

DIocese of METUCHEN

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

July 25, 2019

Feast of Saint James the Apostle

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

After a recent meeting between Fr. Rozembajgier, Fr. Broderick, and Fr. Carles, together with Fr. Christy, our Vicar General, and Tony Kearns, our Chancellor, and after having heard from some of you, it is again necessary for me to address clergy abuse in our Church. This time, I am focused more on our local Church and, more specifically, Mary, Mother of God Parish and your former pastor Liam Minogue. He was pastor of the parish from March 2, 1993 to March 6, 2007. The alleged acts did not occur while he served in your parish or even our diocese, as they occurred in other parishes and before the creation of our diocese. To date, the Diocese of Trenton has received three credible complaints, spanning more than a decade, between the 1960s and 1970s.

In each of the complaints, the Diocese of Trenton determined credibility based on a thorough and deliberate process. Their Diocesan Review Board is an independent body from the Diocese of Trenton and its members serve as fact finders. Their review board consists of: two priests; the president of a high school; a former county prosecutor; a former county chief of detectives; a Ph.D. psychologist with expertise in abuse cases; a hospital chief medical officer; a former high school principal; an attorney who is a social services director; a licensed clinical social worker; and a Chief Administrative Officer. This board determined that these three complaints were believable, plausible and reasonable, corroborated, and ultimately deemed credible. As a result of these findings, Liam Minogue's name was published as part of a list naming priests throughout the Diocese of Trenton who had credible complaints of abuse against them. Additionally, there is a pending fourth complaint from the 1970s being investigated by the Diocese of Trenton. All complaints have been reported to the appropriate County Prosecutor's offices.

I do not know the specifics of the allegations, only that the Diocese of Trenton deemed there to be three credible complaints against Minogue regarding the abuse of minors. There are no known complaints beyond the four just mentioned. Again, and more specifically, there are no known complaints of abuse against Minogue after he became a priest of the Diocese of Metuchen or while he was pastor of Mary, Mother of God Parish.

Minogue served your parish for a little over fourteen years. These allegations only came to light in 2017, upon a survivor coming forward through an attorney. The Diocese of Trenton never received a complaint or knew of any complaints prior to 2017. The Diocese of Metuchen only just recently became aware of any complaint about Minogue through the Diocese of Trenton. Again, there are no known complaints regarding Minogue's conduct while a priest for the Diocese of Metuchen.

I am told that Minogue was beloved and respected by many. At the time, it must have seemed right and proper to honor his service to your parish, through the use of pictures, name plates, etc. In our Faith, we believe in the communion of saints and we honor people with pictures and at times name buildings or rooms after them because we want to model ourselves after their example of Christian life and strive to live the virtues we believed they lived. But now, in the wake of the clergy abuse horrors coming to light and with insight into the devastating pain caused to those subjected to the abuse, we must remove any honor given to a clergy person credibly accused. The purpose of removing these honors is not to forget their abuse, but rather to pave a pathway to healing for the survivors.

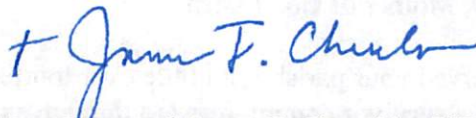
In Minogue's tenure of pastorate here, he no doubt performed many acts of kindnesses, offered pastoral care, and celebrated many sacraments. It is important to keep in mind that any good he did or the sacraments he celebrated are not canceled. Rather, with the credible information that has recently come to light, it sadly places his legacy in a shadow, that we as a Church have a responsibility to properly acknowledge. Survivors of abuse should not be subjected to view the marks of respect and honor for those who have done great harm.

I believe our Church is journeying toward a new day. We have many mechanisms in place, including: the Protecting God's Children Protocol; the 2002 USCCB Dallas Charter For the Protection of Children and Young People; a victim's assistance coordinator; the implementation of lay Diocesan Review Boards to evaluate allegations; the design of websites and messaging to encourage the reporting of abuse; training of our clergy and seminarians on best practices; and many more efforts to ensure the safety of our young people and to ensure that clergy are held accountable for any and all abuse. Most recently, the USCCB also adopted accountability measures, consistent with the new universal laws for the reporting and handling of complaints against bishops, as set forth in the *Motu Proprio "Vos estis lux mundi,"* or "You are the Light of the World," issued by Pope Francis in May. There has not been a credible allegation against clergy in our parishes and schools throughout the diocese in over a decade. We will remain vigilant in safeguarding against any further abuse in our Church.

As we remove any public honors given to Minogue, we are called to be mindful of God's tremendous grace and goodness and we pray for all those involved and subjected to Minogue's moral wrongdoing and criminal choices. We also pray for all survivors of sexual abuse and ask God to heal their painful memories and scars. I pray for all of you and the effects these allegations have had on you as a parish family. Finally, we ask God for our Church to remain a source of comfort, healing, and peace to all.

With renewed best wishes, I remain

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James F. Checchio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Most Reverend James F. Checchio, JCD, MBA
Bishop of Metuchen