



July 28, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This is a difficult time knowing that a priest who once ministered in our diocese has been arrested on one felony count of child sexual abuse. As your bishop, I pray for you and all the good, faithful parishioners of the Diocese of Greensburg. I pray for all of our dedicated, hardworking priests. And, most importantly, I ask you to join me in praying for all the victims of child sexual abuse and their families. This is one of the most despicable evils in our society, and it can devastate young lives and tear families apart.

Please know that the diocese — in its ongoing commitment to protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults — responded immediately to the allegations against Father Sweeney.

On Sept. 20, 2016, the diocese was informed by the Westmoreland County District Attorney's Office that a report of alleged sexual abuse of a child involving Father Sweeney dating back to the early 1990s was made to the PA ChildLine.

In accordance with diocesan policy, Father Sweeney was immediately removed from Holy Family Parish, West Newton, where he had been serving as pastor since Oct. 30, 2008. His priestly faculties were suspended, and he was placed on administrative leave effective Sept. 21, 2016, pending an investigation by civil authorities.

Father Sweeney was prohibited from presenting himself as a priest in public, and his residence was transferred to the diocese's retired priest facility. He was required to avoid any unsupervised contact with minors.

Father Sweeney retired Dec. 31, 2016, with residence at the diocese's retired priest facility. He continues to live there because the diocese is responsible for the care of its priests, and he has not been tried or convicted of a crime.

According to diocesan records, it was the first — and thus far is the only — complaint related to sexual abuse of a child that the diocese has received concerning Father Sweeney.

At the request of law enforcement officials, the Diocese of Greensburg did not publicize the allegation. The diocese has been fully cooperating with law enforcement's investigation of this allegation, and continues to cooperate with the ongoing, statewide grand jury investigation of clergy abuse of minors. Given the fact that the grand jury investigation into six Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania — including the Diocese of Greensburg — is continuing, the diocese is prohibited from making any comments about Father Sweeney.

Father Sweeney served several parishes. He was parochial vicar of Holy Family Parish, Latrobe, (1970-75) and Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish, Greensburg (1975-80). He was pastor of the former St. Hedwig Parish, Smock, and its former chapel in Keisterville (1980-82); St. Mary Parish, Freeport (1982-85); St. Margaret Mary Parish, Lower Burrell, and its former chapel in Braeburn (1985-98); St. James the Greater Parish, Apollo (1998-2008); and Holy Family Parish, West Newton (2008-16).

Please know that every report made to the diocese involving the suspected abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult — sexual, physical or emotional — is immediately forwarded to the PA ChildLine and the appropriate District Attorney if this has not already been done.

If anyone suspects that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been abused by any one at any time, call the PA ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313, no matter when the suspected incident might have occurred.

If you have information pertaining to Father Sweeney, call the Attorney General's hotline at 1-888-538-8541.

The diocese offers free counseling through Catholic Charities to anyone who has been impacted by sexual abuse by anyone associated with the Catholic Church, even if the abuse occurred in another diocese. If you or someone you know seeks counseling for this matter, call Catholic Charities at one of these numbers: Belle Vernon office, 724-929-4699; Kittanning office, 724-548-1009; Indiana office, 724-463-8806; New Kensington office, 724-334-4453; Uniontown office, 724-439-3531; or the Catholic Charities main number in Greensburg, 724-837-1840.

While this is an uncomfortable and difficult subject to discuss, we will continue working to protect our children, our church and our society from this unconscionable evil. We look to the teachings of Jesus for guidance and for hope. He is our compassionate and just judge, the true shepherd of our souls, who asked that we let our children come unto him without harm.

Mary, Mother of the child Jesus and Mother of our Church, pray for us.

*+Edward C. Malesic, JCL*

The Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, JCL  
Bishop of Greensburg