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From the Diocese of Springfield

<https://promise.dio.org/>

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In recent months, I have received a steady flow of correspondence from many of the lay faithful and religious of our diocese (as well as many from elsewhere in the country) regarding the troubles besetting our Church. I have also begun a process of visiting with each of the parishes of our diocese to speak with the lay faithful and listen to their concerns and suggestions. I am grateful to all those who have taken time to share their thoughts candidly with me, and I have reflected deeply on all that I have heard and observed.

From this reflection, it has become clear to me that, as regrettable as the circumstances are, this dialog must be part of our collective journey to a life of intentional discipleship. With that in mind, and borrowing from similar efforts by Archbishop Aquila in Denver, I am setting up this “Promise” website, in conjunction with our diocesan social media platforms, to provide a channel for dialog and transparency. I invite and encourage each of you to join this dialog, as members of the body of Christ, and I welcome your insights, concerns, and suggestions.

I also want to share my disappointment with the outcome of the fall meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and our failure to advance concrete measures of accountability amongst bishops. This is clearly an area of national concern for our church, in light of the scandals surrounding Archbishop Theodore McCarrick. I had contributed, as a member of a

working committee, to specific, concrete protocols that would help address this issue, and I regret that we were prohibited from voting on these measures.

That said, I reiterate the quote from *Lumen Gentium* that I shared at the USCCB, that, like my brother bishops in their dioceses, am a vicar of Christ here in this diocese, and not a “branch manager of the Vatican.” While I anxiously await clear and definitive reform measures from Rome, I will continue to advance work within my authority, and with all my ability, to prevent abuse and misconduct in our diocese and to continue to advocate for reform nationally. This is my solemn promise to you.

With every best wish and prayers, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "† Thomas John Paprocki". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

Our Track Record Here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

Since 2002, our diocese has promoted an environment of awareness and safety that is certainly on par with leading organizations throughout the country, and in some ways more advanced than many, at least in its maturity. Our Diocesan Review Board and Special Panel have been in place and effective for more than 15 years, and our safe environment awareness and prevention efforts have been widely implemented and successful.

Below are some key statistics highlighting the breadth of our preventative safe environment program:

Individuals Trained since 2002

57000

Children trained annually

16000

Adults trained annually

3300

Training events conducted since 2002

2640

Safe Environment Facilitators

250

Safe Environment Coordinators

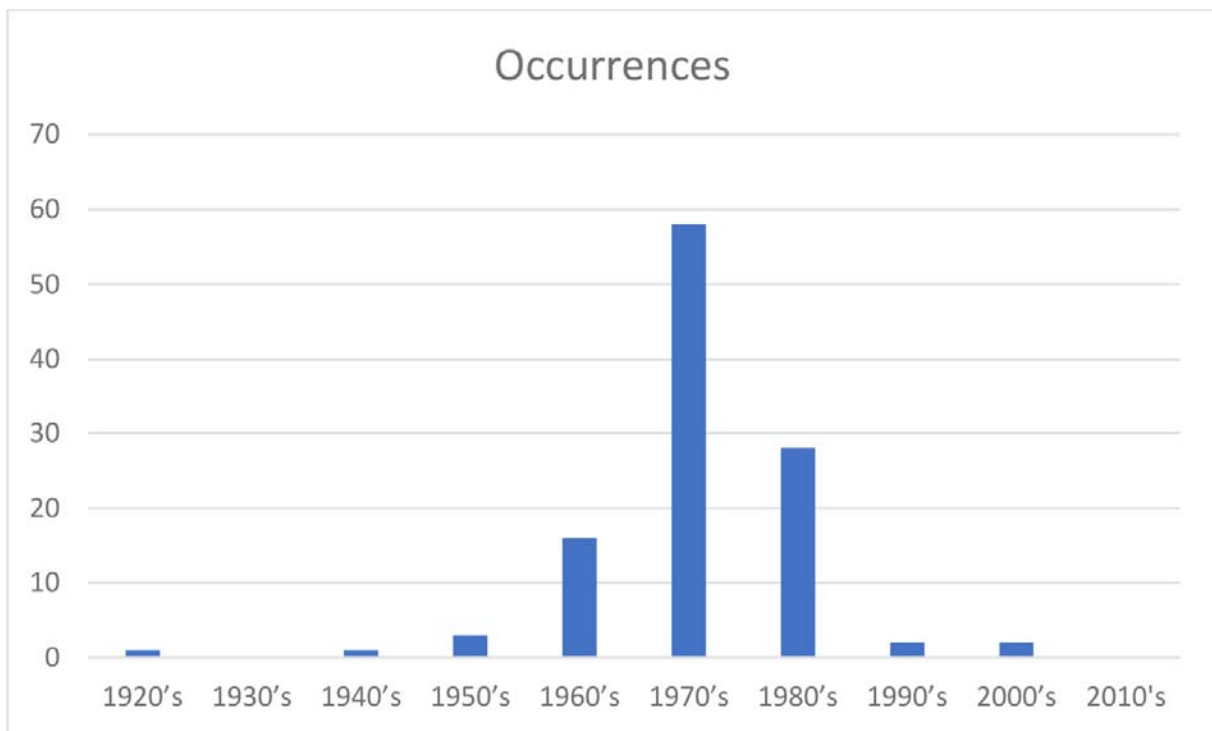
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Historical Perspective

Unfortunately, the implementation of our safe environment, beginning in the early 2000's, was prompted by very public and scandalous revelations of sins in our own clergy, including one of our own bishops. While shocking and painful for the faithful, priests, deacons and religious of this diocese, these circumstances also created an environment of awareness, and prompted a series of actions, in our diocese that many others are just now coming to terms with.

The result of all this is what can only be honestly described as a mixed track record in our diocese, marked by grave sin but also by diligent and effective response, with a clear turning point near the close of the last century, as illustrated in the graphic below.

Credibly Affirmed Incidences of Abuse in the Springfield Diocese, by Decade



As this graphic illustrates, there was an increase in cases of abuse during the 1960s, reaching a peak in the 1970s, declining but persisting during the 1980's and returning to very low levels for the past two decades. As noted in "The Big Picture" section here, a highly similar pattern has played out nationally. None the less, this diocese remains committed to an environment of vigilance and proactive defense against any recurrence of abuse.

Disclosure of Specific Cases

With the intent to shine a light on any past troubles remaining hidden in shadow, and to reinforce our efforts of vigilance and diligent handling of abuse, below is a summary of all substantiated cases of sexual abuse of a minor by clergy in this diocese as disclosed in our recent voluntary review with the Illinois Attorney General's office.

Deceased

Name/	Date of Ordination	Status Date
Alvin Campbell	5/31/1952	12/2/2002
Robert Dodd	5/30/1964	3/28/2013
Michael Driscoll	3/30/1941	5/15/1989
Robert Eagear	6/2/1928	9/22/1984
George Faller	6/13/1918	10/23/1975
Ray Franzen	5/18/1940	10/4/1987
Joseph Havey	5/29/1971	8/21/2017
George Kromenaker	6/8/1947	5/10/2010
Joseph Cullen O'Brien	4/5/1942	3/27/1978
Frank O'Hara	3/30/1941	4/19/2006

Name/	Date of Ordination	Status Date
James Patrick O'Hara	4/8/1945	11/15/1987
Daniel Ryan	5/3/1956	12/31/2015
Aloysius Schwellenbach	3/28/1928	9/15/2000
Louis C. Shea	6/4/1955	11/15/1996
Frank Westhoff	5/27/1961	1/7/2006

Laicized

Name	Date of Ordination	Status Date
Joseph Cernich	5/2/1983	6/2/2003
Eugene Costa	7/24/1976	10/12/2007
Walter Weerts	12/18/1960	1/13/1989

Not in Active Ministry

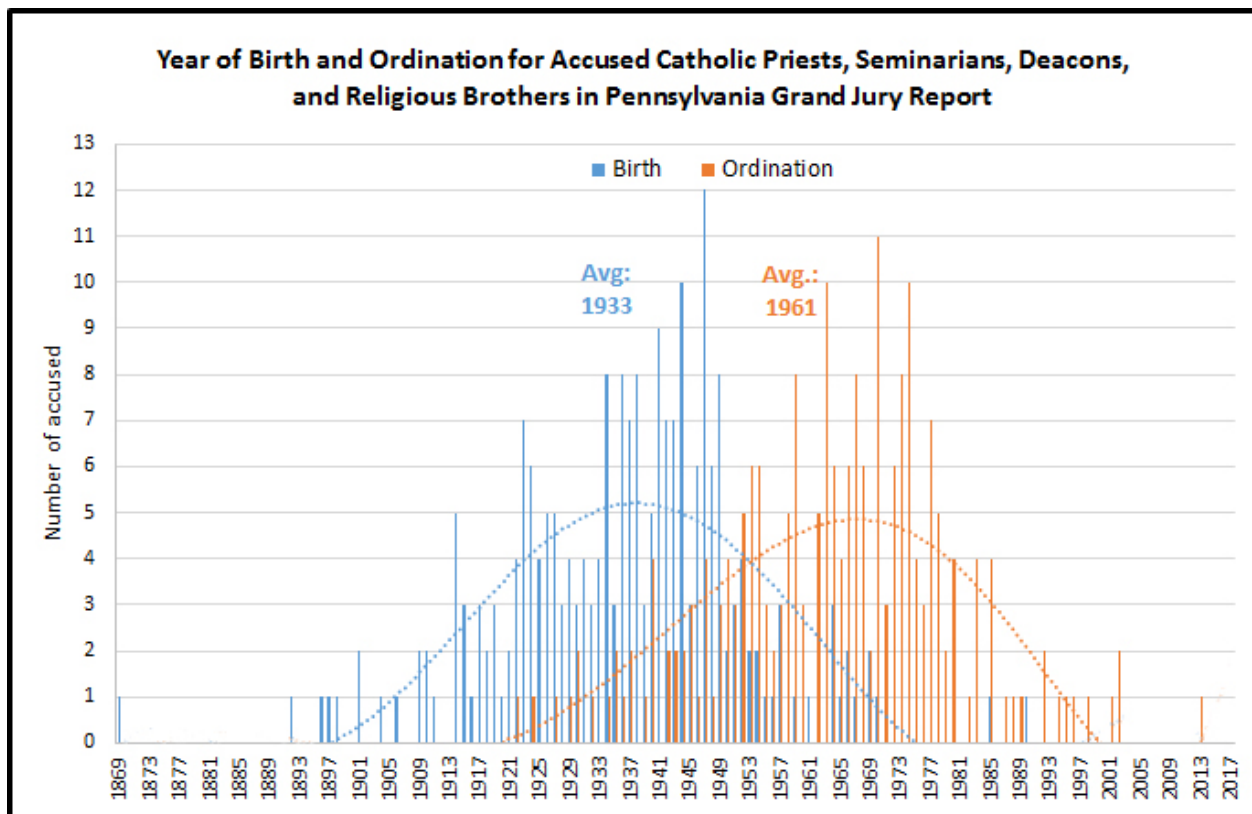
Name	Date of Ordination	Status Date
Garrett Neal Dee	5/23/1964	7/31/2002
Robert DeGrand	5/31/1980	5/1/2015
Francis Tebangura	12/9/1968	3/10/2006

(Last updated: June 18, 2019 - James O'Hara, Louis Shea)

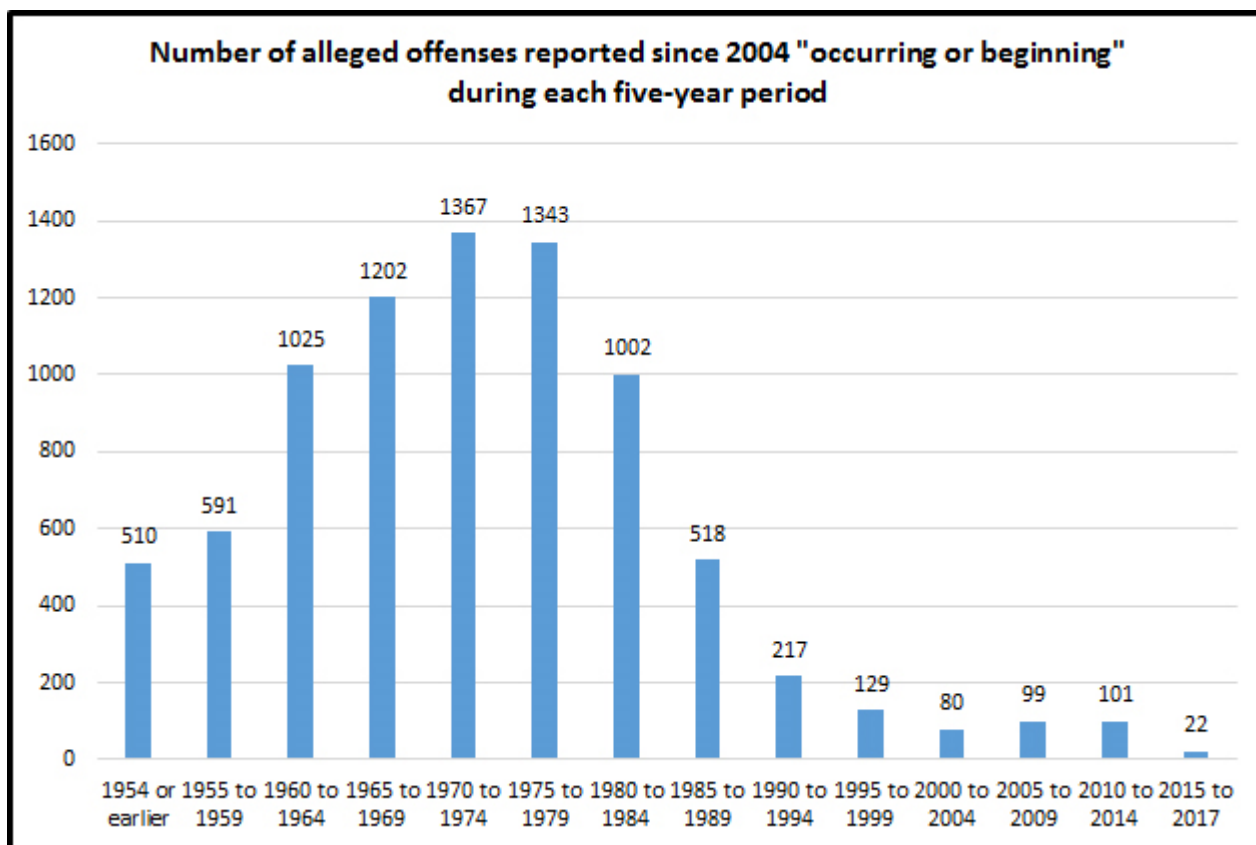
The Big Picture

While we are clearly focused on creating a culture and environment in this diocese that rejects sin and deals forcefully with issues of misconduct and abuse, it is also important to step back and observe the broader context of some national trends that have clearly affected us locally.

As depicted below, in data assembled from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, there was a clear historical spike in instances of abuse, with a peak in the 1970's and a steady decline that persists into current times. There is also a clear profile of priests predominantly born in the 1930's and ordained in the early 1960's. This data is also consistent with broader data reported in the 2004 John Jay study. While by no means a signal that we should reduce our vigilance, there is a clear and indisputable fact that much of what we continue to see being revealed is related to a troubled time period that is now historical.



To further broaden this perspective, the graph below presents data aggregated by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) representing the number of alleged cases of clergy sex abuse of minors during each five-year period from 1950 up through 2017. This data is for the entire U.S. Church, and it is for allegations that have been reported since 2004. (Note: The reported date and the alleged incident date are often decades apart). As the graph shows, new abuse allegations have not disappeared altogether — there were 22 that were reported to have occurred during this most recent five-year period we’re in — though they have dropped significantly. This is still far too many — zero should be the only acceptable figure. However, to give these numbers some context, consider that **42 teachers in the state of Pennsylvania lost their licenses due to sexual misconduct in 2017 alone**. This is no excuse for what has happened in the Church; rather, these statistics put into proper context all the diligent work the Catholic Church has done and continues to do at preventing sexual abuse in its institutions and shows that it is committed to purging this evil from its ranks.



The Bigger Problem of Child Sexual Abuse Outside the Church

While the Catholic Church, thankfully, has seen a near-elimination of clerical sex abuse of minors over the past two decades, there is a far broader and more alarming issue about child sexual abuse in our society. Unfortunately, a disproportionate focus on the Church's historical failings has come at the expense of public awareness of the broader issue.

Consider these facts:

- According to a study by a professor at Hofstra University, there is 100 times more child sexual abuse in public schools than in the Catholic Church¹
- 16% of U.S. youth ages 14-17 are sexually abused in any given year²
- That means more than 3 million children suffer from sexual abuse each year³
- The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services found credible evidence that child sexual abuse occurred in the general population in Illinois in over 2,000 cases per year from 2009 to 2016⁴

- Insurance companies receive more than 200 reports per year of sexual abuse of minors in U.S. Protestant churches—which, each year, is more than the total allegations against the Catholic Church in the U.S. since 2005⁵

- In Pennsylvania, there were 3 times more cases of child sexual abuse identified statewide in 2016 than there were in the entire 80-year time period covered in the Grand Jury report.

To be clear, the intent in sharing this information is not to deflect responsibility for the troubled history and past sins of the church. Our church has certainly owned up to those issues, and, as [described here](#), we have aggressively addressed this issue and reduced to zero the number of new alleged incidents of clergy sex abuse in our diocese since 2004. However, the rest of our culture and public institutions have not done likewise, and our children are in grave danger as a result. There is much the Church has learned and can offer to our other institutions in confronting this problem. Meanwhile, our public resources would be better spent to implement programs like our *Protecting God's Children* program, rather than in continuing to fund investigations into well- documented historical failings of the Church from decades ago.

1. <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/03/10/26abuse.h23.html>
2. *ibid*
3. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/101-child-population-by-age-group#detailed/1/any/false/871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35/62,63,64,6,4693/419,420>
4. <https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/aboutus/newsandreports/Documents/CANStat.pdf>
5. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/16/us/16protestant.html>

Resources

Below are three important resources in our diocese that we encourage all the faithful of our diocese to be aware of and utilize, as appropriate:

Safe Environment Training

Our diocese offers a comprehensive and effective safe environment training and awareness program, staffed by a full-time leader at the Catholic Pastoral Center and by hundreds of local facilitators and coordinators.

For questions about our safe environment training or any upcoming sessions, to identify your local facilitator or coordinator, or to get involved as a facilitator or coordinator, please contact Ember Beddingfield, Director, Office for Safe Environment, 217-698-8500, or email: ebeddingfield@dio.org.

Child Abuse Reporting and Investigation Hotline & Diocesan Review Board

This Diocesan Review Board is led by predominantly lay people and is responsible for intake and review of claims of abuse of minors by clergy. [Click here for a list of the Review Board Members and their biographies.](#)

The Diocese's Child Abuse Reporting and Investigation number is (217) 321-1155.

Individuals may also contact the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse Hotline at 1(800)-25-ABUSE.

Special Panel on Clergy Misconduct

Allegations of financial misconduct or sexual misconduct with adults are handled by a separate group called the Special Panel on Clergy Misconduct, led by lay people and which is headed by William Roberts, formerly the U. S. Attorney for the Central District of Illinois. The hotline to report financial misconduct or adult sexual misconduct committed by priests, deacons or lay employees in our diocese is 1 (866)-346-2003, or email to reportmisconduct@gmail.com. These hotline calls and email messages go directly to the office of Mr. Roberts.