



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

October 31, 2018

Dear people of the Diocese of Sioux City,

We are all aware that this is a difficult time for the Catholic Church. We are dealing with a clergy sexual abuse crisis. That is why I just completed three conversations and listening sessions across the Diocese of Sioux City. The last one took place on October 30th in Fort Dodge. At that session, we discussed the situation that has—as of this morning—gained considerable comment in the national news. I would like to share the following insights:

No one presently at the diocese has firsthand knowledge about Jerry Coyle and that includes me. For the past few months, we have been attempting to put the pieces together about what happened during the 1980s with the files and records that we do have on Jerry Coyle.

What we have learned is that in 1986, the Bishop terminated Jerry Coyle's priestly faculties, meaning that he could no longer function as a priest in any way, except that he could offer Mass alone in his own home. He could not present himself as a priest, wear any clerical clothing, or function as a priest in any public capacity. In addition, he was sent to a facility in New Mexico for evaluation and treatment. He was told he would never return to a parish. He elected to stay in Albuquerque where he has remained until recently, living and working as a civilian. If during that time he presented himself as "Father Coyle," or told anyone he was a priest, it was a violation of the restrictions placed upon him. He was to live as a civilian.

During the ensuing 32 years, there were no complaints of any misbehavior by Jerry Coyle. Psychologists in Albuquerque advised the Diocese that Coyle was highly motivated to change. We know that many disagree with this point, and so do I.

He was not hidden. He was sent to New Mexico in 1986 for treatment operated by the "Servants of the Paraclete" which, among other things, specializes in the treatment of clergy. This was the protocol at that time.

We do know that Coyle did befriend a couple with children in New Mexico. He was involved in a serious car accident, and the couple suggested that he move in with them. The Diocese was led to believe that Coyle had disclosed his past to them. However, the Diocese felt that it was a bad idea and attempted to dissuade Coyle and the couple from going forward. It was during these discussions that the Diocese disclosed the extent of Coyle's past transgressions.

DIocese of Sioux City

1821 JACKSON STREET • SIOUX CITY, IOWA 51105
(712) 233-7555 • FAX: (712) 233-7557

Because of the concern about the living situation at this couple's home, and because of Coyle's advanced age and frail condition, the Diocese moved him back to Iowa and placed him at the Marian Home in Fort Dodge under strict supervision. This is not permanent, and he will not remain there.

Police were not contacted when Coyle self-admitted, but policies have changed since 1986. Now the policy is to contact civil authorities, which we will follow since we have named victims of Jerry Coyle.

If you are a victim of Jerry Coyle or any priest or person associated with the Diocese of Sioux City, please come forward. The Diocese of Sioux City partners with an independent and professional local care provider, to offer confidential, compassionate assistance. Please contact Angie Mack, Victim Assistance Coordinator: 866-435-4397 or 712-279-5610. She is not employed by the Diocese of Sioux City and helps both victims who are minors and those who are adults and were victimized in their childhood by a member of the clergy.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Walker Nickless". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "Your brother in Christ,".

Most Reverend R. Walker Nickless
Bishop of Sioux City