



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

Communications Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from the Diocese of Venice

The Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report released on August 14, 2018 indicates six priests with ties to the Diocese of Venice.

The said report mentions Rev. Robert Brague, a deceased priest from the Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania, who served in the Diocese of Venice as Parochial Vicar of St. Ann's Parish in Naples from 1990 -1991, then at Holy Cross Catholic Church in Palmetto from 1991 to 1997. Father Brague, who remained a Diocese of Scranton priest throughout his stay here, passed away on December 18, 1997. The Diocese is not aware, nor was it ever informed, of any abuse allegations in the Diocese of Venice pertaining to Father Brague. This information has been verified from Diocesan archives. The then Bishop of the Diocese, Most Rev. John J. Nevins, Bishop from 1984-2007, and passed away in 2014.

Regarding the second priest, it can be confirmed that Rev. Thomas M. O'Donnell, has never had faculties in the Diocese of Venice, and priestly faculties were neither requested, nor granted. He is a priest from the Diocese of Pittsburgh, who resides at St. John XXIII HUD project (Housing and Urban Development) in Fort Myers. Residency requirements are determined by HUD and its fair housing rules. Eligibility and background screenings are required by HUD.

Father Sean Kerins, also mentioned in the report as a priest from the Diocese of Erie, has no association with the Diocese of Venice. It should be noted that the Diocese of Venice was informed by the Diocese of Erie in a letter dated February 2018, that one of their priests, Father Kerins, had been "removed from ministry" and would be residing with family in Naples.

Father Robert E. Spangenberg, C.S.Sp. was granted faculties in the Diocese of Venice from October 1989 through September 1990. He returned to Sarasota in July 2002 and stayed until February 2003; there is no record of faculties being granted for that period.

Regarding Fathers Raymond R. Rhoden and Timothy Sperber, there are no records in Diocesan files and they are unknown to the Diocese of Venice.

If a priest is retired, or moves to the area of the Diocese and does not request to exercise their priestly ministry, the Diocese is not always informed and has no way of confirming or knowing an individual is within its boundaries.



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The Diocese of Venice and its entities, take very seriously the safety of all young people and vulnerable adults. To this end, the Diocese works to prevent any instances of abuse, particularly against minors and vulnerable adults with a zero-tolerance policy.

Any person who believes abuse has occurred should immediately contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

The sexual abuse of children and young people by anyone, but particularly by clergy and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, is unacceptable. The ways in which many of these crimes and sins were addressed, have caused enormous pain, anger and confusion. The Diocese asks all to pray for victims of this scourge and their families, to receive healing and renewed hope. The perpetrators of these inhumane crimes are to be held responsible for their actions.

The Diocese of Venice is aware of its responsibilities and role in reporting any accusation of sexual abuse against minors and vulnerable adults, and strives to be alert for any such offenses.