct documents to Nebraska attorney general

November 30, 2018 (Omaha, Neb.) – The Archdiocese of Omaha has submitted to the Nebraska attorney general documents pertaining to church personnel accused of criminal sexual misconduct since 1978.

The documents included information on 24 archdiocesan priests with substantiated allegations of the abuse of minors or misconduct with minors. In all, documentation on 38 clergy were given to the attorney general for alleged abuse or misconduct with minors as far back as 1956 but reported to the archdiocese between 1978-2018.

“We acknowledge this report with sorrow, and know that it will cause a great deal of pain,” said Archbishop George Lucas. “We’re deeply saddened so many innocent minors and young adults were harmed by the church’s ministers. To victims and their families, I am sorry for the pain, betrayal and suffering you have experienced in the church.”

Last summer, Attorney General Doug Peterson requested from Nebraska’s three Catholic dioceses the files of church personnel accused of criminal sexual misconduct. The attorney general’s request followed the Pennsylvania grand jury report on decades of clergy sexual abuse of minors in six of that state’s eight dioceses. The archdiocese immediately pledged its full cooperation and began a review of its files.

Of the 38 clergy with substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of minors or misconduct with minors since 1978:

- 34 offended before 2002 and the establishment of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People;
- 24 were archdiocesan priests;
- 10 were priests from another state/country/religious order ministering in the archdiocese;
- four were deacons.

The complete list of clergy is available online at report.archomaha.org. The report will be updated if the archdiocese receives future substantiated allegations or after the archdiocese conducts an upcoming forensic audit of its historic clergy files.

(more)

Archbishop Lucas said there is no one currently serving in ministry – 132 active priests and 215 active deacons in the Archdiocese of Omaha – who has had one substantiated allegation of sexual abuse against a young person.

“When we see these numbers that go back many decades, we can see that there was a pattern of failure – both on the part of those who misused their office to abuse minors and vulnerable adults, and on the part of those who refused to listen to victims in a compassionate, just and forthright way,” Archbishop Lucas said.

In recent listening sessions with rural and urban parishioners, as well as in numerous individual conversations, Archbishop Lucas promised that clergy will be held to a high standard of conduct as they perform their pastoral and sacred responsibilities.

He also promised a greater transparency in the resolution of cases of misconduct involving a member of the clergy.

“The higher standards of conduct and greater transparency are seen as essential in restoring the trust that has been compromised by the misconduct of a few, as well as to do all that is reasonably possible to protect vulnerable youth and adults from harm,” Archbishop Lucas said.

Archbishop Lucas said that in recent years, the archdiocese has followed standards which reflected best practices to determine whether a priest could continue in ministry, after having committed an act or acts of misconduct.

He said people are insisting that it is not enough to say that no criminal charges have been filed against a cleric, when a violation of his pastoral responsibility or the moral law have clearly taken place, when judging his fitness for ministry.

Archbishop Lucas said he is committed to look at the placement of all clergy, to ensure that they are meeting the rightful expectations of the church and of society.

“We have to acknowledge the ugly truth of the past so that we can repent, but also so that all in the archdiocese can be resolute in our commitment to ensure that no one is hurt going forward.”

“I see this as a moment of grace,” Archbishop Lucas said. “The acknowledgement of this painful part of our past allows us to better experience the healing and peace that Jesus desires for the church.”

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