



DIOCESE OF ALEXANDRIA FINDS 'CREDIBLE' ALLEGATIONS AGAINST 27 CLERGY

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17 have links to Avoyelles Parish

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At least 17 priests who served in Avoyelles Parish Catholic churches at some point in their career are among 27 individual clergy members the Diocese of Alexandria has concluded are likely to have been guilty of sexual misconduct/abuse of minors.

Almost every community in Avoyelles was served by someone on the diocese's list of "credible allegations" of sexual misconduct with minors. Avoyelles has historically had the largest Catholic congregations within the Alexandria Diocese, which accounts for the higher number of cases in Avoyelles.

The majority of the offenses occurred decades ago, mostly in the 1960's when cases peaked before Catholic officials put more discipline in place in abuse cases. The Diocese did not release where the alleged offenses occurred.

The Diocese did not include the church assignments in its release. The newspaper added information on churches where the men served from information in the newspaper's archives.

Among those on the diocese's list are former pastors Revs. Frederick Lyons, Edward Terry Allen, Charles Dekeukelare, Harvey Fortier and William Allison. Lyons served in Bunkie, Allen in Mansura, Fortier in Simmespor, Dekeukelare in Fifth Ward and Andries in Cottonport.

In a "letter to the faithful" released Wednesday, Bishop David P. Talley said he was "horrified and scandalized" when a Pennsylvania grand jury report was published in the summer of 2018 detailing a history of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy against minors over several decades.

Talley said the Diocesan Permanent Review Board, composed of clergy and laity members, has reviewed all allegations made against clerics since it was created in 2002, after the adoption of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Many of those on the list are deceased. In some cases, allegations of abuse were not made until after the priest had died.

Lyons, now in his mid-90's, was sentenced to a life of prayer and penance by an ecclesiastical court in 2013.

Allen died in 2018, after reaching a settlement with the victim in 2012. Fortier died in 1999, after reaching a settlement with his victim in 1995.

Dekeukelare and Andries were both tried in criminal court, Dekeukelare in 1982 and Andries in 2002.

Several alleged victims reached out-of-court settlements.

"As Bishop of Alexandria, I have promised to do everything in my power to safeguard our children and youth and to help those abused in the past," Talley wrote.

The bishop said the intent of publishing the list is not to "re-victimize those who have already been so wounded by the actions of some clerics who served in our diocese over the past 165 years.

"This evil can only be purged through a vigilant process that is transparent to the public. Our response must demonstrate the highest levels of honesty and scrutiny," he added.

Talley said the list is probably incomplete, "not because we have held anything back, but because this kind of evil is perpetrated in secret -- and out of fear and shame, some may not have been able to come forward."

The diocese reviewed 535 clerics who served in this area since the Diocese of Natchitoches was created in 1853. This list of 27 represents 5 percent of those who served in the area's Catholic churches.

"While this process of review and publication is not a declaration of guilt," Talley wrote, "it is our best assessment of all the evidence available to us at this time."

'MATTER OF JUSTICE'

He said publically releasing the names "is a matter of justice if we are to help the victims and the Church we love and serve."

Talley said he hopes anyone who was abused in the past will come forward "to speak the truth and seek the healing that all desire." Sexual abuse victims are encouraged to contact a local law enforcement agency. For more information or assistance, call Victim's Assistance Coordinator Dr. Lee Kneipp at (318) 542-9805.

There were 20 credible claims of incidents alleged to have occurred between 1960-1989. There was only one in the 1940s, four in the 1950s and one between 1990 and 2002.

Since the Catholic bishops initiative in 2002, there has only been one credible allegation of sexual abuse in the diocese.

17 WITH LINKS TO AVOYELLES

Following is additional information on the 17 clergymen on the list with connections to Avoyelles Parish.

Fr. William Allison

Served as pastor in Plaucheville from 1949-52 and was transferred to the church in Echo in 1953.

- An allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor dating back to 1961 was brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2004.
- Allison died in 1986.
- Review of Allison's file in 2019 showed evidence corroborating the allegation.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegation were deemed credible.

Fr. John Wesley Andries

Served as pastor of St. Mary's in Cottonport in the 1990s.

- Multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors dating back to the 2000s were brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2003 and

Andries was removed from active ministry.

- The allegations were deemed credible.
- Andries was convicted and sentenced in 2002 for molesting a 16-year-old boy in 2001.
- After completion of the investigation, Andries' case was referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome and he was laicized in 2007.
- He died in 2013.

Fr. Edward Terry Allen

Served at Catholic church in Bunkie in 1941. Later was pastor at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Mansura for many years.

- An allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor dating back to 1973 was brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2005.
- The accusation was deemed credible.
- Allen resigned from active ministry in 2005.
- A settlement was made with the victim in 2012.
- Allen died in 2018.

Fr. William Cody Bressler

Faculty member of St. Anthony of Padua School in Bunkie in 1949. Assistant at Christ the King Catholic Church in Simmesport in 1956.

- Multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male and female minors dating back to the 1960s were brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2004 and again in 2005 and were deemed credible.
- Bressler died in 1990.
- Settlements were made with the victims in 2006 and 2017.
- Review of Bressler's' file in 2019 showed evidence corroborating the allegations.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Francis O. Couvillion

Served at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Moreauville and in Catholic churches in Hessmer and Glenmora.

- Review of Couvillion's file in 2019 revealed multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors dating back to the 1950s.
- Couvillion died in 1978.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Charles Dekeukelare, CICM

Dekeukelare was ordained in 1948 and was assigned in 1955 to Our Lady of Lourdes in Fifth Ward, where he served as pastor until 1982. The current church building was built during his pastorship.

- Dekeukelare was removed from public ministry. He pled guilty to and was prosecuted for indecent behavior with a juvenile in Avoyelles Parish in 1982.
- A priest of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
 - Review of Dekeukelare's file in 2019 showed evidence of an allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor dating back to 1982.
 - The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Harvey Fortier

Fortier served as assistant pastor at St. Joseph Church in Marksville and at St. Rita Church in Alexandria before being named pastor of Christ the King in Simmesport, where he served for 20 years.

- He was pastor in Vidalia for six years before being transferred to be pastor at Church of the Little Flower in Evergreen and St. Joseph in Cheneyville until his death in a 1999 car accident.
- Fortier was born in 1924 in Haverhill, Mass., where he was ordained in 1955.
 - Review of Fortier's file in 2019 revealed an allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor dating back to 1954.
 - An allegation was made of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor in 1994.
 - The allegation was deemed credible.
 - A settlement was made with the victim in 1995.

- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. John Franklin

He was in Moreauville in 1965 and was named director of the St. Anthony mission in Cottonport in 1966.

- An allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor dating back to 1966 was brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2004 and after investigation, the allegations were deemed credible. A settlement was made with the victim in 2005.
- Franklin left the diocese in 1973.
- Franklin died in Alabama in 1986.
- Review of Franklin's file in 2019 showed further evidence of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Edmund Gagné

Assistant at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marksville for two months in 1974. Transferred to Houston, Texas.

- Native of Rhode Island
- Review of Gagné's file in 2019 showed evidence of multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors dating back to the 1980s.
- Gagné was removed from public ministry in 1986.
- Gagné died in 1990.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Moise Richard Gremillion

Native of Avoyelles Parish. Served briefly as a chaplain associated with St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marksville in 1934 before transferring to Monroe.

- Ordained in 1933
- Review of Gremillion's file in 2019 revealed multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors dating from the 1960s.
- Gremillion retired from active ministry in 1969.
- Gremillion died in 1973.
- This evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Leo Van Hoorn

Was assigned as an assistant pastor St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marksville until he was appointed assistant pastor at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Bunkie in 1959.

- Holland native; traveled to U.S. in 1956
- An allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor dating back to 1967 was brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2006.
- Van Hoorn was suspended from active ministry by Bishop Graves in 1979.
- Van Hoorn died in 2006.
- Review of Van Hoorn's file in 2019 showed further evidence of another allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Michael Hannon

The Diocese indicated Hannon served at some point in Avoyelles, but no other information was available.

- Review of Hannon's file in 2019 showed evidence of multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors dating from the 1960s.
- Hannon left the diocese in 1963.
- Hannon was incardinated in the Diocese of Brooklyn in New York in 1982.
- Hannon died in 2000.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Frederick Lyons

Served at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Bunkie in 1958 to early 1960's.

- Multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors dating back

to the 1960s were brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2005 and 2006.

- Lyons was removed from active ministry in 2006.
- The allegations were deemed credible.
- After completion of the investigation, Lyons' case was referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome and ecclesiastical penalties were imposed in 2013.

Fr. Kenneth Mathews

Served at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marksville in 1978. Celebrated his first mass in Marksville during this time.

- Review of Mathews' file in 2019 showed evidence of multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors dating back to the 1980s.
- Mathews left active ministry on a leave of absence in 1998.
- Mathews died in 2008.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.

Fr. Louis Senesac, CSV

Served 1941 to 1948 at Church of the Little Flower in Evergreen.

- A priest of the Clerics of Saint Viator.
- Review of Fr. Senesac's file in 2019 showed evidence of an allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor dating back to 1945.
- Senesac was removed from active ministry in the diocese.
- Senesac died in 1966.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegation was deemed credible.

Fr. Joseph Tisch

In 1964 appointed to Mater Dolorosa Church and director of St. Joseph School Plaucheville.

- An allegation of sexual misconduct and abuse of a male minor dating back to 1967 was brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2014.
- Tisch left the diocese and active ministry in 1968.
- Tisch died in 2007 publically separated from the Church.
- Review of Tisch's file in 2019 showed further evidence of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.
- In 1964 he was appointed to serve at Mater Dolorosa Church in Plaucheville and as Director of St. Joseph School in Plaucheville.

Fr. Léger Tremblay

• Allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors dating back to the 1950s and 1960s were brought before the Permanent Review Board in 2003 and again in 2005.

- Born January 20, 1922, in St. Joachim de Montmorency, Quebec
- Ordained to the priesthood May 22, 1948 in St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria
- Served 53 years as a parish priest
- Tremblay died in 2002.
- Settlements were made in 2004 and in 2005.
- Review of Tremblay's file in 2019 showed further evidence of sexual misconduct and abuse of male minors.
- The evidence was presented to the Permanent Review Board in 2019 and the allegations were deemed credible.
- Served as pastor at Church of the Little Flower in Evergreen from 1945 to 1950. Also served at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Bunkie and St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marksville. Also served in Plaucheville, Evergreen, Alexandria, Jena, Ferriday, Mansfield and Shreveport. He retired from active ministry in 1987 and continued to reside in Shreveport.
- Tremblay has donated his body to the LSU Health Science Center, Shreveport.

REMAINING CLERGY ON LIST

Accused of Abuse and Misconduct

Diocese Clergy – Living

Deacon Raymond M. Jones
FR. Donald Rogers
Fr. Victor Sepsi
Fr. Gilbert Gauthé

Diocese Clergy – Deceased
Msgr. Paul Conway
Fr. Francis Patrick Donohoe
Msgr. Robert Friend
Msgr. H. Clinton Teacle

Accused of Misconduct
Fr. Norman Rogge, SJ
Fr. Antonio Valez- Lopez

NEWS

AVOYELLES JOURNAL
BUNKIE RECORD
MARKSVILLE WEEKLY

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