



ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
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OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

STATEMENT REGARDING CLERICAL SEXUAL ABUSE

Every Advent Season we are renewed in hope—hope that Jesus, who was born on the first Christmas—will come again, this time in glory, to judge the living and the dead. His judgment will shine brightly and reveal the truth about each and every person who has ever lived. It is a divine light of both mercy and justice, and we distort what God has revealed if we emphasize only one of these two realities.

Judgment is very much on my mind when I think of the heinous crimes of predatory sexual abuse of minors by clergy, including the misconduct of bishops. Much attention has rightly been given to recent events connected with our United States Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting in Baltimore, and I want to share with you some of my thoughts about this matter.

First of all, it is very important for me to repeat that when it comes to priests, deacons, and any other person working in the Archdiocese, we have had strict and comprehensive policies and procedures of accountability in place since 2002. There are no clergy ministering in the Archdiocese against whom there has been a credible accusation of abuse of a minor. Those who have been credibly accused are either laicized (i.e. returned to the lay state) or, if the Holy See in Rome will not impose laicization, then they are sentenced to a life of “prayer and penance” with absolutely no public identity or ministry whatsoever as a cleric.

Today’s uproar has to do with bishops, precipitated by the as yet unexplained case of Theodore McCarrick, former Archbishop of Washington. I was deeply disappointed by the directive the U.S. Bishops in Baltimore received from the Holy See in Rome not to vote on proposals which had been developed to ensure the accountability of bishops. However, the rationale given for this prohibition was that we should wait for the results of a meeting of representatives of all the world’s bishops to take place in Rome in February. Whether this February meeting will provide an effective and timely way forward remains to be seen, but I want to assure you that I fully support what the leadership of our U.S. Conference of Bishops has said, that “we are committed to taking the strongest possible actions at the earliest possible moment,” and that we will continue to develop the proposals that were to have been discussed in November.

I remain convinced that allegations against bishops ought to be handled by a review board principally composed of lay people who have the expertise to properly assess and make a determination about the credibility of such accusations.

Finally, having heard in Baltimore the recommendations of the bishops' National Review Board, I wish to announce that **in January the Archdiocese of Hartford will be publishing the names of archdiocesan clergy who have been the object of lawsuits and legal settlements, or otherwise credibly accused, and the names of religious order priests and priests from other dioceses who have been credibly accused of an offense that took place in the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese will also contract for a further independent review of all our clergy files to identify any additional names from the present going back to 1953, the year in which the Archdiocese of Hartford as such was established. The publication of names will be updated as any new information becomes available. Finally, the Archdiocese will be publishing the financial outlay that has been made as a result of the abuse of minors by clergy and the sources of these funds.**

Very importantly, in seeking to apply spiritual remedies to this great scandal and tragedy that has seriously wounded so many people, I will be offering Masses of reparation for the evil that has been done. Three Masses are envisioned, to be celebrated in different churches in early 2019.

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford
December 8, 2018