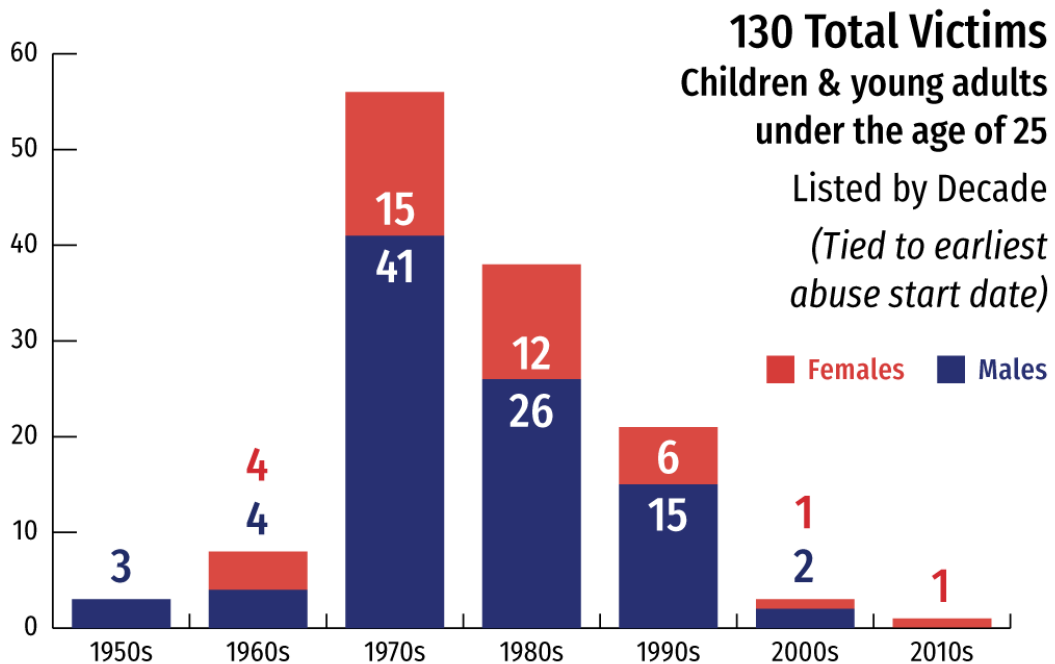
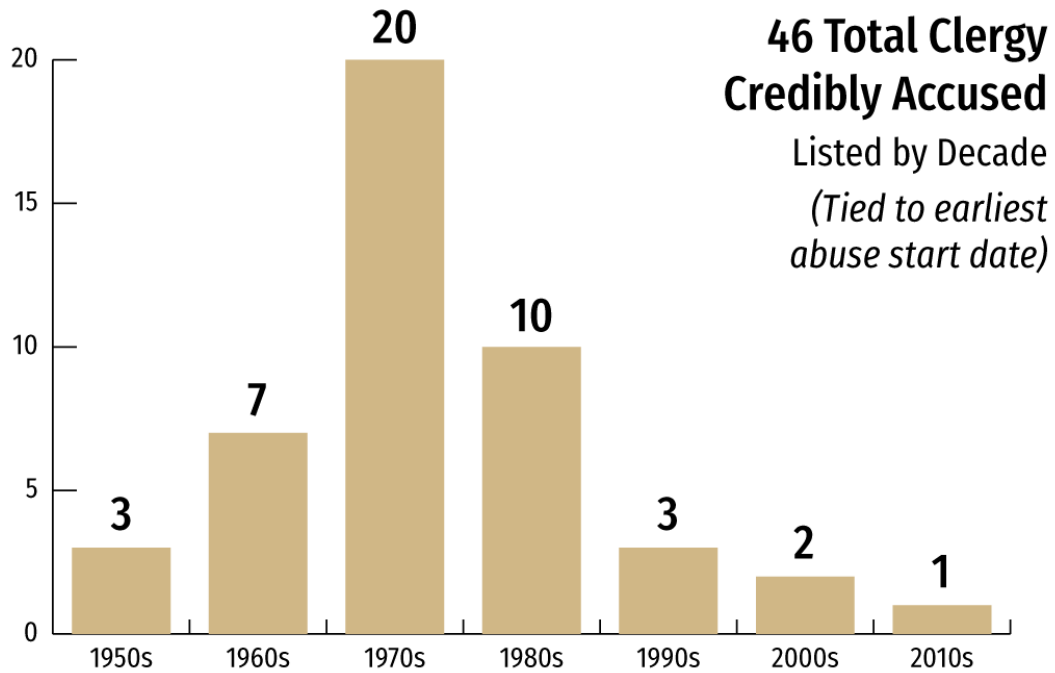


## Frequently Asked Questions: Addressing the Wounds Inflicted by Clergy Abuse

1. **Why is the diocese releasing a list of accused priests and deacons?** Bishop Jaime Soto pledges to confront the past and the shameful sins and crimes of sexual abuse that were part of it. He is determined to own this past and to atone for it, and a key step to doing this is to make a thorough and public accounting of that past.
2. **Is there anyone on this list still serving in a parish, school or diocesan ministry in the Diocese of Sacramento?** No one known to the diocese to have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor is in active ministry. In 2002, the diocese instituted a policy of “zero tolerance” regarding the abuse of minors by clergy. Since then, any member of the clergy in our diocese facing a plausible accusation of sexual abuse of a minor is immediately removed from ministry, regardless of when the abuse is alleged to have occurred. No priest, deacon or religious credibly accused of abuse of a minor is working in a parish, school or any diocesan ministry today.
3. **How was this list compiled?** The diocese enlisted the services of an independent consulting firm headed by Dr. Kathleen McChesney, a former executive assistant director of the FBI and a founding member of the Office of Child Protection at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Dr. McChesney and her firm are recognized experts in reviewing personnel files, detecting indications of possible abuse, and assisting dioceses in fulfilling their promises of accountability. Diocesan staff and Dr. McChesney’s firm examined every clergy personnel file (the records of 1,452 Bishops, Priests and Deacons who served in the Diocese of Sacramento) for indications that a credible accusation of child or young adult sexual abuse was made.
4. **Who verifies that you are following your policies and safeguards?** The diocese’s Independent Review Board (IRB) examines allegations of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults involving clergy or diocesan personnel. The board also reviews the diocese’s policies to ensure continued compliance and vigilance on the part of diocesan leadership.

Additionally, the diocese is audited annually by an independent examiner who verifies compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, established in 2002 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. That audit assesses such things as criminal background checks and safe environment training of diocesan personnel and volunteers who interact with children, and reporting of the receipt of any new allegations of abuse.

5. **Who is on the Independent Review Board?** The IRB is comprised of nine men and women from diverse professional backgrounds with a wide range of expertise. They include a former judge and prosecutor, as well as professionals with experience in psychology and victim assistance. Six of the nine members are lay persons; three are ordained or religious. All share a commitment to ensuring our diocese is safeguarding children and the vulnerable from clergy sexual abuse.
6. **What information is the diocese releasing?** The Diocese of Sacramento is aware of forty-four priests and two deacons who have been credibly accused of sexually abusing 130 minors or young adults (25 years and younger) going back to the 1950s. The charts below show the decades when those acts occurred. Three incidents have taken place since the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was introduced in 2002. It is divided into five parts: priests from the diocese; priests from religious orders; priests from other dioceses; permanent deacons; and priests who briefly served or lived in the diocese, but where the alleged incidents of abuse occurred outside the diocese. We included information such as years active in the Diocese of Sacramento, about their current status, number of victims, date range of the abuse, nature of the allegation and the diocesan response.



- Why 25 years and younger, why not just minors?** After consulting with Dr. McChesney’s team, we learned that while the actual sexual misconduct may have happened after the person reached the age of majority (age 18), there is strong indication that “grooming” these individuals began while the person was a minor and not at an age of consent.

8. **The list is described as including all priests “credibly accused” of sexual abuse of a child or young person. What does “credibly accused” mean?** For an accusation to be deemed “credible,” from the evidence, there must be a **strong suspicion**, or what canon law calls a **“semblance of truth,”** that a crime or misconduct has occurred and that the accused cleric is the one who did it.

Stated another way, “is the alleged misconduct more likely to be true or not? Do the scales of justice tip, even slightly, toward the alleged misconduct being true? Based on the evidence presented, could a reasonable person believe that the alleged misconduct is likely true?”

The clerics on the list of credibly accused may or may not formally have been found guilty of any crime or misconduct, but based upon the credibility of the accusation, may have had their authorization (known as “faculties”) to exercise public ministry in the name of the Church restricted or removed, in order to protect the common good. This determination is made by the Bishop, upon the recommendation of the Independent Review Board. It is independent of any action taken by law enforcement.

9. **What are you doing to prevent abuse from taking place in the future?** Since 2002, the diocese has implemented safeguards to protect children and vulnerable adults from the evil of clergy sexual abuse. These policies have been strengthened several times over the years, most recently in 2017. Today, our diocese follows strict rules and policies to ensure the safety of young people and vulnerable adults.

We conduct thorough background checks including fingerprinting for all clergy, plus staff and volunteers who could come into contact with young people. We require every clergy member, anyone training to become a clergy member, employee or volunteer to be thoroughly trained in recognizing and preventing child abuse. Any clergy member facing a plausible accusation of sexual abuse is immediately suspended from ministry while the allegation is investigated. Law enforcement is notified immediately of any accusation involving a victim who is a minor, and the diocese fully cooperates in any resulting law enforcement investigation. A single instance of a sustained allegation of abuse of a minor results in the immediate and permanent removal from ministry of the perpetrator.

10. **What is being done to ensure future priests are mentally and spiritually healthy?** Recent news has made it clear that a diocese must take an active role in ensuring that only candidates who are fit to serve the people of God become priests. It is also clear that seminarians themselves need to be protected from sexual abuse.

In the seminaries that prepare priests for the Diocese of Sacramento, all candidates receive full background checks and safe-environment training. No one is accepted to the seminary unless he has clearly demonstrated a disposition to live a celibate life. Candidates are psychologically screened and evaluated throughout their training and education so that they are ready and willing to commit to a chaste life as celibate priests.

Bishop Soto and the diocesan director of vocations maintain an open dialogue with each of our seminarians and work closely with seminary leadership. Bishop Soto has confidence each seminary provides the necessary religious environment and safeguards to help seminarians grow as mature, chaste Catholic candidates for the priesthood.

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Once a priest leaves the seminary and comes to our diocese, he is carefully instructed in our policies to safeguard the young and vulnerable, our safe environment training, and in Bishop Soto's clear expectations that he will vigilantly guard the well-being of all the people of God. Further, all priests are expected to participate each year in ongoing training to reinforce this instruction. These include a weeklong retreat, workshops, and a human formation series on topics that include managing stress, transforming loneliness and managing emotions.

- 11. What happens when the diocese receives a report of abuse?** The first thing the diocese does when it receives a report is to obtain as much information as possible from the reporting party, to determine when and where the abuse took place, whether the alleged perpetrator is still in ministry in the diocese, and any other details.

The priority in this process is to ensure that no children or vulnerable adults are at risk. If a priest or deacon facing a plausible accusation is in ministry, he is immediately removed, pending an investigation into the reported facts. If the report involves a minor or includes other illegal conduct, the diocese immediately reports it to child protective services and the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Unless requested otherwise by law enforcement (who may urge a delay while they investigate), an announcement will be read at every parish or school where the alleged perpetrator has served asking for victims or witnesses to step forward and contact law enforcement. In all cases, the diocese will offer its full cooperation to police and investigators.

The diocese, working with the Pastoral Care Coordinator, seeks to render any help – spiritual, psychological or other – that the reporting victim may need or want. Finally, the diocese conducts its own investigation of the report.

Typically, this would include interviews of the person making the report, any witnesses, and the alleged perpetrator. This information is shared with the Independent Review Board, who examines all the available evidence before advising the bishop on a recommended determination. If the report is found credible, the cleric is permanently removed from public ministry and faces other sanctions, which could include removal from the priesthood.

- 12. What should I do if I suspect a loved one has been abused?** If there is or has been abuse involving clergy, employees or volunteers at any of our parishes, schools, religious education programs or other church-related events, please notify law enforcement, child protective services, or adult protective services. Then, we ask that you would report it also to the diocese at 866-777-9133. You may also reach the Pastoral Care Coordinator, Loree Lippsmeyer at 916-733-0142. Reports can be made in English and Spanish.
- 13. Is it too late to report abuse that occurred long ago?**  
No. It is never too late for a victim to reach out for help, or to speak the truth about an abuser. We encourage anyone with information about abuse, whether present or long ago, to come forward – to help with their own healing and to make the truth known.
- 14. Will the Diocese continue to disclose the names of clergy, and others, against whom a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor has been made?** Yes. The list released on April 30, 2019, reflects the information reasonably available to the Diocese at the present time. The Diocese continues to encourage all victims of abuse to first report that abuse to law enforcement, and then to contact

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the Diocese's Pastoral Care Coordinator at 916-733-0142 to access pastoral resources. Bishop Soto is committed to ongoing disclosure to the faithful of those priests who are the subject of a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor.

15. **Why does the list only go back to 1950?** A primary goal of Bishop Soto's disclosure on April 30, 2019, is to help those victims of abuse heal by publicly acknowledging and expressing remorse for their pain. The date of 1950 was selected with a focus on those victims who may still be living, and to reflect the availability of historic files that might contain allegations of abuse.
16. **If a priest or deacon who has a credible allegation performed a sacrament for me (Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage or Convalidation, [first or any] Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, Penance), is that sacrament considered valid? In other words, did it "count"?** Even if a priest or deacon has been removed because of a credible allegation, or is no longer functioning as a priest or deacon (restricted or removed from the priesthood or diaconate), sacraments that were administered are valid. A sacrament is a personal, saving action of Jesus Christ. This said, we note that, however worthy or unworthy that ordained person may be, the sacrament is valid as long as the priest is validly ordained and deputed by the Church. It is worth noting that all of the faithful have a right to "spiritual goods," especially the Word of God and the sacraments. The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the body of Christ, and to give worship to God. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], n. 59)
17. **My children are involved in church activities. How do I know that they are safe?** The church has put in place several programs to better screen individuals who are involved in churches, schools and other activities and has done extensive training on these issues. In the last decade, we have taken extensive measures to effectively screen candidates to the priesthood, including criminal background checks and repeated psychological screenings before ordination. We also train all who work in the Catholic Church to recognize the signs of grooming and abuse in order to maintain a safe environment. Through the *Circle of Grace* Program, we equip the children with training to report behaviors that may be cause for concern. More than 160,500 individuals have completed and/or renewed Safe Environment training since 2003. All priests and deacons are also required to take this on-going training. We continue to examine best practices from organizations around the country to identify innovative ways to ensure the protection of our children.
18. **What measures are in place for overseeing bishops and cardinals?** Bishops and Cardinals fall under the jurisdiction of the Holy See (the Vatican). Currently, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is working with the Holy See to develop new channels for reporting complaints against bishops, as well as advocating for more effective resolution of future complaints. These goals will be pursued according to three criteria: proper independence of such investigations, sufficient authority to punish those found to have engaged in misconduct, and substantial leadership by laity.
19. **How much has the diocese paid to settle claims of sexual abuse?** Since 2002, the diocese has paid more than \$50 million to settle 58 claims of sex abuse, with \$35 million of that amount being paid out as part of the global settlement of 33 claims in 2005. Since 2005, the diocese has been able to recover about \$16 million from its insurance carriers, and nearly \$5 million from religious orders, leaving the diocese's direct settlement costs at just over \$29 million.

20. **Are my donations to the bishop's Annual Catholic Appeal paying for this?** No. All funds raised for the Annual Catholic Appeal are restricted specifically for the charitable and social service work the appeal supports.

In paying the costs of settlements, the diocese has made use of diocesan insurance and other reimbursements, with the balances coming from diocesan self-insurance reserves and the sale of pre-existing diocesan assets.

Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that everything our church does is funded by donations. We cannot escape the reality that the betrayal and sin of clergy sexual abuse has taken away funds that could have been used for serving the people of God.

21. **When will this be over?** We cannot think of this as something that will pass. The depth of the sin committed and the lasting nature of the harm done to victims requires that we make atonement part of our spiritual life from this point forward. We must always pray for the victims of sexual abuse – as their pain is lasting, so must our prayers for them be lasting. And, we must make the protection of the young and vulnerable central to who we are and what we do – forever.
22. **What can I as a Catholic do during this difficult time?** During this time, it is easy to feel helpless, but there are many things we can do as Catholics that are productive.

**PRAY** - Prayer obtains grace from God. Grace is something that we all need to make right decisions and to grow in holiness. So, increase your prayer life, spend more time reading Sacred Scripture and draw nearer to God during this time. Pray for victims of sexual abuse, pray for justice to prevail in these matters, and pray for the mission of the church to proclaim the Gospel. And please pray for our priests, deacons and bishops daily, especially your parish priests, and offer encouragement to them as they are saddened and angered by the tragic and evil actions of some priests and by Church leaders who failed to protect those under their care.

**PARTICIPATE** – Be an active participant in your parish's Safe Environment program, take advantage of the Diocese's resources for equipping parents and children, and most importantly—report any suspected misconduct to law enforcement and to the Diocese's Pastoral Care Coordinator.

**PERFORM ACTS OF CHARITY** - It is important that we continue our pastoral outreach to others, especially those most in need. Our service, charity, and good works help us to grow in the virtues of humility and generosity of soul, and bring the healing light of Christ to those whom we serve.

**RESPECT OTHERS** - We certainly can acknowledge our emotions and share our opinions in light of the issues within our Church. In the process, we must respect each other and let nothing divide us, so that we may live as members of God's holy family.