



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Memo

To: All Priests and Principals
From: Kathy Conner, Chancellor
Date: March 8, 2020
Subject: Statement of Bishop Jaime Soto on recent ProPublica report

Sacramento Bishop Jaime Soto issued the following statement in response to recent reporting by ProPublica highlighting the case of José Antonio Pinal, a known sexual abuser of children formerly assigned in the Diocese of Sacramento, who continues to serve as a priest in Mexico:

The handling of the case of José Antonio Pinal represents a shameful chapter in the history of our diocese. This man, a self-confessed serial abuser of children, should never have been allowed to leave the jurisdiction where he committed his crimes, and he should never have been allowed to serve as a priest after his sickening actions came to light.

The way this case was handled in 1989 bears no resemblance to how a similar case would be handled today. Since 2002, it has been our practice to immediately report all suspected instances of child sexual abuse to law enforcement. Further, an accused priest is immediately placed on leave while an investigation is conducted, and a single instance of child sexual abuse is cause for immediate and permanent removal from ministry.

I am ashamed of the letters in this file and the disregard they show for the safety and well-being of the children and vulnerable who placed their trust in our Church. The handling of this case was in every respect a grave failure of judgment and a betrayal of trust. I must own this failure and seek to atone for it.

Since 2002, our diocese has made multiple attempts to convince Church officials in Mexico of the need to remove Pinal from ministry. In light of new directives recently issued by Pope Francis, I believe it is time to renew these efforts and escalate them. I am taking steps to bring this matter to the personal attention of the Vatican's representatives in Mexico. I will implore them to intervene in this matter and force action that should have occurred long ago.

We cannot change the past, but we can and must seek constantly to ensure the shameful acts of the past are not repeated. My commitment is to help the victims of past abuse and betrayal as well as ensure all measures are taken to provide a safe sanctuary for all God's children.