



CONTACT
Tom Halden
Director of Communications
T: 651-291-4525
haldent@archspm.org
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STATEMENT REGARDING MONSIGNOR PAUL KOSCIELNIAK

From Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda

Earlier this year, the Archdiocese received an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor against the late Monsignor Paul Koscielniak, and his photograph was removed from public display at your parish pending the outcome of an investigation. That investigation, conducted by the Archdiocesan Office of Ministerial Standards and Safe Environment, is now complete. While Monsignor Koscielniak died in 1980, interviews were conducted and historic records were examined at the parish, the school and the Archdiocese. A thorough investigation has resulted in fact-based conclusions. The evidence gathered established that it was highly likely that a particular minor, now deceased, had been sexually abused on repeated occasions by an adult serving at St. John the Baptist, but the evidence did not support the allegation against Monsignor Paul Koscielniak. His photo has now been put back up at the parish.

The abuse was said to have occurred in the early 1970s at St. John the Baptist, where the minor was a student at the school and served as an altar boy for the parish. Records indicate that at the time period in question, Joseph Wajda was assigned to the parish as a transitional deacon as he prepared for his 1973 ordination to the priesthood. Wajda served as a priest until 2003 when he was removed from ministry based on credible allegations that he sexually abused minors. Those allegations were later substantiated and Wajda was dismissed from the clerical state in 2016. Wajda is listed on the Archdiocese's [disclosure page](#) as a former priest with a substantiated claim of sexual abuse of a minor. His present physical condition made it impossible for investigators to question him about the young boy at St. John the Baptist. However, interviews and documentary evidence from the investigation suggest that Wajda was the offender.

While we may never know with certainty the identity of the offender, I am nonetheless profoundly sorry for the abuse that occurred, the suffering the young boy endured, and the ongoing harm to his family and friends. I hope that, in some way, the information gathered in the course of the investigation will aid them on their journey and also heighten the resolve and compassion of all in the parish community. Together, we will continue to confront past abuses so as to build a safer future for all.

Please join me in praying for those who have been harmed by abuse, for their families and friends, and for an end to abuse in our world.