



This FAQ is intended to be a brief summary of the Independent Review and its published report specific to the Diocese of Pueblo. The full report and a letter from Bishop Stephen Berg are available at <https://healing.dioceseofpueblo.org>.

**What was the Independent Review?** Former U.S. Attorney Robert Troyer was given access to 70 years of diocesan files concerning the sexual abuse of minors by diocesan priests and the opportunity to interview survivors, priests, and other witnesses. His report included an analysis of the diocese's policies related to preventing and responding to sexual abuse of minors; the dioceses' compliance with Colorado law requiring the mandatory reporting to law enforcement of abuse allegations; and a list of all diocesan priests that are the subject of one or more substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor since 1950.

**Why did the Diocese agree to the Independent Review?** There were four goals: (1) To publicly acknowledge this history of sexual abuse, and in doing so provide a moment of justice for any survivor and encourage others to come forward; (2) To assure the Attorney General, public and members of the Diocese – clergy and laity – that no diocesan priest known to have sexually abused a minor is in active ministry; (3) To identify any needed improvements to our policies and procedures to ensure they are of the highest standard; (4) To allow the thousands of people who are working to make the Diocese a safe environment for children to see the progress of their work.

**What did the Independent Review find for the Diocese of Pueblo?** Please see the full report available at <https://healing.dioceseofpueblo.org>.

**What was the scope of the Independent Review?** The review focused on all diocesan and extern priests who have served in the Diocese between 1950 and today. While religious order priests often serve in our parishes, they each report to a different religious superior of their religious order who maintains their files and handles their allegations of misconduct.

**What is the status of the priests named in the report?** Of the 19 priests, 5 of them are living and are no longer in active ministry.

**Are my children safe in Catholic parishes or schools?** Yes. The policies and procedures that have been implemented and strengthened over the last three decades have shown to be effective. Every priest, deacon, employee and volunteer who works with children must pass a background check and attend safe-environment training to be educated on preventing, spotting and responding to potential abuse. We currently have 1,751 trained mandatory reporters, and every year approximately 2,793 children are taught how to keep themselves safe. We have also strengthened our seminary screening and formation process to better prepare our future priests. **Constant ongoing vigilance to protect our children, however, is required.**

**Has the Church completely fixed the issue of clergy sexual abuse of minors?** No. While we take the absence of substantiated abuse by any diocesan priest in the last 20 years as a positive sign that we are

meaningfully addressing the issue, we recognize that child sexual abuse is a pervasive problem in our society and that we must remain vigilant as a Church. The report is a stark reminder of what happened when the issue was not taken seriously.

**What happens next?** The diocese will work to understand the recommendations of the report, most of which deal with how we investigate historical allegations and respond to survivors who are now adults. To our faithful: we would encourage you to attend one of the safe environment training classes that are required for our priests, deacons, employees and volunteers who work with children. We would also encourage you to find ways to support your current priests, who far too often are judged as guilty by association. Finally, we should all continue to pray for the healing of everyone impacted by sexual abuse.

### **Five things for Catholics to keep in mind regarding the Independent Review:**

**1. It's appropriate to feel hurt or anger.**

While much of this report had already been disclosed, seeing the details from 70 years assembled in one place makes it especially terrible to read. We are certainly appalled, incensed and devastated by the incidents of abuse in the report and this horrible history – and no one in the current Church is making any excuses for what happened back then. The pain caused to the innocent can never be forgotten no matter how long ago it occurred in the past.

**2. Our hearts are with the survivors.**

Our primary concern is for those who were harmed – while no apology is sufficient, we are truly sorry on behalf of the Church and hope that we can assist in the healing process. We hope the independent reparations program will encourage others to come forward for healing.

**3. We can always do better and must never get complacent.**

We are committed to continuing to improve our response to all allegations - while we know we have made great strides and been able to help many people, nevertheless we will implement the recommendations in the report and we will learn from those who came forward and felt they weren't treated appropriately.

**4. Our culture has changed – thanks to many of you.**

We are thankful for the tens of thousands of people who have made the commitment to ensure our children are safe and that the Archdiocese is a community where sexual abuse of minors will not be tolerated. Their work and continuing vigilance is one of the primary reasons that there has not been a substantiated allegation of the sexual abuse of a minor by a diocesan priest in 20 years.

**5. Support your priests.**

We are grateful to our current priests – they have carried the cross for sins they didn't commit, and humbly served while under the skeptical or scornful eye of society. It's important for everyone to know that the report found no substantiated allegations against any of our diocesan priests currently in ministry. Together we will persevere, rebuild trust within our community, and become stronger as we love and serve the Kingdom of God.