



August 21, 2018

Provincial Statement on Pennsylvania Grand Jury Findings and Crisis in Episcopal Leadership
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we reckon with the Grand Jury report on sexual abuse by priests in Pennsylvania and the failures of bishops to protect the children entrusted to their care, our hearts and prayers-first and foremost-are with the victim-survivors.

Our hearts are also heavy with shock, outrage, sorrow, and shame in the wake of these revelations and the allegations of sexual abuse and harassment by Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, who recently resigned from the College of Cardinals. The collective sins of the institutional church and her servants-including Jesuits-cast a heavy shadow on the People of God and our world today. As Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), recently stated: "We are faced with a spiritual crisis that requires not only spiritual conversion, but practical changes to avoid repeating the sins and failures of the past that are so evident in the recent report."

As I think about how this scandal affects our church, the living body of Christ in our world, I am especially mindful that many faith-filled young people in their teens, 20s and 30s were too young to have fully comprehended the horror of the revelations in Boston in 2002 regarding clergy sexual abuse. As one young Jesuit put it, "this Pennsylvania attorney general report is our generation's '9/11' for the church; this is our Boston 2002 moment of reckoning with clergy sex abuse in the church." We who are in leadership need to offer these young people hope that the church grasps the gravity of this moment, will remain committed to helping victim-survivors heal, and will ensure the safety and well-being of this in our care by holding church leaders accountable.

To these ends, I urge that church authorities accept the specific plan outlined by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, as summarized by Archbishop Gregory Michael Aymond, stating that we as a church MUST:

- Undertake a full and complete investigation of questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick so that this can never happen again.
- Pledge to find a way in which abuse and misconduct of bishops can be reported swiftly, and effectively.
- Assemble a lay commission for the U.S. church to oversee the church's commitment to greater accountability for bishops. There are laity with expertise in the areas of investigation, law enforcement and psychology who should be an essential part of this plan for independent review.
- Request our Holy Father to authorize an Apostolic Visitation to look closely at all that has taken place and be critical in helping church leadership become more responsible in the future, thus preventing irresponsibility on the part of the bishops.
- I would add that what Cardinal DiNardo outlines in terms of accountability for bishops should also be expected of major superiors of religious orders such as myself.

As Provincial of the Midwest Jesuits, I want to reassure you that we have no tolerance for sexual abuse by our members. Jesuit leadership is subject to the same policies as the rest of the membership.

Our policies and procedures promoting safe environment for minors and vulnerable adults are in compliance with the standards established by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and are routinely examined for compliance by independent auditors from Praesidium, Inc. When an allegation is received by the Province involving a current minor, or from an adult who was a minor when the abuse occurred, the Province notifies civil authorities in the jurisdiction where the alleged abuse took place. Upon receipt of the allegation, the accused Jesuit is suspended from ministry pending the outcome of the investigation. The Province works with an independent firm to conduct a thorough investigation of the allegation and cooperates with civil authorities.

All reports pertaining to the allegation and resulting investigation are presented to the Province Review Board. The board is comprised of highly competent, unbiased lay people with expertise in professional boundaries in the helping professions, along with two Jesuits. The purpose of the review board is to provide consultation to the Provincial on the Province's response to all reports and allegations of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, even if the abuse happened many years ago. After reviewing all information related to the allegation and the completed investigation, the review board makes a recommendation to the Provincial as to whether the allegation against the accused Jesuit has been established, along with a recommendation on the disposition of the accused Jesuit.

No Jesuit who has an established allegation of sexually abusing a minor or vulnerable adult is allowed to remain in public ministry. An established allegation of the sexual abuse of a minor leads to permanent removal from ministry, and, if possible, criminal legal action.

We are acutely aware that serious abuse can also occur with non-minors which also requires a vigilant response. Reports of misconduct with an adult are investigated in the same manner as those involving minors. Adults who believe they have been the victim of a crime are encouraged to contact local law enforcement. In all cases, individuals who come forward with complaints about the behavior of a Jesuit are dealt with compassionately, and every effort is made to foster healing.

At the front end, we take great care with the screening of applicants to the Jesuits, including thorough background checks and psychological evaluations. We work hard to ensure that our long formation program of 10+ years fosters healthy human development both in terms of the spiritual life of the Jesuit as well as his psycho-sexual health and well-being. Our entire membership receives regular safe-environment training towards ethical conduct in ministry, which includes professional boundary awareness.

If you or anyone you know has felt victimized by a Jesuit at any time, please contact Ms. Marjorie O'Dea, the head of our safe environment office and victim's advocate, at 773-975-6363 or umisafeministry@jesuits.org. For more information, please visit our website.

In conclusion, let us continue to pray for healing graces for all victims of abuse in our church, for atonement by all of us collectively for these egregious sins-for "what we have done, and what we have failed to do"-and for light to guide us forward as a church, the body of Christ in our world.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Brian G. Paulson, SJ
Provincial, USA Midwest Province Jesuits

Please also see Pope Francis: Letter to the People of God