



# Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

*Tony DeGol*

*Secretary for Communications*

925 S. Logan Boulevard  
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
Telephone: (814) 695-5579  
Facsimile: (814) 696-9516  
Cell: (814) 937-1418  
E-mail: [tdegol@dioceseaj.org](mailto:tdegol@dioceseaj.org)

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## MEDIA ADVISORY

### *Bishop Bartchak Responds to Grand Jury Report*

**(HOLLIDAYSBURG, PA) – Bishop Mark Bartchak has issued the following statement in response to the Grand Jury Report released today and the reference to his role in a case in the Diocese of Erie in 2005.**

I am shocked and saddened by the scope of the findings of abuse detailed in the Grand Jury Report issued today (August 14, 2018).

While I am proud of the concrete steps we have taken in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, including a new Office of Children and Youth Protection, a Review Board with new membership and protocols, and an Independent Oversight Board, today's Report is a sobering reminder that as a Church we have much more to do.

There have been inquiries made regarding reference to my efforts to fully investigate and successfully seek laicization of one particular priest in the Diocese of Erie. In keeping with my promise to maintain the transparency that I have insisted upon since I became Bishop, it is appropriate that I briefly respond.

The Grand Jury Report discusses communications between myself and Bishop Trautman as part of the laicization of a priest (William Presley) in the Diocese of Erie in 2005. As reported, I was assigned to conduct the process.

I sought guidance from the Bishop on whether it would be necessary to interview additional witnesses despite my firm belief that we had more than sufficient information to successfully and promptly proceed with the laicization of this priest. That priest was in fact laicized by the Vatican in 2006.

Any inference that I was seeking to cover up any misconduct by a priest who had been removed from ministry is simply not accurate.

I have dedicated much of my pastoral efforts to the prosecution and removal of priests who have harmed our children. In that regard, I have personally investigated and prosecuted numerous perpetrators, resulting in their laicization.

Over the years I have met with a great number of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in the course of investigating and responding to their complaints. I have also met with them and their families simply to listen.

I apologize again to the victims of child sexual abuse, to their families and to all those affected. I wish to reaffirm my public commitment to respond with the care and compassion that everyone deserves.