

Retired Priest Accused of Sexual Abuse of Minor in mid-1970s

Tuesday, August 20, 2019

A man has informed the Archdiocese of Baltimore that in the mid-1970s he was sexually abused by now-retired priest, Ronald Belschner. The man claims Belschner abused him on multiple occasions while serving at St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church in West Baltimore. Belschner has not been in ministry for over 25 years and no longer resides in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

The Archdiocese first learned of the allegation in December 2017 and immediately reported it to law enforcement, including Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City State's Attorney, Child Protective Services of Baltimore City and the Office of the Maryland Attorney General. The Archdiocese waited for many months to receive permission from the criminal authorities to conduct its own investigation. The Archdiocese eventually investigated the allegation and was able to interview Belschner who denied sexually abusing any children. The Archdiocese concluded that the allegation was credible and recently presented the matter to its Independent Review Board. Since 1991, Belschner has not had permission to exercise any public priestly ministry. The Archdiocese has also informed the bishop of the diocese where he currently resides of the allegation against Belschner.

Pursuant to Archdiocesan policy, the Archdiocese offered the victim counseling assistance.

In addition to serving at St. Gregory the Great from 1969-1976, Belschner also served at the following parishes: St. Mark, Catonsville (1965-1969); All Saints, Baltimore (1976-1981); St Joseph, Buckeystown (1981-1989), and St. Mary, Cumberland (1989-1991). He also served as part-time chaplain at Mount St. Joseph High School from 1967-1969.

All allegations of child sexual abuse brought to the attention of the Archdiocese of Baltimore are reported to law enforcement. Under Maryland Law, any person who

has reason to believe a child has been subjected to abuse must report the suspected abuse to civil authorities, even if the potential victim is now over 18 years old and even in cases where the alleged perpetrator is deceased. If someone associated with the church, including clergy, employees, or volunteers of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, is suspected of abuse, then the suspected abuse should also be reported to the Archdiocesan Office of Child and Youth at 410-547-5438 or the Victims Assistance Line at 1-866-417-7469.