



The Diocese of Knoxville

Living our Roman Catholic faith in East Tennessee

MEDIA ADVISORY
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Diocese of Knoxville statement on Nashville abuse report

KNOXVILLE — The Diocese of Nashville on Friday released a report naming 13 former priests who served in that diocese who have been accused of sexually abusing a minor.

We are grateful that the Diocese of Nashville has decided to release this report. We were given an opportunity to review it for the first time this week and we regret the actions of the priests who are listed in it. Before the Diocese of Knoxville was created in 1988, the Catholic Church in East Tennessee, and the priests who served here, were under the pastoral leadership and oversight of the Diocese of Nashville.

In the only instance cited in the report involving a priest in the Diocese of Knoxville, immediate action was taken in 2010 when Bishop Richard F. Stika permanently removed Bill Casey from active ministry and withdrew his priestly faculties after allegations of sexual abuse against a minor were brought to the attention of the diocese by the victim and were found to be credible. The allegations against Mr. Casey dated back to the early 1980s, before the Diocese of Knoxville existed. Following Mr. Casey's conviction, the Diocese of Knoxville was praised by the local prosecutor, and by the media, for its cooperation during the investigation and trial. Based on the recommendation of Bishop Stika, Pope Benedict XVI laicized Mr. Casey in 2012.

The Diocese of Knoxville has had just one other case involving an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest. Bishop Joseph E. Kurtz removed Steven LaPrad from active ministry and withdrew his priestly faculties in 2001. His case never went to trial. Mr. LaPrad died in 2014. He was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Knoxville in 1995 and served as parochial vicar of St. Mary Church in Johnson City (1995 – 1999), parochial administrator of St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Lenoir City (1999 – 2000) and pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle (2000 – 2002).

The Diocese of Knoxville does not have any current credible accusations or active investigations of sexual abuse of a minor by clergy in the diocese. In accordance with policies put in place by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002, and updated as recently as 2018, the diocese has taken all of the necessary steps to make sure abuse allegations are investigated independently and thoroughly and we encourage anyone who was a victim of abuse by a priest to contact law enforcement authorities and then to contact Marla Lenihan, the Diocese of Knoxville's Victim's Assistance Coordinator, at 865-482-1388.