



# DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

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## CHANCERY

March 11, 2025

Dear members of the Pius X community:

We write to inform you of some sad and difficult news. Fr. Joe Bernardo, a teacher and priest who served at Pius X High School for many years, decided last year to take a sabbatical in his ministry. Fr. Bernardo sought inpatient counseling during his sabbatical this past winter. While in counseling, Fr. Bernardo self-reported to his therapist behaviors involving sexual misconduct. Pursuant to mandatory reporting statutes, the therapist reported the misconduct to law enforcement. Following that report, Bernardo and his therapist also informed the Diocese of Lincoln that misconduct had occurred.

The misconduct Fr. Bernardo reported to his therapist involved Fr. Bernardo intentionally rubbing or brushing against the bodies of one or more male Pius students. This appears to have happened in a public area at Pius where contact may have seemed accidental but reportedly was deliberate. He also reported to his therapist having taken pictures of students in public areas without their consent. Separate from any conduct involving Pius students, Fr. Bernardo also reportedly took pictures of individuals in a public gym locker room, which we understand was not at Pius.

Upon learning of misconduct by Fr. Bernardo, the Diocese placed him on administrative leave and suspended him from ministry. The Lincoln Police Department has initiated an investigation into Fr. Bernardo's self-disclosed conduct, and the Diocese and Pius leadership are fully cooperating with the authorities. The Lincoln Police Department has asked that anyone with information about this conduct contact Investigator Robert Norton at (402) 441-8294.

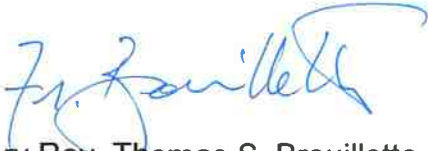
It is important to share this information with you as members of the Pius X community, and to avoid speculation and gossip. In that regard, the changes in leadership at Pius may be perceived to be in reaction or otherwise related to the circumstances with Fr. Bernardo. They are not. The administrative changes are unrelated to Fr. Bernardo's disclosures.

Parents are encouraged to take the time tonight to discuss this information with their Pius student as they deem best. The statement regarding Fr. Bernardo will be shared with students via email tomorrow morning. The attached document, while framed as a trauma-focused resource, contains guidance intended to help parents facilitate conversation with their students about Fr. Bernardo and to support them generally, using the suggestions as appropriate for their own child's needs. The professionals at Pius's counseling center also are available to help students process this information.

The Diocese likewise offers pastoral care and support to anyone who needs it. Those seeking more information about these resources can contact Fr. Lawrence Stoley, Superintendent of Schools, at (402) 473-0616. Again, any information relevant to law enforcement's investigation into Fr. Bernardo's conduct also should be provided to the Lincoln Police Department.

We ask that you pray for the Pius X community, the parishes in the Lincoln Diocese, and anyone affected by these events.

May God bless you and your families,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brouillette", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Very Rev. Thomas S. Brouillette  
Vicar General