



THE DIOCESE OF YAKIMA • PASTORAL OFFICE
LA DIÓCESIS DE YAKIMA • CENTRO PASTORAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 9, 2024

Contact: Monsignor Robert M. Siler, Chancellor
Catholic Diocese of Yakima
509-965-7117 (work)
509-494-2678 (cell)
robert.siler@yakimadiocese.org

Diocese of Yakima Responds to Attorney General’s Office Subpoena

Since learning of the subpoena issued by the Washington State Attorney General’s office last July, and reissued with additional demands in April, the Diocese of Yakima has expressed its willingness to work cooperatively with the AG, all public institutions that serve children and youth, and all communities of faith, for a thorough study of the history of abuse of minors, and how to effectively prevent it.

We extended this invitation directly to the Attorney General’s legal team last summer. Our legal representatives were told the invitation would be communicated directly to the Attorney General. Sadly, it appears our offer to engage in a collaborative, constructive, and public process that could benefit all residents of Washington has not been accepted. Nor has the Attorney General’s office identified a valid legal basis for the extraordinary demands made on the Diocese. The subpoena is not authorized by any statute, and it runs afoul of the guarantees of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article I, Section 11 of the Constitution of the State of Washington.

Since 2002, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, and the state of Washington, has been a leader in how to best protect children and youth from the societal disaster that sexual abuse has helped to create. We report credible complaints promptly to law enforcement, cooperate in their investigations, and conduct our investigation if civil authorities decide not to proceed.

The Catholic Church provides compassionate care to victims of sexual abuse, always supporting their rights to report as well as to seek financial compensation. This support sometimes is provided even before complaints are substantiated. We want victims – and indeed our society – to be made whole.

A comprehensive review of sexual abuse of minors in our state would be a great asset. Singling out the Roman Catholic Church, however, may have the opposite effect. Scapegoating one particular Church among thousands – one child-serving institution among hundreds – could contribute to a false sense that sexual abuse of minors is a “Catholic problem.”

One of the points made in our objections to the AG’s subpoena is that there are already many public sources for the information that is being sought. We cannot publicize everything in our

records, however, to respect the privacy and confidentiality rights of, among others, both victims and falsely accused clergy. And so, we will vigorously assert our First Amendment rights.

Resources at the following links may be helpful to those seeking to more fully understand how the Roman Catholic Church, and in particular the Diocese of Yakima, has responded to the societal crisis of sexual abuse:

Yakima Diocese Victim Assistance Hotline:

<https://yakimadiocese.org/2011/01/28/victim-assistance-to-report-clerical-abuse-of-minors/>

or:

<https://tinyurl.com/mwkj7p9h>

Catholic Bishops Abuse Reporting Service:

<https://yakimadiocese.org/2020/03/16/catholic-bishops-abuse-reporting-service/>

or:

<https://tinyurl.com/52b6hza5>

Yakima Diocese Abuse Disclosure List:

<https://sites.google.com/a/yakimadiocese.com/abuse-disclosure-list/>

or:

<https://tinyurl.com/y3un44ch>

Yakima Diocese Abuse Policies and Resources:

<https://yakimadiocese.org/2015/12/02/safe-environment/>

or:

<https://tinyurl.com/54cphhfb>

Yakima Diocese Links to Audited Financial Statements

<https://yakimadiocese.org/2012/01/01/finance-office/>

or:

<https://tinyurl.com/bder6yyu>

In conclusion, we would note that the nearly 1.4 million Catholics in the State of Washington enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as all residents of this state. Catholics are workers and employers; we serve our state in public institutions, and help protect our state in serving through law enforcement and the military; we pay taxes. Most importantly for the matter at hand, we have been leaders in this state for more than two decades in how to better protect minors from sexual abuse, help victims heal, and hold abusers to account.

As leaders of the Yakima Diocese's 170,000 or so Catholics, we encourage the AG's Office to drop this subpoena, and actively work with us to more thoroughly study the past, and work effectively together in a transparent manner to bring about true and lasting change for the protection of children and youth, the compassionate care and healing of victims, and true accountability for all.

###