

Jesuits' Maryland province releases lists of clergy with credible claims

The Maryland province of the Society of Jesus Dec. 17 released the names of Jesuits who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors since 1950. They include Jesuits from the province and other Jesuits who have served the province.

Most of the cases "date back decades, with the last known incident of sexual abuse of a minor by a Jesuit of the Maryland province happening in 2002," Jesuit Father Robert M. Hussey, provincial, said in a letter accompanying the release of names.

The province, based in the Baltimore suburb of Towson, released four lists and a total of 29 names. Eight of the Jesuits named are deceased.

"We are deeply sorry for the harm we have caused to victims and their families," Father Hussey said.

"We also apologize for participating in the harm that abuse has done to our church, a church that we love and that preaches God's care for all, especially the most vulnerable among us," he said. "The people of God have suffered, and they rightly demand transparency and accountability. We hope that this disclosure of names will contribute to reconciliation and healing."

Father Hussey said, "We view the disclosure today of our shameful history as part of our commitment now to preventing abuse," he said, adding that, the province has instituted "numerous reforms" in the last 15 years for responding to claims of abuse "and striving to insure the safety of minors."

The province released names of credibly accused Jesuits in four groupings depending on the current status of the Jesuit.

"One of the groups refers to allegations that could not be fully investigated to determine credibility, but we are releasing the names because there is a reasonable possibility the alleged abuse occurred. one of four categories."

The groupings and the number of Jesuits named in each category are as follows:

— Five with a credible or established offense against a minor (anyone under the age of 18) who are current Jesuits of the Maryland province or are current Jesuits from another province whose offense took place in the Maryland province: <https://bit.ly/2SRmjaU>.

— Eight with a credible or established offense against a minor (anyone under the age of 18) who are deceased or are former Maryland province Jesuits or are deceased or former Jesuits from another province whose offense took place in the Maryland province: <https://bit.ly/2EqwpeV>.

— Six with an allegation of an offense against a minor (anyone under the age of 18) that could not be fully investigated to determine credibility, but for which there is a reasonable possibility, or semblance of truth, the alleged offense occurred. These are deceased or former Jesuits of the Maryland province or are deceased or former Jesuits from another province whose alleged offense took place in the Maryland province: <https://bit.ly/2Ck4trX>.

— Five from other provinces who served in the Maryland province at one time. The province is currently aware that these Jesuits have been publicly named by other provinces or by (arch)dioceses for an allegation of abuse against a minor (anyone under the age of 18) that took place outside the Maryland Province. These allegations were not reported to or investigated by the Maryland province. This list includes another five men from the Jesuits' U.S. West province who studied at some point in the Maryland Province: <https://bit.ly/2R3onze>.

Father Hussey said the Maryland province has "a strict zero-tolerance policy" regarding sexual abuse and reports to civil authorities any accusations of sexual abuse involving a minor.

Ethics in ministry policies have been in place for Jesuits since 2003, and an independent review board evaluates accusations and the province's response to them, the provincial said.

Since 2006, Praesidium Inc., an independent agency, has accredited the province's

compliance with standards for safeguarding of minors.

The province will have an external audit of its files “to ensure that our previous reviews were both accurate and complete,” Father Hussey. The move is “as an additional step toward transparency and accountability.”

The Maryland province’s release of names follows by a week the same action by the leaders of two other U.S. provinces of the Society of Jesus.

Jesuit Father Scott Santarosa, provincial of the order’s West province based in Portland, Oregon, and Jesuit Father Ronald Mercier, provincial of the Central and Southern province based in St. Louis, released separate lists Dec. 7 of priests and religious brothers who were alleged to have abused minors.

They included the names of more than 150 clergy with credible sexual abuse claims against them dating to the 1950s.

In Washington, the presidents of both Georgetown Preparatory School and Gonzaga College High School released messages to their school communities Dec. 17 addressing the release of the names.

Jesuit Father James Van Dyke, Georgetown Preparatory School’s president, said: “There is nothing that saddens and disturbs me so much as this news and the thought of the lives of young people and their families disrupted and, in some cases, destroyed by the callous actions of abusers, particularly those who have used positions of trust such as ministry and education as a cloak for misdeeds.”

“I cannot express strongly enough on behalf of this institution and of the Society of Jesus my deepest apology and contrition to those whom we failed,” Father Van Dyke wrote. “I am grateful to those who came forward; that is an extraordinarily difficult task, I know, on so many levels — moral, spiritual, and psychological.”

He added, “Your painful honesty about what you experienced has made the rest of us aware of a problem — a deeply-rooted problem that afflicts all human institutions — that we all must acknowledge and face. I pray daily for the healing of the pain that you and your loved ones have experienced.”

Jesuit Father Stephen Planning, president of Gonzaga College High School, announced that the school would rescind any honors or recognitions that the accused priests may have received, if that had not already been done.

“The clergy abuse crisis has been a deeply damaging and demoralizing experience for the people of God as well as for those Jesuits who have lived their vocations faithfully. However, no one has been more profoundly hurt than the victims of abuse themselves. They trusted in these men, only to have that trust shattered,” wrote Father Planning in his message.

Acknowledging “that words are completely inadequate,” he extended his “most sincere and heart-felt apology” to anyone “who has been harmed physically, sexually, emotionally or spiritually by any member of the Society of Jesus.”

“No person should ever have to experience abuse,” he said. “It is inexcusable.”

In his statement, Father Hussey said: “In this season of Advent when we hear the promise of God’s coming among us. We pray for all victims of abuse and for our church, and we strive now to participate in the future God is bringing into being.”

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Editor’s Note: The lists released by the Jesuits’ Maryland province and the full text of the provincial’s statement can be found online at mdsj.org.

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Contributing to this story was Kelly Sankowski, a reporter at the Catholic Standard, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington.

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