



## The sins of the past

The Diocese of Burlington this week published a [report](#) listing the names of diocesan clergy who, since 1950, have had a credible and substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor made against them. With one exception, all of these acts occurred more than 20 years ago. None of these priests are in ministry; most of them are deceased. While most of these allegations took place at least a generation ago, the numbers are still staggering; the victims of these priests are still bearing the wounds of what happened to them. Until now, the scope of all of this has been our “family secret.”

Family secrets can be toxic. Harmful past experiences — unspoken, unaddressed, and known only by a few — fester like neglected wounds. The innocent victims of the family secret are often made to feel ashamed about what happened as no one seems to listen to them or even, sadly at times, believe them. While these secrets remain hidden, those

who have been hurt are often unable to find the healing they need, especially if those who harmed them are still “part” of the family, even if only in memory.

The Church is not immune to this reality. We often talk about the Church as a family, as a community of faith in which we are brothers and sisters in our love for God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are supposed to be a people of love, a place of hope, and a community of healing. But that is not always the case. This is especially true with the significant number of cases involving the sexual and physical abuse of children by clergy, not just here in Vermont, but in the entire Church. These “sins of the past” continue to haunt us. These shameful, sinful and criminal acts have been our “family secret” for generations. While there has been significant action by the Church here in Vermont and in the United States to address the issue of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy and the cover-up of those crimes by those in authority, the whole sordid tale of what happened in decades leading up to the U.S. bishops’ 2002 [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) has not been fully aired. That is why I have asked that this report be compiled and published.

When I arrived in Vermont four years ago as the 10<sup>th</sup> bishop of Burlington, I promised to continue the Diocese’s efforts to address past abuses of children by clergy, to work toward [healing](#) for those who have experienced abuse, to maintain a zero-tolerance policy for any individual with a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse, and to be transparent about the [prevention](#), [handling](#), and response to the sexual abuse of minors. In order to do so, it is clear to me that we must be fully honest about these sins of our past. If only a list of priests with credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor had been released 15 years ago, perhaps we would be farther along our collective path of healing. But for many reasons, this was not able to happen.

In November 2018, as part of my personal commitment and that of the Diocese of Burlington to transparency regarding abuse by clergy, an independent, volunteer [committee](#) of four lay men and three lay women assembled to review clergy personnel files pertinent to any past allegation of abuse of a minor and to create a list of priests who have been credibly accused of sexually abusing a minor. Working

completely independent of the Diocese, the committee only met with me twice, in the beginning and at the end of the process. I am grateful to the individuals who served on the file review committee, volunteering more than eight months of their time to thoroughly review files and materials and to compile a report of their findings. As promised, I am publishing the committee's report as it was presented to me without any edits or changes. The report and information about the committee members can be viewed at [vermontcatholic.org/promise](http://vermontcatholic.org/promise).

In addition to confronting the sins of the past, we must remain vigilant in ensuring these sins do not occur in the future. I have listened to the stories of victims of clergy sexual abuse and will continue to do so. They need to hear over and over again that we believe them. They also need to know that we are doing everything we humanly can to make sure this does not happen again. The Church in the United States has put in place policies and procedures to make the Catholic Church one of the safest places for children today. In 2002, the Diocese of Burlington adopted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which requires: mandatory reporting of all abuse allegations to civil authorities; removal of credibly accused clerics from active ministry; background checks of all priests, staff and volunteers; training to recognize and prevent abuse; and many other proactive steps to ensure the safety of all members of our Church family. As a result of our rigorous efforts, since 2002 there has been only one credible and substantiated claim of abuse against a priest in the Diocese of Burlington. There are no priests in ministry in Vermont who have had a credible and substantiated allegation made against them.

As has been the case for the past 17 years, I, along with the clergy, staff and volunteers of the Diocese, are committed to supporting and caring for all victims of abuse and will continue to work to ensure safe environments for all God's people — especially children, youth and vulnerable individuals— in which no form of harassment, sexual or otherwise, is tolerated. If you have been abused or if you suspect a minor or vulnerable person has been abused, contact the proper authorities immediately, including local law enforcement and the Diocese's Victim Assistance Line at 866-485-2488.

Please visit [vermontcatholic.org/promise](http://vermontcatholic.org/promise) for regular updates, frequently asked questions and more information regarding the Diocese's promise to protect children and vulnerable persons entrusted to our care.

The greater family of the Catholic Church is in much need of healing. Together, we can mend our family's discord and, by the grace of God, ensure that these sins do not happen again.

Yours in Christ,

*\* Christopher J. Coyne*

The Most Reverend Christopher J. Coyne  
Bishop of Burlington

**Report**  
**Committee Members**

# Our Track Record

*Annual averages over the last 12 years (2005–2018).*

## **Adults**

trained to recognize  
and report abuse

3,246

## **Children**

trained to keep  
themselves safe

6,223

## **Background Checks**

on staff and  
volunteers

3,108

## **Mandatory Reporters**

staff & volunteer  
*(priests, deacons, educators)*

438

Our Diocese has made a promise to protect the children entrusted to our care and a pledge to heal those who have experienced abuse by clerics or other Church personnel. Under the guidance and direction of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, the Diocese of Burlington works alongside other Dioceses in the nation to ensure that the Catholic Church in the United States adheres to a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to child abuse and neglect.

In 2002, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington adopted the USCCB approved Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and made a pledge to adopt all 17 articles that address the following:

- Mandatory reporting of all abuse allegations by individuals who experienced sexual abuse by some cleric or other Church personnel to civil authorities;
- Cooperation with civil authorities;
- Removal of credibly accused clerics from active ministry;
- Background checks of all priests, staff and volunteers;
- Training of all clergy and staff to recognize and prevent abuse;
- Training for children to recognize, prevent and report abuse;
- Healing and reconciliation;
- Accountability in procedures.

The Office of Safe Environment Programs was established to protect children and young people by establishing “safe environments” in the present and future. Dedicated staff ensure that all policies of the charter are followed across the Diocese in our parishes, schools and ministries. Dioceses are audited annually by an independent auditing firm to ensure continuous accountability and to help avoid complacency in the vital task of protecting God’s children. Each year, the findings of all audits are summarized in an Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter, which is prepared by the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection.

As a result of our rigorous efforts over the last 16 years, there has been only one credible and substantiated claim of abuse with an 18-year-old who formed an emotional relationship that began when the victim was a minor. There are no priests in ministry who have had a credible and substantiated allegation made against them.

Beyond these fundamental steps — which are still in place today — the Diocese continues to be focused on outreach to all survivors of sexual abuse by clergy. In 2003 the Diocese established the Victim Advocacy Group with the specific mission of aiding in the healing process for those who have been harmed. This work now is accomplished through the victims assistance coordinator. The coordinator strives to provide timely

assistance to individuals who have been abused by Church personnel, and all information shared with the coordinator is strictly confidential. The coordinator also meets with victims personally upon request.

As your bishop, I promise to protect our children from harm and pledge to heal the wounds of those abused by clergy, and to work with faithful lay men and women to purify and transform our Church into the source of salvation intended by God.



**PROMISE TO PROTECT,  
PLEDGE TO HEAL**

DECEMBER 21, 2018





STATEMENT OF  
THE MOST REVEREND  
CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE  
BISHOP OF BURLINGTON

REGARDING HIS  
COMMITMENT TO  
TRANSPARENCY AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY

November 15, 2018



VERMONT  
Catholic

DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON  
LAUNCHES 'PROMISE TO  
PROTECT' WEBSITE

OCTOBER 29, 2018



STATEMENT OF  
THE MOST REVEREND  
CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE  
BISHOP OF BURLINGTON

REGARDING COMMITTEE OF  
LAY MEN AND WOMEN  
TO EXAMINE PERSONNEL FILES  
PERTINENT TO ALLEGATIONS  
OF CLERGY ABUSE

OCTOBER 10, 2018



STATEMENT OF  
THE MOST REVEREND  
CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE  
BISHOP OF BURLINGTON

REGARDING  
NONDISCLOSURE  
AGREEMENTS

SEPTEMBER 28, 2018



STATEMENT OF  
THE MOST REVEREND  
CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE  
BISHOP OF BURLINGTON

CONCERNING THE  
ST. JOSEPH'S ORPHANAGE

SEPTEMBER 9, 2018



STATEMENT OF  
THE MOST REVEREND  
CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE  
BISHOP OF BURLINGTON

RESPONDING TO  
SCANDAL AND SIN  
IN OUR CHURCH

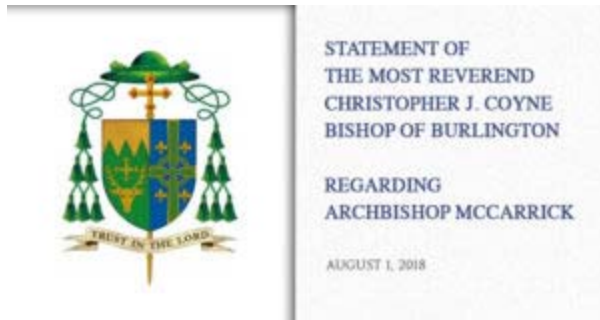
SEPTEMBER 4, 2018



STATEMENT OF  
THE MOST REVEREND  
CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE  
BISHOP OF BURLINGTON

REGARDING RECENT  
REPORTS OF ABUSE

AUGUST 22, 2018



[Office of Safe Environments](#)

[Youth Protection Training](#)

[Healing & Support](#)

## Report Bishop Misconduct

# Office of Safe Environment Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Office of Safe Environment Programs?  
What is the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People?  
Who makes sure the Diocese of Burlington is adhering to the articles of the Charter?  
Can you tell me more about the annual audit?  
How many new allegations have been reported and substantiated since the Charter was adopted?  
Why does the Diocese conduct background checks on all adults who work with minors?  
Why does the Diocese redo all background checks every five years?  
Why do we educate adults with abuse prevention curricula?  
Why does the Diocese required annual re-training, as opposed to a simple one-time training?  
Why do we educate children and youth with abuse prevention curricula?  
What is Circle of Grace?  
Why was the report listing names of clergy with credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor made against them published when it was?  
What do you hope to accomplish with the publication of the report?  
What criteria determined whether a priest's name appears in the report?

The names published are those found to have a credible and substantiated allegation of abuse, based on the criteria determined by the file review committee.

The committee considered several standards and agreed to adopt the standard used by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, New York, to guide decisions on finding a priest credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors. The committee believed it was the most fair to both victims and the accused. The committee agreed “credible” is defined as: An allegation, based on facts of the case, that meets one or more of the following thresholds: Natural, plausible and probable; Corroborated with other evidence or another source; or Acknowledged/admitted to by the accused. The committee determined there must be at least – a “fair probability” – based on the information given, that a particular priest had either sexually abused a child under the age 18 or created a “substantial risk” that the child would be sexually abused. For the purposes of the Vermont report, a “credible allegation” is not the equivalent to a finding of “probable cause” by a judge or grand jury in a criminal case.

What do the terms “laicized,” “assigned to a life of prayer and penance,” and “absent from ministry” mean?

What resources does the Church offer to victims of sexual abuse by priests?

# Wider Church

## **A Call for transparency**

The revelations about Archbishop McCarrick’s sexual sins and infidelity, and the Pennsylvania investigation is extremely disheartening. The sins of our past in our own Diocese and revelations of new allegations outside of our Diocese need to be addressed through complete transparency so we can we purify our Church and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (Jn 17:17). We are all called to spread the truth that Jesus Christ is the son of God and the way, the truth and the life. The horrible sin of abusing minors and the abuse of power by cardinals, bishops or priests over a long period of time are evil. We must purge ourselves of past sins and seek healing and closure for survivors.

**That is why I am recommending that all Dioceses voluntarily open their clergy personnel files — including those of bishops — to investigators.**

While our Diocese turned over files containing a credible allegation of clergy to the state attorney general in 2002, in the name of transparency, I am forming an independent committee of lay men and women to examine clergy personnel files pertinent to any allegation of abuse of minors and to create a list that will be made public.

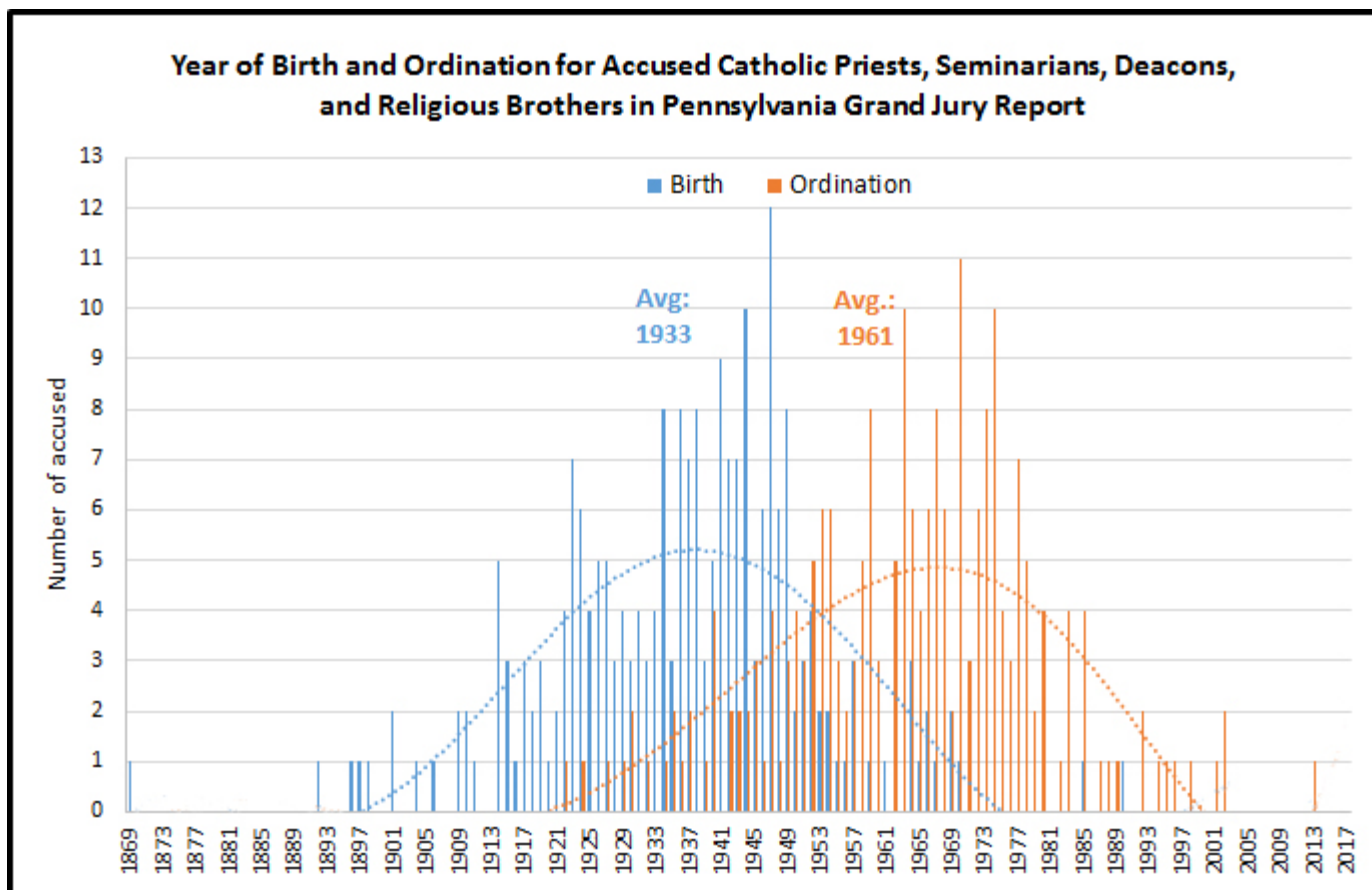
Let us pray: O God may you restore to us the joy of Your salvation and sustain us with a willing spirit.

## **A Call for Clarity about steps taken to prevent abuse**

Every announcement and discussion of clergy abuse is quite painful and potentially re-traumatizing for survivors and their families. We remain committed to investing

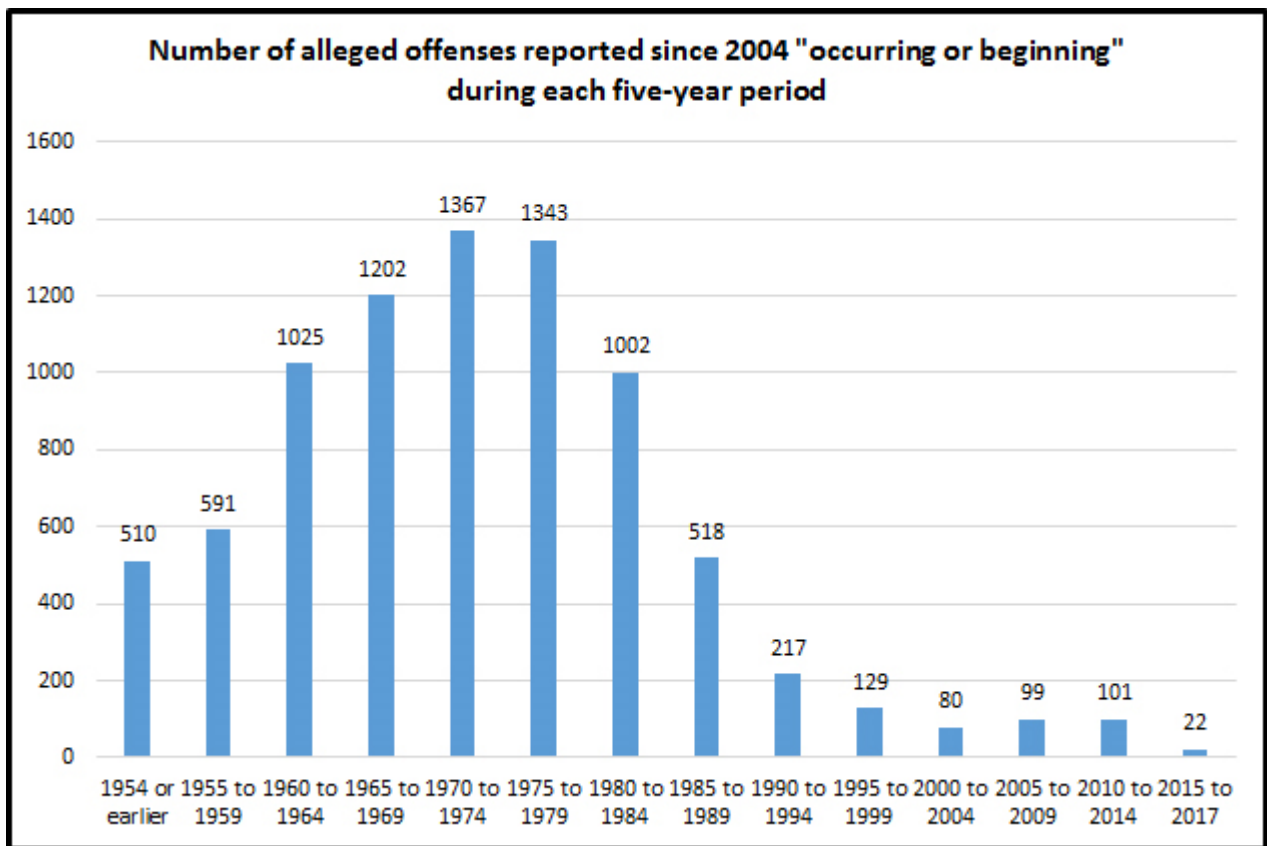
resources to care for the survivors and ensure that the perpetrators are prevented from carrying out further abuse.

Since 2002, locally and nationally, we have made great strides to create one of the safest places for children but what we haven't done well is help the public, our parishioners, or even the media to understand the facts about our track record here in Vermont or across the Church in the U.S. As a result of our rigorous efforts over the last 16 years, there has been only one credible and substantiated claim of abuse with an 18-year-old who formed an emotional relationship that began when the victim was a minor. There are no priests in ministry who have had a credible and substantiated allegation made against them.



**Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report ignores drastic decrease in allegations beginning in 1970's**

The above graph presents data assimilated from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report that measures the number of accused priests against their birth years and the years they were ordained. What it shows is that the average year many of the priests accused of sexual abuse were born was 1933, and the average year they were ordained was 1961. As the graph shows, the number of accused priests in Pennsylvania began to drop at the end of the 1970's and continued to do so until the present. Interestingly, the data on this graph mirrors the revelations of a 2004 study conducted by researchers at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in which they aggregated the number of allegations of clergy sexual abuse of minors from 1950 to 2002. If the research is anything to go by, the profile of priests alleged to have sexual misconduct with minors has not changed in the 14 years since the 2002 sex abuse crisis hit the Church, meaning we are dealing with the ramifications of a scandal that has largely passed, not a new one.



## CARA study shows the same drastic decrease in allegations across the United States

This graph 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.

\*Graphs and analysis from Archdiocese of Denver: <https://promise.archden.org/#widerchurch>

## Contact Form

- Name\*

First  Last

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- Message

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**29 AUG**

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**29 AUG**

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