

December 7, 2018

Statement from Fr. Ronald Mercier on the Release of List of Accused Jesuits

The storm that the Church experiences today calls forth from us an unprecedented and yet needed response. Silence in the face of the events of recent months cannot be an option.

Our first response must be directed to those who have survived abuse at the hands of a member of the Society of Jesus when they were minors, a terrible evil that wounds the soul. Words cannot possibly suffice to express our sorrow and shame for what occurred, our promise of prayers for healing, and our commitment to work with them. Caring for these survivors – and preventing any such future events – must be our focus as we move forward.

The People of God, including our companions in mission, who have experienced a blow to the trust they place in the Society, similarly deserve a response marked by openness and contrition, one that recognizes our history and seeks to create a new way forward. We deeply regret the pain this causes our colleagues as they share with us the mission given by the Lord.

Over the last three months, I have discussed our response with a broad range of people. One consistent theme has emerged, the need for transparency through publishing this list of Jesuits with credible accusations of abuse of a minor, painful as it may be. I have heard too the voices that call, rightly, for attention to the standards of justice in any such revelations. I am grateful to all those who participated in these conversations. In the end, though, the decision is mine.

The province staff has worked tirelessly to put together a list of those credibly accused of having abused a minor. That has meant reviewing the processes used in decisions over the last four decades. Since 2002, we have had the benefit of Province Review Boards including lay men and women versed in law, medicine, and psychology who have provided us excellent advice in deciding cases. Earlier, the province staffs investigated allegations, giving the results to the provincial for his decision. We have reviewed all those files, relying as well on the careful research done in the former Missouri and New Orleans Provinces as they prepared for initial accreditation by Praesidium, Inc.

While we are confident in the provisional list we provide today, we wish a greater degree of certainty and transparency and so have contracted with Kinsale Management Consulting to review all files for anyone who was a member of the Missouri and New Orleans Provinces and the Puerto Rico Region after December 31, 1954, roughly 2500 files in total. We also include those Jesuits from other provinces who were assigned to one of those entities. This audit will begin in March and will provide us with results in the late spring. If necessary, we will then update the list.

The list we are releasing today will no doubt surprise or shock many. This represents a sinful part of our history, one that calls the Society of Jesus to repentance and to a renewed commitment both to create a safe space in our ministries for all God's people and to provide the openness that can become the foundation for renewed trust.

I would make two notes of caution. First, inclusion on this list does not imply that the allegations are true and correct or that the accused individual has been found guilty of a crime or liable for civil claims. In many instances, the allegations were made several years or decades after the alleged events, which makes it difficult to be assured the truth is known.

Second, while a list of each man's assignments is included, it is important to note that the allegations do not necessarily stem from any of the listed assignments.

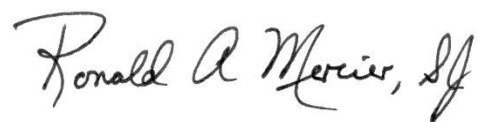
I must say a word of thanks to the members of the Society who continue to minister so well, who provide true witness to our charism. They provide a reason to believe because of the care they show to so many people.

As always, we urge anyone who has experienced abuse as a minor by a Jesuit to please contact our Coordinator of Pastoral Support and Outreach, Carol Brescia, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, at 314-915-7168 or UCSOutreach@jesuits.org. She will respond with compassion and confidentiality

As I close, again I express the sorrow of the Society of Jesus for the abuse and the breach of trust people have experienced. Much has changed; we have learned how to provide safer spaces and better ways of responding to allegations. Nevertheless, these steps cannot take away the pain so many know. We pray that God may provide healing and peace and we stand ready to assist.

I began by noting the storm buffeting the Church today. While we Jesuits must do all that lies in our power to respond, ultimately this is God's work and we trust that God's mercy and wisdom will help the healing of the wounds suffered and provide a light for a way forward for all of us.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald A. Mercier, S.J." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ronald A. Mercier, S.J.
Provincial