



DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 16, 2024

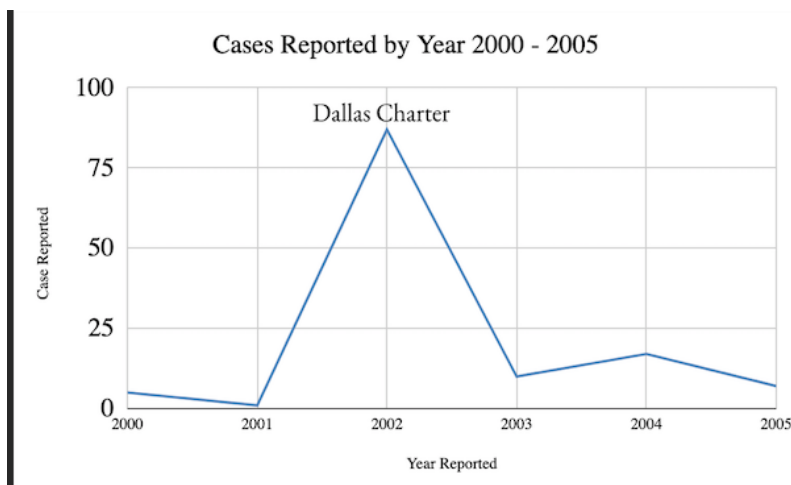
STATEMENT FROM THE DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN IN RESPONSE TO THE INVESTIGATION BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

After an extensive investigation, with the full cooperation of diocesan leaders past and present, the Diocese of Brooklyn has entered into an agreement with the office of New York State Attorney General Letitia James that will improve on its two-decade child protection effort since the passage of the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Dallas Charter) by the U.S. Bishops. As noted by the attorney general, “the Diocese and its leaders, including Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio and Bishop Robert J. Brennan, have fully cooperated with the Investigation and, both prior to and after its commencement, have voluntarily undertaken a number of important changes to the Diocese’s policies and procedures to help address the concerns that led to the Investigation and to prevent their recurrence.”

The attorney general also noted in the agreement, “the Diocese’s efforts from 2003 to the present to strengthen its policies and procedures were significant and improved the Diocese’s response to sexual abuse ... the Diocese’s demonstrated initiative prior to the commencement of the Investigation to assess and improve its institutional response was an important factor in reaching this voluntary resolution.”

The diocese’s cooperation, according to the agreement, “went beyond responding to the subpoena,” being the first diocese in the state to initiate meetings and voluntarily produce documents and information to the office of the attorney general (OAG) in an attempt to have the policies for the handling of sexual abuse allegations looked at closely to ensure the best practices are in place for handling such allegations. As part of this agreement, the Diocese proposed the appointment of an independent third party to monitor its compliance with all policies and procedures, among other things.

Once the Dallas Charter was passed in June 2002, the Diocese of Brooklyn, like many dioceses around the country, was inundated with primarily decades-old sexual abuse allegations. As seen in the graph below, the number of allegations skyrocketed in 2002. Between 2002 and 2005, 121 allegations of sexual abuse were reported to the diocese.



All allegations that came to the diocese were immediately sent to the appropriate district attorney. The Diocese also worked with the NYPD Special Victims Unit on many of the cases. Facing the emergence of these claims, in 2003, soon after his installation, Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio set up an independent reporting line, one of the first in the country, so that an outside person would be involved in taking the information and reporting to law enforcement. Bishop DiMarzio also established the Diocesan Review Board (DRB). The DRB, mostly comprised of former law enforcement officers, lawyers with experience in family law and child abuse, and mental health professionals, manages child sexual abuse allegations and investigations and makes personnel recommendations to the bishop based on their findings.

The diocese worked diligently - often with decades-old information – to remove from ministry any clergy who had credible allegations. That commitment never wavered. The attorney general noted, “in most cases, the Diocese timely referred the Abuse Allegations to the DRB and hired an independent investigator to investigate the charges. The investigations carried out for the DRB were usually thorough and entailed interviews of numerous witnesses by qualified investigators who prepared detailed written reports of their findings.”

Over time, the diocese recognized the need to improve communications internally and to the faithful. In fact, between 2003-2021, during Bishop DiMarzio’s tenure, public statements were released about the outcome of (DRB) investigations that led to the removal of [27 priests](#) from ministry. During that time, an additional 41 communications, including alerts, were issued regarding the sex abuse crisis.

Since November 2021, when Bishop Robert Brennan was installed as the eighth bishop of Brooklyn, two priests have been removed from ministry, following the recommendation of the (DRB). Additionally, under Bishop Brennan’s leadership, former Manhattan Child Abuse Squad NYPD Detective, Elizabeth Harris was appointed, on September 30, 2022, to monitor priests removed from ministry. <https://dioceseofbrooklyn.org/press-releases/brooklyn-diocese-announces-former-nypd-detective-appointed-to-key-roles-in-the-office-of-child-protection>

“This agreement concludes a difficult period in the life of the church. While the Church should have been a sanctuary, I am deeply sorry that it was a place of trauma for the victims of clergy sexual abuse. I pray God’s healing power will sustain them. Today, we move forward with the strongest policies in place for the protection of children and adults,” said Bishop Robert Brennan, who was installed as the 8th Bishop of Brooklyn on November 30, 2021.

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Other notable communications to the public and the faithful include:

- In a first-of-its-kind release in 2017, the diocese released a list of priests who were laicized due to credible sexual abuse allegations. <https://dioceseofbrooklyn.org/news/official-statement-of-the-diocese-of-brooklyn/>
- In the fall of 2018, Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio and diocesan officials held four listening sessions with the faithful in Brooklyn and Queens, where parishioners were able to ask any questions about the clergy sex abuse crisis. Click the link for videos of the [listening sessions](#).
- In 2019, the diocese released its list of credibly accused priests. <https://dioceseofbrooklyn.org/press-releases/diocese-of-brooklyn-releases-names-of-clergy-credibly-accused-of-sexual-abuse/>