



## Archdiocese of Seattle Settles Three Abuse Cases from the 1960s, '70s and '80s

Seattle, January 7, 2021 – Over the past six months, the Archdiocese of Seattle reached final settlements totaling just over \$2 million for three separate cases involving allegations of sexual abuse against four priests of the archdiocese.

On July 16, 2020, the Archdiocese of Seattle reached a settlement in a case involving allegations of sexual abuse by Father Dennis Champagne and Father Michael C. OBrien in the late 1970s and early 1980s at St. Michael Parish in Snohomish, Washington.

- Champagne served at St. Michael Parish as the pastor from 1979 until 1999. In 2002, the archdiocese put Champagne on administrative leave after receiving an allegation of sexual abuse. Champagne remained on administrative leave until a canonical process was completed, at which time he was placed on permanent prayer and penance, removing him from service.
- OBrien served at St. Michael Parish as the pastor from 1974 to 1979. After receiving a credible complaint of sexual abuse, a canonical process was completed, and in 2010 OBrien was laicized and returned to the lay state.

On November 19, 2020, the Archdiocese of Seattle reached a settlement in a case involving an allegation of sexual abuse by Father Paul Conn in the mid-1980s when Conn served at Queen of Angels Parish in Port Angeles, Washington. Conn served at Queen of Angels as a parochial vicar from 1985 until 1988. In 1988, the archdiocese learned of allegations of sexual abuse and facilitated a report to the police. Conn was arrested and charged, pled guilty to six counts of indecent liberties and served time in prison. From the time of his arrest until 2005, he was not allowed to serve as a priest, and in 2005 he was laicized.

On December 28, 2020, the Archdiocese of Seattle completed a settlement in a case involving an allegation of sexual abuse by Father James Knelleken in the early 1960s at then Immaculate Conception (now St. Lawrence) Parish in Raymond, Washington. Knelleken served at Immaculate Parish as the pastor from 1958 until 1964. In 1988, the archdiocese put Knelleken on administrative leave after receiving a complaint of sexual abuse. Knelleken remained on administrative leave until his retirement in 1989. He was barred from ministry in retirement, and was laicized in 1996.

### Commitment to Transparency

Champagne, OBrien, Conn and Knelleken were included on the archdiocese's List of Clergy and Religious Brothers and Sisters for Whom Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor Have Been Admitted, Established or Determined to be Credible when the list was originally published in January 2016.

As part of its commitment to transparency, the Archdiocese of Seattle invites people to visit its [Protect and Heal](#) website to learn about the history of sexual abuse in the archdiocese, which peaked in 1975 and has

since sharply declined. The website also outlines how since the early 1980s, the archdiocese has taken steps to prevent abuse, protect the community and help victims and their families heal. For more information, please visit [www.protectandheal.seattlearchdiocese.org](http://www.protectandheal.seattlearchdiocese.org).

To report any suspicion of abuse by any Church personnel, please contact local law enforcement. In addition, anyone who has knowledge of misconduct by a member of the clergy, an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Seattle is urged to call the archdiocesan hotline at 1-800-446-7762.

### **About the Archdiocese of Seattle**

The Archdiocese of Seattle encompasses all of Western Washington, stretching from Canada to Oregon and from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. There are 168 parishes, missions and pastoral centers in the archdiocese, with more than 500 weekly Masses celebrated in eight languages. Archbishop Paul D. Etienne leads the archdiocese with his two auxiliary bishops, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo and Bishop Daniel Mueggenborg. For more information about the Archdiocese of Seattle, visit [seattlearchdiocese.org](http://seattlearchdiocese.org).

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