

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

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STATEMENT OF FRANCIS CARDINAL GEORGE, O.M.I. ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO MARCH 20, 2006

Sexual abuse or molestation of a child by any adult is disordered. It is a sin and a crime.

When children or young people are robbed of their innocence and suffer the pain, anguish and anxiety caused by the illegal and immoral actions of a priest, a person of trust, the tragedy of sexual abuse is compounded.

As you know, Father Daniel McCormack has been arrested and charged with sexually abusing three children. There are additional accusations by more families. This is a tragedy for the children, for their families and all who are involved. But it also represents failures within the Archdiocese to react promptly and appropriately to what happened in these cases. It is up to the legal process now to determine innocence or guilt on the part of Father McCormack; but we have tried to examine our own actions and mistakes.

We are here today to report to the people of the community on how we intend to move forward to further strengthen our commitment to the protection and safety of children.

I have asked Chancellor Jimmy Lago, an expert in child welfare, to take a hard look at what went wrong and to implement changes. But first, I wish to express some personal thoughts:

For the many missteps in responding to the accusations of sexual abuse of minors by Father McCormack, I accept responsibility.

For the tragedy of allowing children to be in the presence of a priest against whom an accusation of sexual abuse had been made, I am truly sorry. I should have focused more clearly on the actions we needed to take and I should have taken them more quickly.

For not following the advice of our independent Professional Responsibility Review Board to remove Father McCormack temporarily, even without a judgment about his actions, I am deeply sorry.

I am committed to a full disclosure of the facts and to the implementation of deliberate, meaningful changes to do all in our power to ensure that such events never happen again.

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