

A Letter from Cardinal Seán O'Malley and the Bishops of the Archdiocese of Boston

November 10, 2018

Auxiliary Bishops

Most Reverend
Peter J. Uglietto

Most Reverend
Robert F. Hennessey

Most Reverend
Mark O'Connell

Most Reverend
Robert P. Reed

My Dear Friends,

The annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which takes place from November 12-15 in Baltimore, will be of particularly great importance. The revelations of this past summer concerning Archbishop McCarrick and the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report make clear that the Catholic Church in the United States, at every level, must do all that is possible to prevent the abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the Church and work to restore the trust lost through this scandal.

Since arriving in Boston in 2003, addressing the sexual abuse crisis has been my highest priority. Our policies and programs seek to guarantee victim/survivors the means to report claims of abuse and seek settlement, programs to provide professional care and support, and our full cooperation with law enforcement in the Commonwealth. In June of 2002 the USCCB embraced the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which commits all archdioceses to reporting any allegations of abuse of a minor to civil authorities, zero tolerance for the exercise of ministry by any member of the clergy against whom there is a credible allegation of abuse of a minor, and screenings and trainings for all Church personnel, clergy, lay employees and volunteers, who could have any ministry with a child or young person. Where the Charter has been enforced there have been dramatic improvements in safeguarding. Any bishop or religious superior who does not comply with the Charter should be removed.

With recognition that the reports of this summer deeply impacted the Catholic and the civic community, joined with my auxiliary bishops we have been meeting with representative groups of Catholic laity, parishioners, priests and religious, deacons, seminarians, and employees throughout the Archdiocese. During these meetings there have been understandable expressions of sadness, anger and even disbelief that the Church is again in the midst of such a crisis. I have heard frustration but also determination to vigorously and effectively prevent any occurrence of abuse.

It is clear that what has been shared at these initial meetings and conversations represents the thoughts and concerns of many others in the Archdiocese and I pledge to bring the call for greater accountability, transparency and lay participation in our Church to the upcoming meeting, including advocacy for a 3rd party reporting system for allegations against a bishop or cardinal.

The Archdiocese of Boston is not alone in recognition of the seriousness of the present situation. I am joined by many fellow bishops in awareness that trust and confidence in the leadership of the Church has been significantly damaged. Please know that your voices in the Archdiocese of Boston have been heard.

With the assurance of my continued prayers and gratitude, I remain,

Devotedly yours in Christ



Cardinal Seán O'Malley, O.F.M., Cap.
Archbishop of Boston

“The Church must embrace spiritual conversion and demand legal transparency and pastoral accountability for all who carry out its mission. This transformation is not easily achieved, but in all aspects it is imperative. The way we prepare priests, the way we exercise pastoral leadership and the way we cooperate with civil authorities; all these have to be consistently better than has been the case....The clock is ticking for all of us in Church leadership, Catholics have lost patience with us and civil society has lost confidence in us.” – Cardinal Seán O’Malley, August 16, 2018

A Policy of Zero Tolerance

Cardinal Seán has made healing, protection, prevention and transparency his priority and instituted a policy of zero tolerance in our Archdiocese. He has made public and personal acknowledgements of clergy sex abuse and requested forgiveness. Since 2003, he has endeavored to regain trust by addressing the needs of survivors and those who have suffered as a result of clergy sexual abuse.

Our Commitment to Healing, Protection and Prevention

- As a result of the 2002 crisis, Cardinal Seán and the Archdiocese have made a lifelong commitment to ensure our children – and all members of our Church - are safe and that such heinous crimes never happen again.
- We are committed to zero tolerance, healing for victims, full accountability, and transparency locally and with Church leaders.
- To that end, we are engaged in the following:
 - The Archdiocesan Office of Pastoral Support and Child Protection (OPSO) was created in 2002 and its professional staff of social workers has met with more than 1,000 survivors of clergy abuse.
 - At any given time, approximately 300 survivors are served by OPSO.
 - The Cardinal has met personally and privately with hundreds of individuals who were abused by clergy to listen to them, offer his personal apology, seek their forgiveness, and provide pastoral care.
 - Since 2000, all clergy, employees, and volunteers working for the Archdiocese of Boston must submit to an annual CORI check – more than 50,000 CORI checks are completed each year.
 - More than 100,000 adults have been trained in the prevention program, *Protecting God’s Children*, since 2002.
 - Archdiocese of Boston is the only diocese to provide life-long services to survivors and their families, for counseling, psycho-pharmaceuticals, and other services.

Abuse Prevention Training

As part of the Archdiocesan response to the crisis of sexual abuse of children in the Church we have launched multiple programs that focus on the protection of children. The following provides some introductory information about our parish and school programs for adults and children.

Child Abuse Prevention Training for Adults

Protecting God's Children® is a training program conducted by VIRTUS, certified facilitators on the prevention of child sexual abuse. The training makes participants aware of the signs of child sexual abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse, and five easy steps one can use to prevent child sexual abuse. To learn more go to www.virtus.org

Personal Safety Curriculum for Children

We have several approved programs for children that focus on training them about personal safety and abuse prevention. They have been designed for teaching annually, both in the Catholic schools and in parish religious education programs.

The programs concentrate on teaching children basic skills that will help keep them safe from dangerous or abusive situations, while supporting parents, educators and community members in responding effectively to suspected abuse. The developmentally appropriate programs introduce the subject of sexual abuse in the context of general safety.

- Grades Pre K – Grade 5

The Child Protection Unit of Second Step (formerly Talking About Touching) was developed by the Committee for Children (CFC), a nonprofit organization that has researched and developed award-winning social-emotional skills curricula since the late 1970s. CFC is committed to its mission to promote the safety, well-being, and social development of children by creating quality educational programs for educators, families, and communities.

- Grades 6, 7 and 8

Created for Love education program is dedicated to helping parents and their middle school children come to a better understanding of and appreciation for the sanctity and dignity of human life and human sexuality. It adheres to the teachings of the Catholic Church, in particular, those expressed in John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, and it includes a lesson on sexual abuse, advice for avoiding dangerous situations, and recommendations for reporting sexual crimes.

- High School

The Technology Safety and Security™ program developed by VIRTUS provides schools and religious education programs with information, resources, and training to help create awareness of technology safety and security issues while teaching caring adults how to protect young people in the world of electronic communication.

For Parents and Guardians

The Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide™ provides best practices for caring adults and parents for teaching children how to protect themselves. It can be used as a stand-alone guide used with the Teaching Safety Program for Children. This can be provided to parents or guardians who decide to opt their child out of the personal safety program.

Our Reporting Policy

- All allegations of clergy sexual abuse of minors are immediately reported to law enforcement with notifications made to local District Attorneys' offices, the Massachusetts Attorney General, and federal law enforcement when appropriate.
- Notifications are made whether or not the person reporting the abuse is still a minor, whether or not the accused cleric is still alive, and whether or not the allegations have been evaluated as credible.
- If the victim is under the age of 18 at the time of the report, the matter is additionally reported to the Department of Children and Families through the filing of a 51A report.
- The Archdiocese publicly discloses when a member of its clergy is removed from active ministry pending an investigation into an allegation of child abuse.
- The Archdiocese publicly discloses when a member of its clergy is convicted of sexual abuse of a child as a result of a criminal process or when, after a canonical process, a member of the clergy is removed from the clerical state.
- Sadly, approximately 250 priests of the Archdiocese of Boston have been accused of sexual abuse of minors.
- The timeframe for the vast majority of abuse cases was from the 1960s to the 1980s.
- To date, we have not received a claim alleged to have occurred since 2006.
- A public list of these clerics – and their status – can be found on our website at <https://www.bostoncatholic.org/Offices-And-Services/Office-Detail.aspx?id=21314&pid=21606>

USCCB Charter for The Protection of Children and Young People –The Dallas Charter

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People is a comprehensive set of procedures originally established by the USCCB in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The Charter also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. It was revised in 2005, 2011, and 2018.

The Charter directs action in all the following matters:

- Creating a safe environment for children and young people;
- Healing and reconciliation of victims and survivors;
- Making prompt and effective response to allegations;
- Cooperating with civil authorities;
- Disciplining offenders;
- Providing for means of accountability for the future to ensure the problem continues to be effectively dealt with through the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection and the National Review Board.

The full charter can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/Charter-for-the-Protection-of-Children-and-Young-People-2018-final.pdf>