



A Statement from Archbishop Blair Regarding the Report of the Holy See on Theodore McCarrick

The publication by the Holy See of its report on the history of Theodore McCarrick underscores the inadequacy and failure of past practices to ensure the moral probity of members of the hierarchy and the protection of the vulnerable. Cardinals and bishops must be held to exactly the same rigorous norms and subjected to the same rigorous procedures that are applied to priests and deacons when it comes to allegations of sexual misconduct, or any crimes for that matter.

This year the Bishops of the United States launched the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service. Claims can be submitted to this independent service by visiting ReportBishopAbuse.org or by calling (800) 276-1562.

The establishment of this independent service complies with the Church's now universal requirement for a reporting system easily accessible to the public with the active involvement of the laity; timeliness and thoroughness of investigations; whistleblower protection for those making allegations; and clear standards for the pastoral support of victims and their families. These norms for bishops and religious superiors cover the sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons, sexual acts compelled through the abuse of authority, and any cover-up of such crimes. And as with all the norms regarding sexual abuse, Church institutions must comply with civil reporting laws.

Locally, the Archdiocese of Hartford and our Office of Safe Environment take great care and precaution in ensuring the safety of youth and vulnerable adults who worship in our churches, learn in our schools, and volunteer their time in service to God. The reporting of misconduct by anyone in diocesan ministry other than a bishop is handled by the Archdiocesan Office of Safe Environment in accordance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. All clergy, employees, and volunteers within the Archdiocese undergo extensive background checks and mandatory training conducted by professionals in the field. To date, tens of thousands of children and adults alike have received age-appropriate training to ensure that our parishes and schools are as safe as they can be. Audits conducted by an impartial third-party firm confirm, as recently as this week, that the Archdiocese of Hartford is in full compliance with operational standards put in place by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops relating to the prevention and reporting of misconduct.

In a sinful world, despite our vigilance, there can be no absolute guarantee that there will not be clerics who betray or violate their sacred office sexually or in other ways. Christ's betrayer, Judas, was one of his chosen Apostles. Against the stratagems of the devil, St. Paul says we must "put on the armor of God" (Eph. 6:13).

Our hearts continue to go out to all victims of abuse, especially by clergy. The facts that have come to light over the years have been a painful and a rightfully humbling cross for all bishops, and I have experienced it very deeply and personally since becoming a diocesan bishop in 2003. I pray daily for the victims of clerical sexual abuse, I offer Mass for them, and I ask you to pray for them as well.