

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

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STATEMENT BY JIMMY M. LAGO, CHANCELLOR OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Five weeks ago, Cardinal George asked me to take charge of the Archdiocese of Chicago's response to the problem of clergy sexual abuse prompted by the McCormack case. I accepted that challenge and directed that several action steps be taken immediately. Today, I'm here to deliver a status report on the results of our efforts to date.

As you know, since 1992 the Archdiocese has had in place a comprehensive set of policies and practices to address sexual abuse of minors by clergy. Our policies have been recognized nationally as good and effective instruments. Unfortunately, when officials of the Archdiocese learned of allegations against Father Daniel McCormack, they failed to act quickly enough to remove him.

We have learned much from this experience, and we pledge to put this knowledge to good use for the safety and protection of children and young people.

First and foremost, our concern must be for the children. It is important for them to receive the care, treatment, healing and closure they need. We understand that part of this process includes fair, compassionate and just compensation from the Archdiocese for the damage they have suffered. We do not want legal technicalities to stand in the way. We want to spare young people and their parents the stress and pain of protracted court proceedings. Therefore, we are reaching out to the victims and trying to work out a just and compassionate resolution of their claims.

Of course, there are children who may have been abused and have not filed lawsuits. We invite them and their attorneys to contact our Office of Legal Services. We will reach out to them in the same prompt, just, and compassionate way as we do with those who have filed lawsuits.

In addition to reaching out to the children in this particular case, we are committed to doing whatever it takes to correct what went wrong. The Archdiocese is undertaking five interrelated initiatives in a comprehensive effort to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people:

- **Release of Independent Consultants' Reports.** We are releasing today the complete independent report by Defenbaugh and Associates, a nationally recognized firm experienced in forensic investigations, on the McCormack and Bennett matters; and another report by Terry Childers, a specialist in sex offender supervision and management who has worked in the federal probation system, on the Archdiocese's monitoring program of priests removed from ministry because of a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor. These are candid and thorough reviews and they detail many areas in which the Archdiocese has been deficient in its efforts to protect children. Fortunately, the reports also provide comprehensive recommendations to correct these deficiencies, many of which we have already accepted and begun acting upon.
- **Appointment of Independent *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee.** We are appointing an independent *ad hoc* Advisory Committee to review and provide counsel on the implementation of the independent reports, with special attention to the outstanding recommendations.
- **Retention of Child Welfare Expert to Aid In-Service Training on Mandated Reporting Requirements.** We are redoubling our efforts to reinforce training programs across the board to ensure that every priest, teacher, coach, employee and volunteer of the Archdiocese knows the procedures and protocol to follow whenever sexual misconduct of minors by anyone, anywhere, anytime is suspected. In that regard, we are retaining John Goad, an experienced child protection advocate and former deputy director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' Division of Child Protection, to assist the Archdiocese on the implementation of protocols with Department of Children and Family Services and to review and enhance Archdiocese of Chicago training programs for processing allegations of sexual abuse of minors. He is a member of the board of the Child Advocacy Center, which provides child abuse training for mandatory reporters in the Chicago metropolitan area.
- **Voluntary Release of Names of Priests with Substantiated Allegations.** We are voluntarily releasing the names of all living priests against whom substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of a minor have been made since 1950. Most of these names were made public at the time the priest was removed from ministry; there were a few already out of ministry or out of the priesthood at the time the allegation was substantiated. This list also includes deceased priests who had an opportunity to respond to allegations made prior to their death.
- **Reporting Protocols with State's Attorneys and DCFS.** We have amended our reporting protocols with the State's Attorneys of Cook and Lake counties, consistent with a recently expanded joint protocol with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. These agreements strengthen our commitment to protect children. They provide that the Archdiocese will receive notification of allegations that come first to public authorities; and that the Archdiocese will extend to DCFS its long-standing practice of reporting to the State's Attorneys cases involving those people who are now adults.

Let me expand on each of these five actions.

Release of Independent Consultants' Reports

First, to help us better understand the facts and circumstances of the McCormack and Bennett cases, we commissioned an independent investigation of the Archdiocese's actions. The McCormack case was different from others we've processed in the recent past in two ways: it was an allegation that involved a person who is currently a minor, and it was reported directly to the Chicago Police Department before it was reported to the Archdiocese. Previously, allegations of sexual abuse with minors by a priest had first come to the Archdiocese and then we notified public authorities. In this instance, public authorities were already involved, but they decided not to prosecute McCormack.

The Defenbaugh report identifies as the "most significant finding the failure of the various Archdiocesan departments involved with the issues of allegations of clerical misconduct of minors to communicate with one each other.

"The audit noted that the Archdiocese is not in compliance with its own policies, procedures and protocols." The report states that numerous individuals in the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Office of Catholic Schools, many in supervisory positions, "did not know or have forgotten what actions to take when an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor comes into their possession or to their personal attention."

The Childers report is a thorough examination of the Archdiocese's monitoring system and indicates that "although the Archdiocese has made a good faith effort to provide some sort of monitoring for accused priest abusers, the monitoring is insubstantial due to almost total dependence of the accused priest abusers' self-reported activities, and lack of corroboration of those activities."

The report concludes that "an effective monitoring system geared toward reducing the further sexual victimization perpetrated by accused abusers does not exist."

Some of our critics have called into question the independence of these two consultants. However, the consultants' candor and diligence in the pursuit of the truth is evident in these reports. The reports are stinging and present a clear itemization of failures in the McCormack and Bennett cases. The reports also demonstrate our current inability to effectively monitor priests withdrawn from ministry because of a substantiated allegation.

We are releasing the complete Defenbaugh and Childers reports in the interest of candor and public responsibility. Although we have not had a chance to fully review and absorb the reports, they provide an important and useful starting point, so that going forward we can take whatever actions are necessary to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people.

Appointment of Independent *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee

Second, to maintain the momentum of the Defenbaugh and Childers reports, Cardinal George is appointing an independent, *ad hoc* eight-member advisory committee to review the reports and to advise the Archdiocese on the implementation of their recommendations. Members of the committee have been selected to make sure that we hear and understand the many and diverse voices and viewpoints on this difficult and complex issue. Their different perspectives and active participation in this important process will play a pivotal role in our implementation efforts.

Members of this *ad hoc* committee are:

- Mary Anne Brown**, Executive Director, Hephzibah Children's Association
Rev. John Collins, Pastor of St. Joachim Parish and Chairman, Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council
Hon. Julia Quinn Dempsey, Retired Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County Juvenile Division, and Member of Cardinal's Commission on Clerical Sexual Misconduct, 1991-1992
Hon. Michael J. Howlett, Jr., Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County
Joseph G. Klest, Esq., Attorney; represents victims of clerical sexual misconduct
Ron Laurent, Director of Public Affairs, Federal National Mortgage Association ("Fannie Mae") (retired); Former President, Government National Mortgage Association ("Ginnie Mae"); Vice Chairman, Board of Trustees, Catholic Charities USA
Raymond Rose, Chief of Police, Mundelein Police Department
N. Don Wycliff, Associate Vice President for News and Information, University of Notre Dame

The reputation and credentials of the members of this *ad hoc* independent Committee stand on their own merit; their recommendations will be appreciated by the Archdiocese and the community and their active participation in this important process will be taken seriously.

As a check on our efforts, we have asked the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to review our implementation of the consultants' recommendations during the National Review Board's audit, which will take place in about six months. The audit is designed to test compliance with the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth* and the corresponding canonical *Norms* adopted in Dallas in 2002.

Then, approximately a year from now, we intend to make a further report to the community about the implementation of the consultants' recommendations.

Retention of Child Protection Expert: Increased In-Service Training on Mandated Reporting Requirements

Third, we are redoubling our personnel training programs so that priests and all employees and volunteers of the Archdiocese of Chicago are fully informed about the requirement to report any allegation of child sexual abuse immediately to both the Archdiocese and to DCFS.

We anticipate that John Goad's contributions to our efforts to ensure the safety of children will be significant. He has had a 30- year career in child protection and child welfare, beginning as a front-line caseworker, progressing to supervisor in inner city Chicago programs and then serving in senior management positions in child protection for the entire state of Illinois.

Voluntary Release of Names of Priests with Substantiated Allegations

Fourth, as a further demonstration of the Archdiocese of Chicago's commitment to transparency in the matter of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, we are voluntarily releasing the names of all living current and former priests from 1950 to the present against whom substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of minors have been made. Many of these names were made public at the time the priests were removed from ministry, and information about them has been accessible by request. Some of the names are of priests who were already out of ministry or the priesthood when the allegations were made and substantiated. The list also contains the names of deceased priests against whom allegations were filed at a time when they were alive and were able to respond to the allegations.

The names will be posted today on the Archdiocese of Chicago's Web site www.archchicago.org

If there are other victims who may have been abused by these same individuals who are in need of healing or assistance, we hope that that they come forward and contact our Victim Assistance Ministry.

Reporting Protocols with State's Attorneys and DCFS

Fifth, we have amended our reporting protocols with the State's Attorneys of Cook and Lake counties. We have consistently reported all allegations of sexual misconduct with a minor by clergy to the State's Attorneys. Under the amended protocols, the State's Attorneys have confirmed that they will also share information with us, as allowed by law, when an allegation is brought first to them, so that the Archdiocese may act to protect children.

Furthermore, in addition to the requirements of the Abuse and Neglected Child Reporting Act ("ANCRA"), we have established new protocols with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services by mutual agreement to include reporting any allegations of past sexual misconduct, even if the person who was allegedly abused is currently an adult. We also have agreed to suspend the Archdiocese's investigation of allegations of sexual misconduct until DCFS has completed its investigation. We continue to cooperate with DCFS during the pendency of an investigation to put into place a safety plan, where warranted, that ensures the protection of children.

As a former child abuse investigator and child protective services administrator, I, together with Cardinal George and others in the Archdiocese of Chicago, am committed to the safety of children.

I must tell you that any professional who is engaged in any aspect of this work does so because of his or her deep commitment to the safety of children. I am grateful for the dedicated service of the Archdiocese's Professional Responsibility Review Board, the Professional Responsibility Administrator and her team, the Victim Assistance Ministry leader and his team, the Office for the Protection of Children, the Vicars for Priests and all who have worked so diligently for almost 20 years. They believe in their heart, as I do, that one act of sexual misconduct with a minor by anyone is one too many.

We pledge to continue to do all in our power to ensure that our Church will protect the children of this community.