

Ind. bishop names 18 pervy clerics

BY DAVID BOROFF
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

The Catholic bishop of a northern Indiana diocese has released the names of 18 priests and deacons who have been "credibly" accused of sexually abusing children.

Bishop Kevin Rhoades of the Fort Wayne-South Bend diocese said earlier this year it was important for victims to see names made public.

"It is my hope that by releasing these names, the innocent victims of these horrific and heartbreaking crimes can finally begin the process of healing," he said.

The list of accused priests and deacons released Tuesday includes James Blume, Michael Buescher, Brian Carsten, William Ehrman, William Gieranowski, John Gillig, Gabriel Hernandez, Edward Krason, Paul LeBrun, Thomas Lombardi, Robert Mahoney, Eldon Miller, Edward Paquette, Cornelius Ryan, James Seculoff, Richard Stieglitz, Richard Thompson and James Trepanier.

Eight of the men are now dead, and the other 10 have been removed from the ministry. Two of them are behind bars.

Gillig, who died in 2011, has the most allegations against him (nine). Ehrman, who is also dead, has eight allegations against him, while Paquette has seven.

"For the purposes of this list, a 'credible accusation' against a priest or deacon of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is an accusation that, after a thorough investigation and review of available information, appears more likely true than not in the judgment of the Diocesan Review Board, and is accepted as credible by the Bishop," read a statement.

The list may be updated as more information is received. Rhoades (photo) said earlier this year he would release the list of names in response to a grand jury's findings that 300 predator priests had abused more than 1,000 children in Pennsylvania.

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Four boys who accused Angelo Serrano (inset), a volunteer catechism teacher at the now-shuttered St. Lucy-St. Patrick Catholic Church in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, of sexual abuse, will receive a huge payout from the diocese.

/GOOGLE MAPS

Hell of a payout

Diocese settles with sex abuse vics for \$27.5M

BY STEPHEN REX BROWN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Four boys who said they were abused by a perverted volunteer catechism teacher at a Catholic church have reached a \$27.5 million settlement with the Diocese of Brooklyn.

The agreement is believed to be the largest settlement on behalf of an individual arising out of sexual abuse in the church, according to attorneys Ben Rubinowitz and Peter Saghir. Each boy will receive \$6.9 million.

The victims were abused by Angelo Serrano, who worked at St. Lucy-St. Patrick Catholic Church in Clinton Hill from 2003 to 2009, according to a release. Serrano pleaded guilty in 2011 to inappropriate conduct with a child and is serving a 15-year sentence.

A Brooklyn Supreme Court judge wrote that two priests at the now-shuttered church, Rev. Frank Shannon and Rev. Stephen Lynch, had ignored glaring red flags

about Serrano's depravity.

"Lynch and Shannon had knowledge that for years Serrano often had several boys... sleep over at his apartment," Justice Loren Baily-Schiffman wrote.

"The record ... is replete with evidence of Serrano's inappropriate behavior with sexual implications that continued for years even after he was told to stop."

Lynch testified he saw Serrano kiss an 8- or 9-year-old boy on the lips, she wrote.

A church secretary, Beatrice Ponnelle, said she frequently told Serrano not to let boys sit on his lap, to no avail. He was often left alone with boys in a church office.

"Some of these boys were in second grade when the abuse started. The abuse continued for months and years," Rubinowitz said.

Serrano, 67, was a daily presence at the church from 1997 to his arrest in 2009. He helped with catechism classes, volunteered at a summer camp and lived next door. He identified himself

to parishioners as the director of religious education. Speakers from the church pulpit often referred families to Serrano for help arranging a baptism or confirmation.

The abuse occurred in the church, at his apartment and at an afterschool program, according to the judge's decision. The diocese announced the church's closure in 2010.

"Absolutely no records were made or kept regarding Serrano and his employment history while at the church," Baily-Schiffman wrote, noting church staff underwent special training regarding signs of sexual abuse in 2002.

Lynch, who has retired but remains active in the church, told The News he'd seen Serrano hug children inappropriately only a few times.

"Apparently he was a very sick person. I guess a lot of signals were missed, unfortunately, probably by myself and others," Lynch, 73, said.

Asked about the boy Serrano kissed on the lips, Lynch said, "I don't have a

memory of that at all," contradicting his own deposition.

The diocese disputed abuse had occurred inside the church. A spokeswoman said an afterschool program affiliated with the church was sharing the cost of the settlement for three victims. "The Diocese of Brooklyn has concluded litigation in which it highly contested its role in the sexual abuse of four adolescents," she said.

"The Diocese endeavored to reach this settlement in a way that compensates Mr. Serrano's victims and respects their privacy. We hope this is another step forward in the healing process for these claimants."

In 2016 the Archdiocese of New York initiated an Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program for victims of clergy abuse. The Diocese of Brooklyn followed suit with its own version of the settlement program, which required victims waive their rights to sue in exchange for a payout.

