

PRESIDENT OF U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS RENEWS COMMITMENT FOR GREATER EFFECTIVENESS AND TRANSPARENCY IN DISCIPLINING BISHOPS

August 27, 2018

WASHINGTON— Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has issued the following statement.

Cardinal DiNardo's full statement follows:

"In communion with the Holy Father, I join the Executive Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in taking upon ourselves his exhortation, 'this open wound [of abuse] challenges us to be firm and decisive in the pursuit of truth and justice.'

"On August 1st, I promised that USCCB would exercise the full extent of its authority, and would advocate before those with greater authority, to pursue the many questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick. On August 16th, I called for an Apostolic Visitation, working in concert with a national lay commission granted independent authority, to seek the truth. Yesterday, I convened our Executive Committee once again, and it reaffirmed the call for a prompt and thorough examination into how the grave moral failings of a brother bishop could have been tolerated for so long and proven no impediment to his advancement.

"The recent letter of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò brings particular focus and urgency to this examination. The questions raised deserve answers that are conclusive and based on evidence. Without those answers, innocent men may be tainted by false accusation and the guilty may be left to repeat sins of the past.

"I am eager for an audience with the Holy Father to earn his support for our plan of action. That plan includes more detailed proposals to: seek out these answers, make reporting of abuse and misconduct by bishops easier, and improve procedures for resolving complaints against bishops. Inspired by his recent letter to the people of God, and his *motu proprio* of two years ago, *As a Loving Mother*, I am confident Pope Francis shares our desire for greater effectiveness and transparency in the matter of disciplining bishops. We renew our fraternal affection for the Holy Father in these difficult days.

"To the survivors of abuse and the families who have lost a loved one to abuse, I am sorry. You are no longer alone. Since 2002, hundreds of professionally trained staff across the country have been working with the Church to support survivors and prevent future abuse. Nationwide, the Church has a zero-tolerance policy toward priests and deacons who abuse, safe environment training, background checks for those working around children, victim assistance coordinators, prompt reporting to civil authorities, and lay review boards in dioceses.

"In other ways, we have failed you. This is especially true for adults being sexually harassed by those in positions of power, and for any abuse or harassment perpetrated by a bishop. We will do better. The more she is buffeted by storms, the more I am reminded that the Church's firm foundation is Jesus Christ. The failures of men cannot diminish the light of the Gospel. Lord, by the help of your mercy, show us the way to salvation."

From Bishop LeVoir

From September 9 through 20, I am leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and will dedicate this pilgrimage to the healing of the wounds of sexual abuse. As a member of the Church hierarchy, I will do prayer, fasting, and penance in the Holy Land at all of the holy sites, especially at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Monday, September 17). It is this church that houses both the site of the crucifixion of Christ and the site of his resurrection. The laity did not cause this scandal in the Church and they have every right to be angry and disheartened. However, I would ask that in solidarity they join with me in prayer, fasting, and penance from September 9 through 20 asking Our Lord for healing of the wounds caused by the sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy and the negligence of the hierarchy to stop such abuse. God bless you!