

Detroit bishop reveals he was abused: Gumbleton urges accountability

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Catholic leaders in Detroit have offered counseling to a 75-year-old bishop who recently disclosed that he had been abused by a priest 60 years ago at a high school seminary.

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, an auxiliary bishop of Detroit and one of the nation's longest-serving bishops, revealed the abuse January 11 when he testified before Ohio lawmakers in favor of a bill that would allow alleged victims to sue the church during a one-year window.

"I am persuaded that this is the most effective way to make all those responsible—bishops who protected priest-perpetrators as well as priests themselves—truly accountable for this tragedy," Gumbleton testified in prepared remarks.

Gumbleton has been a fixture in the church's liberal wing, a leading antiwar figure and one who has not shied away from controversial positions. His disclosure—the first by a U.S. bishop—caught many off guard.

"The Detroit Archdiocese was never made aware of this," Gumbleton's superior, Cardinal Adam Maida, said in a statement. Gumbleton said the priest involved died more than a decade ago and declined to release his name.

U.S. church leaders have fought efforts to lift the statute of limitations on old abuse cases. Ricardo Bass, a priest who handles abuse cases for the Detroit Archdiocese, said time limits on lawsuits have "served our society well in protecting the rights of everyone."

But Gumbleton said "abusers need to be exposed," even if it causes "pain, embarrassment and sacrifice" for the church. Lay reformers cheered Gumbleton's

candor.

“Led now by one of their own, there is a sliver of hope that bishops will drop their opposition . . . and allow wrongs to be righted, children to be protected, and justice to live again in the Roman Catholic Church,” said Kristine Ward, vice president of Boston-based Voice of the Faithful. *-Religion News Service*