

Bishop seeks prayers amid new charges of sex abuse

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A letter outlines church efforts to help alleged victims and ensure safety

By Pat Gee

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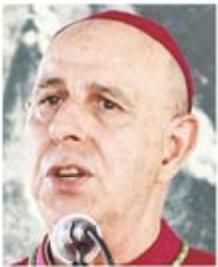
Bishop Larry Silva of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Honolulu is assuring parishioners that their leaders have done and are doing everything possible to assure clergy sexual abuse never happens again.

In a letter dated Aug. 24, Silva responded to allegations by former students of Damien Memorial School and St. Anthony Church in Kailua that they were sexually abused by clergy in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. It can be read in full on the diocese's "e-NewsLetter" at www.catholicahawaii.org.

Claims have been filed in a New York bankruptcy court against the North American branch of the Congregation of Christian Brothers and in Hawaii against the diocese and other defendants, according to a Star-Advertiser story Aug. 24.

Under a new law that went into effect in April — which circumvents the lapsing of the statute of limitations on abuse that may have occurred decades ago — victims have until 2014 to file suit.

"This is a matter of great pain and shame to all of us Catholics, especially our wonderful priests and deacons," Silva wrote, adding later, "We are doing everything we can to address the problem of clergy sexual abuse, so that it never happens again."



Larry

Silva:

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In an earlier part of his letter, Silva said, "All of the lawsuits so far are based on incidents that allegedly took place 30, 40, or more years ago. We are now all being held responsible for what our predecessors a generation or two ago did or did not do.

"It is frustrating, because for many years we have published notices in our own publications, in the secular media, and in brochures in our parishes, inviting anyone who had been sexually abused as a minor by a clergyman or Church worker to come forward, so that we can listen to their very painful stories, do a thorough investigation with the help of our lay Review Board and outside investigators, and offer them Christ's healing love.

"Moreover, any clergyman against whom an accusation of sexual abuse of a minor is made — no matter how long ago — is removed from ministry while an investigation is conducted. And if the accusation is judged credible, the cleric is permanently removed from ministry.

"Our major interest is in the victims, yet few have come forward for healing."

The letter added, "We have a Review Board, a Safe Environment Program and a Victim Assistance Coordinator. For years our diocese has been audited on these matters of the protection of children and young people on a regular basis, and we have always been found to be in conformity with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" (under the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops).

The bishop asked for prayers for:

- » victims whose "suffering is real and deep, their sense of betrayal vivid, and their hope for healing intense";
- » clergy who have perpetrated the crime as well as those falsely accused; and
- » "the great majority of clergy of our diocese who serve us so faithfully day in and day out and who would never

think of harming a young person."

Also included on his prayer list were "the enemies of the Church who capitalize on this very real problem, and who would like nothing more than to destroy the Church and undermine her moral authority, because they cannot tolerate what we teach about the value of life in all its stages, the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman, or the sacredness of the wonderful gift of our sexuality," according to the letter.

Twelve former high school students at Damien have filed claims in a New York bankruptcy court alleging that they were sexually abused by clergy who were working at the private Catholic school from the 1960s through the '80s.

Also, Mark Pinkosh, 48, who now lives in Los Angeles, told reporters he initially was raped by the Rev. Joseph Henry when he was 8 or 9 and, when he reported the assaults to other clergy, was instructed not to tell anyone else about what happened. The assaults continued, Pinkosh said, and he eventually confided in another priest, the Rev. Joseph Ferrario, who had been assigned to St. Anthony's. But Ferrario repeatedly molested him as well, Pinkosh added.

Henry and Ferrario, who later became bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hono-lulu, have since died.

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