



DIOCESE OF CHEYENNE

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Diocese of Cheyenne Reports Three New Credible Wyoming Child Abuse Allegations Against Retired Bishop Hart

In July and August of 2018, the Diocese of Cheyenne announced that it had conducted canonical investigations and concluded that there was substantiated evidence that retired Bishop Joseph Hart had abused three boys in Wyoming. Since those announcements, the Diocese received allegations regarding three new individuals that they, too, were sexually abused by Bishop Hart in the 1970's and 1980's. The allegations have been reported to the civil authorities, and the Diocese of Cheyenne has cooperated fully with the police.

In June 2019 the U.S. Catholic Bishops approved Directives to implement *Vos estis lux mundi* ('*You are the light of the world*'), which authorizes the Metropolitan Archbishop to oversee the investigation of allegations against bishops. However, the Diocese of Cheyenne had previously been authorized by the Holy See to investigate allegations against Bishop Hart and had already begun to investigate the new allegations. Upon consultation with the Holy See, Bishop Steven Biegler was directed to complete the investigation.

Therefore, the diocese completed its canonical investigations which included asking Bishop Hart for an interview to respond to the accusation. He declined to be interviewed. The results of the investigation were given to the Diocesan Review Board, which found the three allegations credible and substantiated. Then the diocese forwarded the results to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for its action. The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Aquila of Denver and Bishop Johnston of Kansas City-St. Joseph were sent copies of the report.

Bishop Steven Biegler reiterated that the Catholic Church is committed to respond promptly and with justice to accusations of sexual abuse. He said, "I applaud the victims who have come forward to report sexual abuse to the police or the Church. Your courageous action helps us to address these terrible crimes, and your example encourages other victims to find their voice. As the Church, we promise to protect the most vulnerable and to accompany those who have been harmed on a journey of healing." Bishop Steven asks for prayers for all victims, their family members, and all Church or public officials involved in this matter.

If anyone has suffered sexual abuse, contact the local law enforcement agency or the Department of Family Services. For further assistance, contact Dorene McIntyre at the Diocese of Cheyenne, 307-638-1530 or the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, Mary Adams at 307-220-0485.

The Diocese of Cheyenne is providing this statement in accord with its obligations under the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People that calls for dioceses to be "transparent in communicating with the public about the sexual abuse of minors by clergy" (Article 7) and under the diocese's own norms which specifies that "a public announcement will be made to the diocese as a whole and to the general public" after an "accusation has been investigated and determined to be credible" (Article XI).
