

**DIOCESE OF  
ALLENTOWN**

**THE DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN**

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**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

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20 June 2018

**BISHOP SCHLERT'S RESPONSE TO THE  
40<sup>th</sup> STATEWIDE INVESTIGATIVE GRAND JURY REPORT**

We thank the Grand Jury and the Office of Attorney General for their work in preparing the Report. It is only by confronting and understanding the past that we, as a Church and as a Commonwealth, can begin to heal and move forward toward a goal that we all share: The elimination of child abuse wherever it may occur in society.

The incidents of abuse contained in the Grand Jury Report are abhorrent and tragic. Even though most of the incidents in the Report date back decades and involve priests who are no longer in ministry or are deceased, it does not change the fact that past abuse was terrible, sinful, and criminal. Child abuse is devastating and tragic for the victims and survivors, who remain in our daily prayers.

On behalf of the Diocese of Allentown, I apologize to everyone who has been hurt by the past actions of some members of the clergy. As a Diocese, we know that these past actions have caused mistrust for many people.

Fortunately, much has changed over the past fifteen years, as the Grand Jury acknowledged in its Report. The Diocese of Allentown has taken strong and decisive action to prevent abuse and to provide support for victims and survivors. This includes a policy of zero tolerance: the Diocese reports all cases of abuse to law enforcement, and perpetrators are removed from ministry.

As a Diocese, we view law enforcement as a partner in the effort to combat the problem of child abuse. For example, in May 2002, the Diocese voluntarily convened a meeting with the District Attorneys of the five counties which encompass the Diocese of Allentown. At the meeting, the Diocese provided the District Attorneys with the files for priests against whom known, credible allegations of abuse had been lodged. Since 2002, we have promptly informed each respective District Attorney when a new allegation is made, regardless of how long ago the abuse may have occurred.

Sadly, abuse still is part of the society in which we live. Today, in the Diocese of Allentown, victims and survivors are heard and cared for, perpetrators are held accountable and children are protected.

The Diocese of Allentown has the following protocols, which it diligently enforces, to protect children:

- ❖ Rigorous background checks for clergy, employees, and volunteers of all parishes, schools, and other organizations.
- ❖ Educational programs have been provided to over 38,000 adults. These mandatory programs provide training in recognizing, reporting, and responding to abuse.
- ❖ Annual, age-appropriate training is provided to children in diocesan schools and religious education programs to assist children in recognizing and preventing child abuse.
- ❖ Safe Environment Coordinators have been designated to ensure that each parish, school, or ministry is compliant with diocesan protocols.

- ❖ Mandated Reporter Training has been completed by more than 5,000 people. This training educates people on the legal requirements of reporting abuse.
- ❖ An Independent Review Board, comprised of people with expertise on child abuse, assists the Bishop in discharging his responsibilities involving the sexual abuse of minors by clerics.
- ❖ The Diocese promptly reports to law enforcement any allegation of child abuse.

The Diocese of Allentown is thankful for the vast majority of its priests, who had absolutely no involvement in this unholy criminal behavior, and who continue to work every day to carry out the mission and good works of our Church. We will focus on reestablishing trust among all those who rely on the Catholic Church for help, for spiritual guidance, and for strength.

The Diocese will learn from the Grand Jury Report and continue to work with law enforcement to proactively use the Report to further improve protections for children and young people. Our first priority remains keeping children safe.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert  
Bishop of Allentown



**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**IN RE:  
THE FORTIETH STATEWIDE  
INVESTIGTING GRAND JURY**

**: SUPREME COURT OF  
: PENNSYLVANIA  
: 2 W.D. MISC. DKT 2016  
:  
: ALLEGHENY COUNTY COMMON  
: PLEAS  
: CP-02-MD-571-2016  
: NOTICE NO. 1**

**SEALED RESPONSE TO REPORT 1 OF THE FORTIETH STATEWIDE GRAND  
JURY**

TO THE HONORABLE NORMAN A. KRUMENACKER, III  
Supervising Judge  
Fortieth Statewide Investigating Grand Jury

1. You can consider this a sealed response by Monsignor Thomas Benestad to the above captioned Investigating Grand Jury Report.
2. Monsignor Thomas Benestad officially retired in June of 2009.
3. The alleged victims came forward in 2011 to make allegations regarding Monsignor Benestad.
4. The summary of the Grand Jury Report implies that Monsignor Benestad retired as a result of allegations made by the alleged victims
5. Monsignor Benestad clearly did not retire because of allegations made by the alleged victims in this matter as he had retired two (2) years before any allegations were made.
6. When allegations were made by the alleged victims in 2011, the Bishop of Allentown informed Monsignor Benestad that he was to refrain from all forms of public ministry until the matter had been investigated and a resolution had been reached.

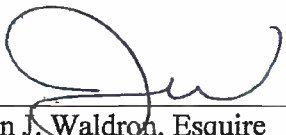
7. In the spring of 2014, the officials in Rome had adjudicated Monsignor Benestad case and notified the Diocese of Allentown of their decision, at which time Bishop Barres sent a decree revoking any restrictions upon Monsignor Benestad's ministry.
8. Monsignor Benestad has never done anything that would be deemed inappropriate with any individual.
9. Monsignor Benestad has never done anything that would be deemed immoral by the church with any individual.
10. Monsignor Benestad has never done anything illegal with any person as judged by any civil or criminal authority.

WHEREFORE, it is respectfully requested that this be a sealed response by Monsignor Benestad to the above captioned report of the Fortieth Statewide Investigating Grand Jury.

Respectfully Submitted,  
HUBER WALDRON & WILLIAMS, LLC

Dated: 6/8/2018

BY:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John J. Waldron, Esquire  
Attorney I.D. No. 36853  
535 Hamilton Street, Suite 102  
Allentown, PA 18101  
Attorney for Monsignor Thomas Benestad





LAW OFFICES  
**CHRISTOPHER G. FURLONG**  
MEMBER OF THE PA & NC BAR

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June 20, 2018

CHESTER COUNTY OFFICE  
89-2 WEST STATE STREET  
P.O. BOX 739  
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610-268-3323  
REPLY TO:

Media

The Honorable Norman A. Krumenacker, III  
Cambria County Courthouse  
220 South Center Street  
Ebensburg, PA 15931

RE: 40<sup>th</sup> Statewide Investigating Grand Jury  
REPORT No. 1.

Dear Judge Krumenacker:

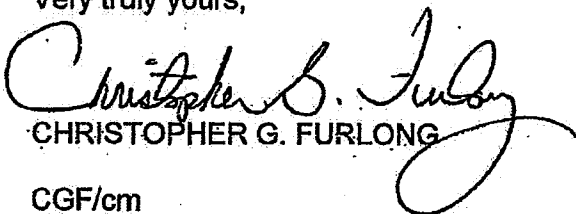
Please be advised that the undersigned has been contacted and retained by Francis J. Fromholzer. Pursuant to your Order of May 22, 2018, would you please be good enough to consider this letter, as Mr. Fromholzer's response thereto.

As evidenced in the Report itself, Mr. Fromholzer denies these allegations of abuse. If you would be kind enough to place this response under seal as referenced your Order and more specifically paragraph 5 thereof, it would be appreciated.

Should you require anything further relative to this matter, don't hesitate to contact me.

I remain,

Very truly yours,

  
CHRISTOPHER G. FURLONG

CGF/cm

cc: Daniel J. Dye, Sr. Deputy Attorney General, via email  
Francis J. Fromholzer



**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**IN RE:  
THE FORTIETH STATEWIDE  
INVESTIGATING GRAND JURY**

**: SUPREME COURT OF  
: PENNSYLVANIA  
: 2 W.D. MISC. DKT 2016  
:  
: ALLEGHENY COUNTY COMMON  
: PLEAS  
: CP-02-MD-571-2016  
: NOTICE NO. 1**

**SEALED RESPONSE TO REPORT 1 OF THE FORTIETH STATEWIDE GRAND  
JURY**

TO THE HONORABLE NORMAN A. KRUMENACKER, III  
Supervising Judge  
Fortieth Statewide Investigating Grand Jury

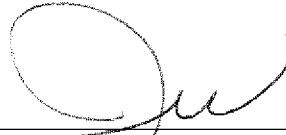
1. You can consider this a sealed response by Monsignor Anthony D. Muntone to the above captioned Investigating Grand Jury Report.
2. The numerous pages of the Grand Jury Report that relate to Monsignor Muntone suggest that he enabled a person or persons to engaged in Child Sexual Abuse, or enable individuals to violate a duty to safe guard the welfare of children.
3. It is Monsignor Muntone's position that he did not enabled individuals/priests to engage in Child Sexual Abuse or he did not violate a duty to safe guard the welfare of children.
4. It is Monsignor Muntone's position that during the time frame mentioned in the investigating grand jury he was not in a position of authority to appoint priests to various positions in the Archdiocese of Allentown.
5. It is Monsignor Muntone's position that any action he may have taken during the time frame alleged in the Investigative Grand Jury was results of meetings and telephone contact with legal counsel for the Archdiocese of Allentown.

WHEREFORE, it is respectfully requested that this be a sealed response by Monsignor Anthony D. Muntone to the above captioned report of the Fortieth Statewide Investigating Grand Jury.

Respectfully Submitted,  
HUBER WALDRON & WILLIAMS, LLC

Dated: 4/8/2013

BY:



\_\_\_\_\_  
John J. Waldron, Esquire  
Attorney I.D. No. 36853  
535 Hamilton Street, Suite 102  
Allentown, PA 18101  
Attorney for Monsignor Anthony D. Muntone



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David B. Mischak

William M. Davis  
Timothy L. Strange\*  
Danielle G. Nitti\*

May 29, 2018

VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS

Daniel J. Dye, Sr. Deputy Attorney General  
Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General  
Criminal Law Division  
Criminal Prosecution Section  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Strawberry Square  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

**RE: 40<sup>th</sup> Statewide Investigating Grand Jury Report No. 1**  
**Supreme Court of Pennsylvania**  
**2 W.D. Misc. Dkt. 2016**  
**Allegheny County Common Pleas**  
**CP-02-MD-571-2016**

Dear Deputy Attorney General Dye:

Please allow this correspondence to serve as the response of Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown to the Report No. 1 of the 40<sup>th</sup> Statewide Investigating Grand Jury (the "Report"). Specifically, the Bishop responds to the following passage, which appears on p. 44 of the Report excerpts sent to the Bishop:

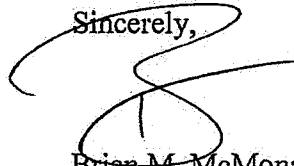
On July 31, 2003, Monsignor Schlert, the Vicar General, sent a letter to Monsignor Gobitas indicating that Rigney was apprehensive about attending a "*special retreat*" he was encouraged to attend by the Diocese, because "*he retired without Scandal, if he goes to the retreat with the other 'known' offenders, it will implicate him.*"

The Bishop wishes to clarify that the Memorandum dated July 31, 2003 authored by then-Monsignor Schlert was a recitation of a telephone call that then-Monsignor Schlert received from Rigney. The two quotations contained in the passage above are attributable to Rigney, and are not attributable to Bishop Schlert.

Please note that the Bishop's omission of a response to the other sections of the Report should not be interpreted as commentary on any other aspect of the Report.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a vertical line and a loop at the bottom.

Brian M. McMonagle

BMM:sak

cc: Most Rev. Alfred A. Schlert, D.D., J.C.L.  
Joseph A. Zator II, Esquire  
Stephanie A. Koenig, Esquire