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Diocese of Providence  
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June 28, 2019  
The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

To My Brothers and Sisters in the Diocese of Providence:

The publication of the list of clerics credibly accused of the sexual abuse of minors in years past is a difficult but necessary moment in the life of our diocesan Church.

In so doing, our thoughts and prayers turn first of all to all those who have been harmed by the grave sin of sexual misconduct by clerics – priests and deacons – over the years. To the victims/survivors and their families, and to the many faithful Catholics who have been rightly scandalized by these disgraceful events, I offer the profound apology of the Church and the Diocese of Providence. We pray fervently that God will give you the grace of healing and peace.

The publication of this list is also an opportunity for the Diocese of Providence to renew our commitment to provide safe environments for children and youth; to respond aggressively whenever sexual abuse is reported; to work in close collaboration with civil authorities; and to provide material, psychological and spiritual care for the victims/survivors who come to our attention. This is the path that the Diocese of Providence has followed for many years, and in this moment we reaffirm our solemn pledge to continue doing so in the future.

Some have asked why it is necessary to publish this list. There are, I believe, at least two compelling reasons.

The first is the societal expectation that we do so. Most dioceses of the country, along with many religious orders, have already published their “lists,” and there is a widespread expectation in our own community that we do the same. The failure to publish the list would create an impression that we do not take the situation seriously, but we certainly do; or that we have something to hide, and in fact we do not!

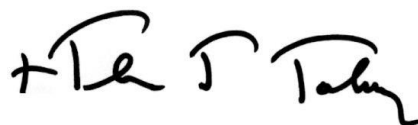
The second reason is that the members of our diocesan Church have the right to know what the situation has been and is regarding the world-wide sexual abuse crisis as it has occurred here in our local Church. We always ask our faithful to support us – personally, financially and spiritually – and in turn they have the right to know what the history of clerical misconduct has been, and to be reminded of the substantial efforts the Diocese has made over the years to combat the plague of sexual abuse. In short, the publication of this list is an expression of the transparency we want to encourage, and the accountability we need to accept.

It should be strongly emphasized and clearly understood that the fact that a name appears on this list does not necessarily mean that the individual is guilty of having committed sexual abuse, unless the allegation has been otherwise proven or admitted. It means only that an allegation has been received by the Diocese and after a preliminary investigation, has been deemed to be credible. But it should also be noted that every allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, credible or not, is reported to civil authorities and is subject to the canonical requirements of the Church. This has been the practice of the Diocese of Providence for many years.

And in listing the names of clerics credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors, it is also important to state that the overwhelming majority of clerics – priests and deacons – have served God and the Church very faithfully over the years, with enormous fidelity, generosity, compassion and care. This is a difficult time for them as well. We are proud of our priests and deacons, we pray for them, and we renew our wholehearted support and personal appreciation for all the good they do every day.

This list and letter are being released on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, source and sign of mercy and love. May the mercy and love of Jesus come upon all of the victims/survivors of sexual abuse, upon their families, on our priests and deacons, upon our parish communities, and all the members of our Church. As Jesus as our witness, we will continue to do everything in our power to remove sexual abuse from the Church, and to bring healing and peace to all.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Tobin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and a distinct 'J'.

Thomas J. Tobin  
Bishop of Providence