



The Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix

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COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

Q&A: General Information About Church Court Process

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1. How does a Diocese collect all the evidence to prove its case and how does it know it has enough evidence to send to the Vatican for a decision?

The Church has its own procedures within its system of canon law. As in any legal system, the Church seeks to render justice by taking action against criminal activity in the Church through specific procedures, evidence gathering, interviewing witnesses and fact finding. In a judicial process there is a formal procedure involving the appointment of three judges who evaluate all the proofs and render a decision as to guilt. This decision is then sent to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for finalization.

2. Do clerics have a right to a canonical advocate or legal representation in Church law as they go through these processes?

Yes. All clerics are notified of their right to have a canon lawyer to represent their concerns and to defend their rights in these proceedings.

3. Who decides whether or not a cleric is laicized?

Ultimately it is the pope who through an official decree declares a priest to be dismissed from the clerical state — or in more commonly used terms, “laicized.”

4. Does the Diocese of Phoenix maintain a list of clergy found guilty of sexual abuse?

The Diocese of Phoenix has informed the community in each instance that an abuse allegation was determined to have a semblance of truth to it.

Additionally, a list of those who have been laicized and/or removed from ministry due to abuse allegations was publicized in 2012 in a report published on the 10th anniversary of the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.” Read the report and a list of Community Notification Statements here: diocesephoenix.org/child-youth-protection-office.php

5. Where can I learn more about the Church's policies concerning the protection of youth and the processes for training Church personnel and volunteers?

Information concerning the Church's policies and procedures can be accessed at:
diocesephoenix.org/child-youth-protection-resources.php

Documents, in English and Spanish, include:

- 2013-2014 Diocesan Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Minors
- USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People
- USCCB Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons

The mission of the Diocese of Phoenix's Safe Environment Training Office is to prevent sexual, physical or emotional abuse and/or neglect of children and young people through continued education, building awareness, and maintaining a commitment to keeping all children and young people safe.

The Diocese of Phoenix is committed to protecting all children and young people by offering several abuse prevention educational sessions. The Diocesan "Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Minors" requires all clergy, employees, volunteers that directly serve minors, volunteers that work in food pantries/provide meal service, provide ministerial service in private homes, adults administering service in an after school program, and minors to attend training on an annual basis. All other volunteers must attend training every other year (unless annual training is required by the pastor).

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