



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Department of Communication

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Response to media inquiries concerning Rev. David Connell, listed in Pennsylvania grand jury report

The Archdiocese of San Antonio was recently made aware of an allegation that Rev. David Connell sexually abused a minor while he was serving as chairman of the Science Department of Nativity High School in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, where he was assigned from 1973 to 1976. This allegation was first made in 2007 to a Carmelite provincial and the Archdiocese of San Antonio was made aware of it in reviewing the Pennsylvania grand jury report released August 14, 2018, concerning clergy sexual abuse investigations in that state covering a span of more than 70 years.

Rev. Connell came to San Antonio in August 1976 and joined the faculty of Antonian College Preparatory High School as a biology and theology teacher. Rev. Connell provided the Archdiocese of San Antonio documentation from the Chancellor of the Diocese of Allentown, Pennsylvania, of an allegation from his time at Nativity High School that he “made a pass” at a male student while on a camping trip. At the time he denied this incident happened.

He continued at Antonian College Preparatory High School in the roles as vice principal and then principal until September 1988. In 1980, Rev. Connell, who was a Carmelite priest, was incardinated into the Archdiocese of San Antonio from the Carmelite Province of St. Elias in New York. On January 1, 1989, Rev. Connell was assigned as temporary administrator of St. Thomas More Church in San Antonio, and he was named pastor there on June 1 of that year. He served in that role until his death on September 13, 1995.

Regarding Rev. Connell’s time in San Antonio, there have been no reports to the Archdiocese of San Antonio of misconduct or allegations of abuse from parishioners or students in the Archdiocese.

The information contained in the Pennsylvania grand jury report is being taken extremely seriously by the Archdiocese. Although the allegations concerning Rev. Connell and the incidents contained in the Pennsylvania grand jury report did not take place in the Archdiocese, out of an abundance of caution the Archdiocese of San Antonio asks anyone with information or concerns regarding Rev. David Connell to contact Steve Martinez, director of the Archdiocesan Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment, at (210) 734-7786 or (877) 700-1888, or e-mail at ovase@archsa.org. The Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment was created in order to be the initial contact point for those who have experienced clergy abuse. The Office provides pastoral care including individual, group, and spiritual counseling to assist in the healing process. The archdiocesan procedures for reporting abuse can be found at:

https://www.archsa.org/images/uploads/Reporting_Procedures_2016.pdf

This Pennsylvania grand jury report information will be brought forward to the Archdiocesan Review Board, an announcement concerning these allegations will be placed in the parish bulletin at St. Thomas More, in *Today's Catholic* newspaper, posted on the archdiocesan website at www.archsa.org and the community at Antonian College Preparatory High School will be notified as well.

In 2002 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which commits the prelates to respond promptly and compassionately to victims, report the abuse of minors, remove offenders, and take ongoing action to prevent abuse. The *Charter* was updated in 2011 and again in 2018.

Since the *Charter* was implemented 16 years ago, two priests in the Archdiocese have been accused of sexual abuse; one of sexual abuse of a minor and another of possession of child pornography. Both served jail time. No priests of the Archdiocese of San Antonio against whom a single verifiable allegation has ever been made are serving in ministry anywhere.

We pledge to maintain safe environments for everyone, and all policies and procedures regarding training and background check requirements are publicly available. In our Catholic schools:

- Hiring is through an on-line application platform that allows us to ensure only qualified applicants are available for interviewing
- Background check for all individuals
- All employees must receive Safe Environment Training and training on the archdiocesan sexual misconduct policy
- All campuses are trained in reporting requirements as stated by law and appropriate response for suspected child abuse
- Any reports/observations of potentially inappropriate interactions with minors are investigated and reported as appropriate to local law enforcement
- Employees are immediately removed from the school environment in the case of inappropriate interaction with a student allegations and are resolved on a case by case basis

The Archdiocese of San Antonio remains strongly committed to restoring trust and healing the wounds of anyone who may have been hurt by sexual abuse. The Archdiocese will continue to work toward making every Catholic parish, school and institution a safe harbor for all. Nothing will deter the Archdiocese from this vital effort toward a better future for everyone in need.

We reiterate the comment made by the president of the USCCB following the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report released August 14, 2018: “We pray that all survivors of sexual abuse find healing, comfort, and strength in God’s loving presence as the church pledges to continue to restore trust through accompaniment, communion, accountability, and justice.”