

Remarks of Bishop Daniel E. Thomas Regarding The USCCB Administrative Committee Actions to be Taken

Earlier this month I attended the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Administrative Committee meeting. At that meeting we discussed, at length, the sex abuse scandals that have plagued the Church. As a first step, the Administrative Committee is releasing new policies that will better safeguard the faithful and create a formal process for those with abuse claims associated with the misconduct of bishops.

A full press release from the committee can be found below and at (<http://www.usccb.org/news/2018/18-152.cfm>).

U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS' ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON SEX ABUSE SCANDALS; COMMITTEE RELEASES ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN WITHIN ITS AUTHORITY

September 19, 2018

WASHINGTON--The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Administrative Committee has issued the following statement today in response to the recent sex abuse scandals. In the statement, the bishops say they pledge to "heal and protect with every bit of the strength God provides us."

Turning to the Lord

"When each of us was ordained as a bishop, we were told:

'Keep watch over the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit has appointed you to shepherd the Church of God.'

We, the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, assembled last week in Washington at this time of shame and sorrow. Some bishops, by their actions or their failures to act, have caused great harm to both individuals and the Church as a whole. They have used their authority and power to manipulate and sexually abuse others. They have allowed the fear of scandal to replace genuine concern and care for those who have been victimized by abusers. For this, we again ask forgiveness from both the Lord and those who have been harmed. Turning to the Lord for strength, we must and will do better.

The Administrative Committee took the following actions within its authority:

1. Approved the establishment of a third-party reporting system that will receive confidentially, by phone and online, complaints of sexual abuse of minors by a bishop and sexual harassment of or sexual misconduct with adults by a bishop and will direct those complaints to the appropriate ecclesiastical authority and, as required by applicable law, to civil authorities.

2. Instructed the USCCB Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance to develop proposals for policies addressing restrictions on bishops who were removed or resigned because of allegations of sexual abuse of minors or sexual harassment of or misconduct with adults, including seminarians and priests.

3. Initiated the process of developing a Code of Conduct for bishops regarding the sexual abuse of a minor; sexual harassment of or sexual misconduct with an adult; or negligence in the exercise of his office related to such cases.

4. Supported a full investigation into the situation surrounding Archbishop McCarrick, including his alleged assaults on minors, priests, and seminarians, as well any responses made to those allegations. Such an investigation should rely upon lay experts in relevant fields, such as law enforcement and social services.

This is only a beginning. Consultation with a broad range of concerned parents, experts, and other laity along with clergy and religious will yield additional, specific measures to be taken to repair the scandal and restore justice. We humbly welcome and are grateful for the assistance of the whole people of God in holding us accountable.

As these initiatives get underway, the Administrative Committee invites each of our brother bishops to join us in acts of prayer and penance. This is a time of deep examination of conscience for each bishop. We cannot content ourselves that our response to sexual assault within the Church has been sufficient. Scripture must be our guide forward, "be doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

In all of this, we do not want anyone – ourselves included – to lose sight of those who have suffered from those who have acted or failed to act as the Gospel demanded. For survivors of sexual abuse, these days may re-open deep wounds. Support is available from the Church and within the community. Victims Assistance Coordinators are available in every diocese to help you find resources. We are grateful to hundreds of dedicated people who, since the adoption of the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, have been working with the Church to support survivors and prevent future abuse.

To anyone who has been abused, never hesitate to also contact local law enforcement. If you don't feel comfortable for any reason with the Church providing help, your diocese can connect you with appropriate community services. With compassion and without judgement, the bishops of the United States pledge to heal and protect with every bit of the strength God provides us.

Acting in communion with the Holy Father, with whom we once again renew our love, obedience, and loyalty, we make our own the prayer of Pope Francis in his August 20 letter to the people of God, "May the Holy Spirit grant us the grace of conversion and the interior anointing needed to express before these crimes of abuse our compunction and our resolve courageously to combat them."

Diocese of Toledo

Questions and Answers Regarding the Clergy Sexual Abuse Scandal

This document has been created to answer questions, in summary form, about how the Diocese of Toledo handles sexual abuse allegations, what we do to prevent such abuse, how we train people who have contact with youth and how we form men for priesthood.

How can I report the sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric or other representatives of the Diocese of Toledo?

Any sexual abuse of a minor should first be reported to local law enforcement where the abuse is alleged to have occurred. If the abuse involves a priest, deacon, staff member or volunteer affiliated with the Diocese of Toledo, please also report it to the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator at 419-214-4880.

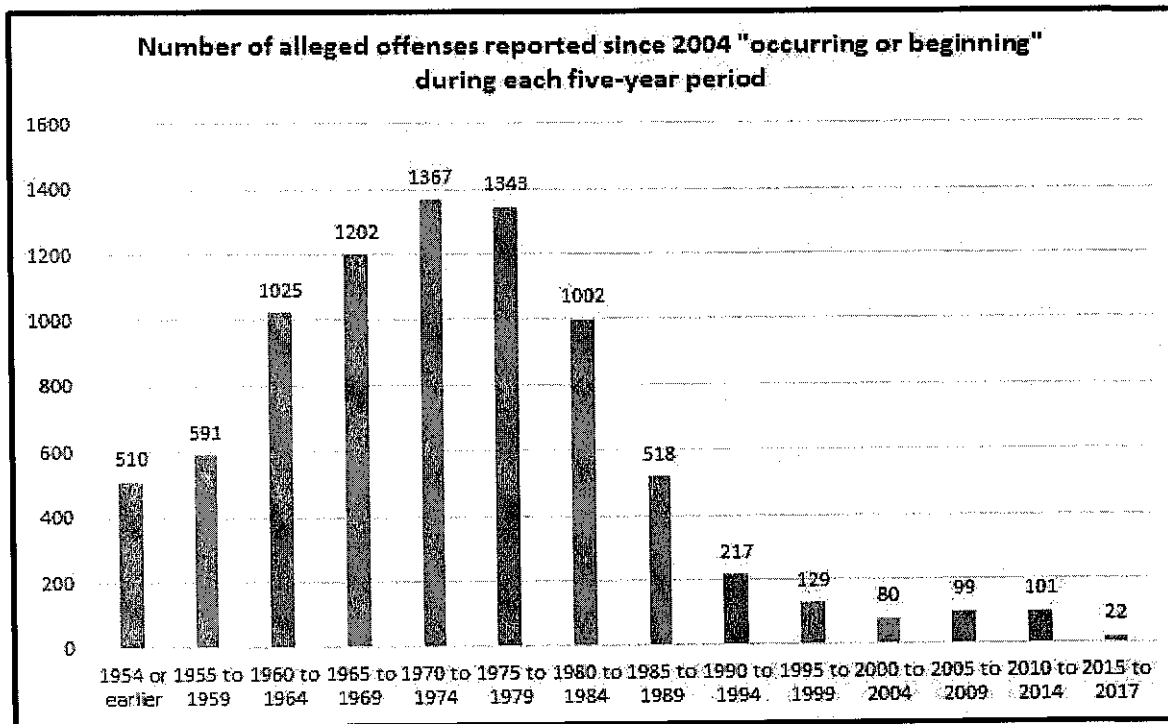
What did the August 2018 Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report say?

A Pennsylvania Grand Jury reviewed the files of six dioceses in that state and found that 300 priests had been accused of committing child sexual abuse over the previous seven decades and that some bishops failed to report the abuse to police or to permanently remove the accused priests from ministry. The report revealed abuse of children by priests and a pattern of certain bishops who put institutional well-being before that of children.

Is child sexual abuse still occurring?

Of the 300 priests described as abusers in the recently released Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, two are accused of abuse within the past 10 years. All of the other cases are decades old. Approximately half of the 300 priests are deceased and the remaining priests are not in ministry. Based on these facts, there is good reason to believe that the comprehensive reforms and uniform child protection procedures developed by the United States bishops in the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, along with much greater societal awareness and commitment to preventing child abuse, are having a significant impact and have led to drastic reductions in new allegations of abuse in the Church.

In their independent study, the John Jay Report researchers reviewed the number of allegations of clergy sexual abuse of minors from 1950 to 2002, nationally. Separately, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University has collected the numbers of new allegations of sexual abuse by clergy reported since 2004. The distribution of cases reported to CARA are nearly identical to the distribution of cases, over time, in the John Jay results. The graph below shows the results of these independent studies. Consistent with all of the data from analysis of this issue and the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, it is clear the abuse occurred primarily in the past, from 1950-1990 and has greatly decreased since the 2002 Charter was implemented.



What changes for the protection of children were made by the Church in 2002?

Following a 2002 revelation of widespread child sexual abuse in the Church, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) developed a Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People to ensure diligent measures to prevent future abuse, as well as, consistent and standard handling of abuse allegations. The Charter requires zero tolerance for all credible allegations and established policies around screening, mandatory reporting of abuse allegations to civil authorities, background checks, safe environment training, selection and training of future priests, as well as outreach to survivors of abuse.

What policies are in place in the Diocese of Toledo to protect our youth?

The Diocese has a comprehensive Policy for the Protection of Minors and Young People which includes Accompanying Standards of Behaviors and Boundaries and the Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse of Vulnerable Adults. This policy must be followed by all bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, consecrated religious, lay people, employees, and volunteers. This policy was substantially revised and strengthened in early 2018 and took effect 1 May 2018.

What does the Policy for the Protection of Minors and Young People require?

The Policy lays out the required process, roles and responsibilities of individuals who work to prevent, intervene, and respond to sexual abuse. The policy addresses Diocesan Safe Environment Program, which includes specifics on the screening, formation, education, and

assignment of clergy and seminarians. The Policy also provides information on the care for survivors of sexual abuse and the process by which allegations are received, investigated, and canonically processed.

What do the *Accompanying Standards of Behavior and Boundaries and Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse of Vulnerable Adults* require?

This section provides the required rules of behavior and boundaries for all interaction with children and young people, as well as those who may be considered “vulnerable adults.” These standards apply to all church personnel and volunteers, emphasizing that the utmost care must be taken when providing ministry and service. These Standards and Guidelines apply to all interactions, whether the individuals involved are physically present or contacted through the use of technology.

Does the Diocese’s policy require reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and cooperation with law enforcement?

When the Diocese of Toledo receives an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, the first action taken is to ensure that a report is made to the appropriate local law enforcement or civil authority. Even if a person is not designated as a Mandatory Reporter by Ohio Law, they are expected to report incidents of abuse, neglect, or suspected abuse of children, elders, or at-risk individuals no matter where the incident took place. It remains the sole discretion of law enforcement or civil officials to investigate the allegation. Even if civil law enforcement chooses not to investigate or pursue the allegation, the Diocese of Toledo engages an independent and experienced investigator who carries out an investigation of the allegation.

How does the Diocese investigate a sexual abuse claim?

After an allegation has been received by or forwarded to the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, and determined at least to have been possible, the accused is immediately placed on administrative leave by the diocesan bishop. The Diocese of Toledo cooperates fully with any civil investigation and awaits its conclusion before undertaking its own internal investigation. All facts and testimony from the internal investigation are submitted to the Diocesan Review Board, a group of 7-12 professionals specializing in areas that can include forensic psychology, psychiatry, sexual abuse victim counseling, civil and canon law, as well as civil officials involved in child abuse prevention, physicians, and a victim of sexual abuse. This group, comprised principally of lay people, functions as an independent, confidential consultative body to the bishop in assessing an allegation of sexual abuse. After their examination of all the facts and reports, the Review Board provides a written recommendation to the diocesan bishop. The bishop then makes a determination, based on canon law, the facts, evidence and the reasoned opinions and recommendations of the Review Board as to whether the allegation meets the canonical definition of “semblance of truth” (more commonly referred to as ‘more likely than not’.) If the allegation meets this standard, the matter is forwarded to

the Vatican (Holy See) for a final decision. The Holy See judges such cases and determines the accused's suitability for ministry.

How are Church Personnel trained to prevent sexual abuse?

All priests, deacons, seminarians, consecrated religious, lay people, employees and volunteers who have contact with minors are required to complete FBI and BCI background checks and the Safe Environment training program. This program teaches how to identify signs of misconduct and best practices for making churches, schools and communities safer. Further, the Standards and Guidelines instruct that those who serve in the name of the church, even if they are not designated as a Mandatory Reporter by Ohio Law, are expected to report incidents of abuse, neglect or suspected abuse of children, elders, or at-risk individuals. Clergy and individuals who work with youth in the Church are surrounded each day by people who have completed the Safe Environment training program and who have agreed to follow the mandatory Standards and Guidelines. Annually, approximately 5,500 individuals in the Diocese of Toledo receive Safe Environment training. Such individuals are expected to help set the standard of behavior and report any problem behavior.

Is there outside verification of the Diocese of Toledo's compliance with these prevention practices?

The Diocese participates in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) annual audit on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The audit, conducted by an independent firm, reviews prevention and reporting training of both children and adults, as well as background checks for those whose service brings them into contact with children. The auditors research the programs used, the frequency of required training/background checks and the means of data collection. Information is given on posting of procedures and the screening for seminarians and candidates for the permanent diaconate. This audit is completed on an annual basis. In addition, an "on-site" audit is conducted every 3 years, accompanied by in-person interviews of all diocesan personnel involved with child and youth protection and victim assistance. The latest audit conducted in 2015 found the Diocese of Toledo to be in compliance. The Diocese has passed the audit every cycle, with no problems or issues of non-compliance identified by the outside auditors. The next review is scheduled for October 2018.

What is being done to ensure healthy and well-formed future priests?

The application process for entering seminary is multi-layered and follows very stringent standards. The candidates first enter a discernment process with the Director of Diocesan Priestly Vocations through discernment retreats and conversations. These conversations and interactions help the director evaluate each individual on a personal and informal level. Eventually, the director conducts a formal, pre-application interview with the candidate to discuss all areas pertaining to ministerial lifestyle including: prayer life, sexuality, physical health, emotional health, academic background, family-of-origin experiences, financial history

and employment history. Once an individual begins to understand and demonstrate evidence of a call to the priesthood and once the director has reached a similar conclusion that God might be calling the man to discern more seriously a call to ministry, then the director may give permission for the individual to begin the formal application process.

What does the formal application process for seminary and permanent diaconate formation require?

For seminarians: Candidates who apply for affiliation as seminarians with the Diocese of Toledo are required to complete several different rigorous screenings conducted by various professionals. All applicants undergo a battery of psychological tests with a licensed psychologist who prepares a comprehensive report of clinical scores, professional assessment and recommendations for each candidate. This evaluation addresses an applicant's emotional health, maturity level, family background, psycho-sexual health and ability to maintain appropriate boundaries. All applicants undergo a thorough evaluation by medical professionals and several medical screenings. Additionally, each applicant is scrutinized through several background checks including, state and federal criminal background checks, personal credit checks and motor vehicle reports. Biographical information on candidates is also collected, along with academic records. Evaluations are requested from several references, including priests, laity, co-workers and teachers. After a thorough review of these components, the Diocesan Admissions Formation Board conducts an interview with the candidate. After the interview and discussion, the Board makes a recommendation to the bishop about the suitability of the candidate for seminary studies. The Director of Diocesan Priestly Vocations personally presents to and discusses with the diocesan bishop the entire profile packet of the candidate, along with the recommendations of the Admissions Board. After thorough consideration and reflection on the materials presented, the bishop then meets personally with the Director of Diocesan Priestly Vocations again to share his decision to either accept or reject the candidate's application.

For candidates for the Permanent Diaconate: Candidates applying for the Deacon Candidate Formation Program of the Diocese of Toledo are required to undergo a battery of psychological tests with a licensed psychologist who prepares a comprehensive interpretation of clinical scores, professional assessment and recommendations for each applying candidate. This evaluation addresses an applicant's emotional health, family background, psycho-sexual health and ability to maintain boundaries. Moreover, the psychological assessment is reviewed, along with other pertinent information, i.e. state and federal criminal background checks, credit check, motor vehicle report, academic transcripts, biographical background, letter of recommendation from priests, deacons, laity, co-workers and teachers. After review of these integral components, the diocesan Deacon Candidate Admissions Board submits a recommendation to the bishop who reviews the entire profile packet with the Vicar for Clergy. As with seminarian candidates, the diocesan bishop reflects on the materials and recommendations given and makes a decision to either accept or reject the candidate's application.

What is involved in Seminary Formation?

Seminary formation is a rigorous process that takes seven to nine years to complete. This is a full-time commitment on the part of the candidate to prepare for ministry in the Church. Seminarians take part in a multifaceted training program that is based around four “pillars” of formation: human formation; spiritual formation; pastoral formation; and intellectual formation. These pillars are used to evaluate the candidates’ fitness for ministry as they move through the formation program. Any candidate who does not meet the thresholds of expected competency in any of these areas is dismissed from the formation program and not ordained for ministry.

Seminarians are regularly evaluated by a team of experts at the seminary, including clergy, religious sisters, lay women and men, psychological professionals, and professors. Through ministry immersion experiences and parish internship experiences, seminarians are evaluated by both clergy, as well as lay men and women of the parish. Further, the Diocesan Admissions/Formation Board assists the Director of the Office for Diocesan Priestly Vocations in supervising the formation of each candidate, providing feedback on formation reports and assessing the aptitude of a candidate for priestly ministry.

The human pillar of formation focuses on the overall physical, mental and psycho-sexual health of the individual. In particular, the seminarian is taught how to live a healthy lifestyle with a focus on being able to form healthy relationships with others, while also maintaining proper professional boundaries. The spiritual pillar of formation emphasizes the forming of a seminarian to be a man of prayer who is able to lead others deeper in their own relationship with God. The academic pillar of formation provides the man with a thorough understanding of philosophy and theology. Most seminarians complete one or more graduate degrees during their seminary studies. Finally, the pastoral pillar of formation provides seminarians opportunities to learn how to effectively minister to people in various settings, while also providing formators opportunities to evaluate a seminarian’s competency and effectiveness in ministering to others.

During seminarian formation each seminarian’s progress in achieving thresholds of competency in each of the pillars of formation is closely monitored by a formation advisor. Additionally, each seminarian is mentored by a spiritual director who meets regularly with the candidate to help him understand whether or not he is truly being called by God to serve the Church as a priest. Considering the painful scandals caused by clergy sexual abuse in the Church, seminary formation is especially focused on identifying abnormal sexual behavior by priestly candidates in order to prevent them from entering into ministry. Further, seminary formation provides many forums for seminarians to gain a mature understanding of their sexuality and to learn how to live a commitment to celibacy in the context of healthy, meaningful relationships with other people.

How does the Diocese ensure that clergy from another diocese or religious order are screened for service in the Diocese of Toledo?

In order for a priest or deacon from outside the Diocese of Toledo to function in a ministerial capacity within our diocese, a letter of good standing (referred to as a “Letter of Suitability”)

must be received by the Vicar for Clergy office from the priest or deacon's home diocese or religious congregation. This letter verifies that the priest or deacon has never been accused of misconduct with a minor, that his background check is clear, and that he has completed a Safe Environment training program.

After the initial training and screenings of priests and deacons, how often are prevention methods updated?

Background screening is mandatory for all priests and deacons every five years, and background checks are made in quarterly updates each year. Through the use of new technology, the Diocese of Toledo utilizes a service that provides quarterly updates on clergy, employees, and volunteers that would identify if a person may have been accused of crimes. This serves to inform the diocese in a timely fashion of any concerns which it otherwise would not be aware of regarding a crime committed outside of the individual's service to the Church.

What measures are in place for overseeing bishops and cardinals?

Bishops and Cardinals fall under the jurisdiction of the Holy See (the Vatican). Currently, the USCCB is working with the Holy See to open new and confidential channels for reporting allegations against members of the hierarchy. These reports will be pursued according to three criteria: proper independence, sufficient authority and substantial leadership by laity. For example, in the most recent case involving sexual abuse and harassment by Archbishop McCarrick, the USCCB is pursuing a thorough investigation. Recently, the Administrative Committee of the USCCB has committed to further action in order to address the misconduct of any member of the hierarchy.

How does the Diocese of Toledo help survivors of abuse?

Anyone making a substantiated allegation of abuse against a cleric or other representative of the Church is offered the compassionate care of the Victim Assistance Coordinator, the pastoral and spiritual support of the Church and counseling assistance with a counselor of their choosing, for as long as it is helpful. The Church will continue to pay for counseling sessions to support these survivors on their journey of healing. As each person and the circumstances surrounding the offense committed against them is different, a variety of other means of assistance may also be employed to help them. to gain healing and peace.

Has the Diocese ever opened its files for examination by civil law enforcement?

Yes, in 2002, the diocese allowed Lucas County Prosecutors to examine our personnel files of clergy accused of sexual abuse of minors. In 2004 and 2005 the Diocese of Toledo opened the files again at the request of Lucas County Prosecutors.

Does my offertory donation to my parish or the Diocese of Toledo go toward any fund settlement or abuse-related legal fees?

All payments of monetary settlements, counseling assistance and associated legal fees come from specifically established reserves, and not from the general funds of the diocese or parishes supported by offertory donations.

Will the Diocese release information on priests and deacons who have been accused of sexual abuse?

On our diocesan website we currently list the names of accused clerics with a substantiated allegation, as we have since 2003. We are presently updating the format of the website to be even more transparent and accessible to the public.

How will the diocese address the issue of sexual abuse in the Church going forward?

The Diocese of Toledo is committed to respond promptly and compassionately and to offer care to victims, to report the abuse of any minor to law enforcement, to treat swiftly and justly allegations of abuse, to offer care to victims, to discipline offenders and to take ongoing action to prevent abuse.