



TIMOTHY CARDINAL DOLAN

November 5, 2020
Month of the Faithful Departed

Dear Member of the Family of the Archdiocese:

It is time for me to give you another update on the Archdiocese of New York and its response during this coronavirus pandemic, and let you know what's been happening regarding our efforts to combat the sin and crime of the sexual abuse of minors. I did a similar update a number of months ago, and you let me know you found it helpful.

Let me begin by recognizing our *parishes and priests* who did an outstanding job meeting the pastoral and spiritual needs of the people, even while public celebrations of the Mass were put on hold. Many began livestreaming their parish Masses, so that people could join together in prayer. While the [livestream from Saint Patrick's Cathedral](#) was very popular – the Easter Sunday Mass livestream and broadcast reached over 2 million people! – many people have told me that they preferred to tune in to their local parish, because that, to them, is “home.” Since public celebrations of Mass and the sacraments have resumed, our churches are carefully following all health and safety guidelines, and Mass continues without any virus outbreaks. Our pastors tell us that attendance is increasing weekly.

[Our Catholic schools deserve praise as well.](#) When the pandemic hit last March, our teachers, principals, pastors, staff, and students all quickly pivoted to on-line learning, and finished the school year in remarkable fashion. That was impressive, and those involved had certainly earned a restful summer break. Instead, everyone buckled down, and began to prepare for a September return to the classroom. Rather than beaches and pool-sides, our wonderful faculty and administrators began to formulate plans for safe, smart, and creative ways to teach in this age of Covid-19. After more than two months, the results have been remarkable, and could easily serve as a role model for other school systems. That we were back with schools safe and open right off the bat was a big plus, and enrollment has even risen since September.

[We mustn't forget the tremendous work done by Catholic Charities of the archdiocese in finding new and innovative ways to respond during this pandemic.](#) Residences for those with disabilities remained open, and staff were provided with PPE. In addition to regular food programs, pop-up pantries provided nutritious food in the New York City and Hudson Valley neighborhoods, often at parishes. Over 1 million meals have been distributed since March. Calls for help, more than 22,000, were answered remotely by dedicated Catholic Charities staff. Generous private donors enabled more than \$4.5 million in emergency cash assistance to be distributed to families ineligible for other forms of assistance. Other services for children and

youth needed to be adjusted, to allow for social distancing, but tens of thousands of New Yorkers continue to receive assistance amidst the pandemic.

[ArchCare, the health care ministry of the archdiocese, has been a leader in the community with its response to the pandemic.](#) Initially, the lack of testing and PPE impeded its response. But those issues have long been resolved and the system made many enhancements that demonstrate how well they can prevent the spread of the virus. Through a program called “Protect,” ArchCare has been increasing its infection control staff and training, enhancing its protocols and policies and invested in new equipment and technologies. Although it has been difficult to make such investments during an economically challenging time, ArchCare is committed to be well prepared in case of a resurgence of the virus. Improvements and reliability in testing have ensured the safety of limited visits to the facilitates and support the well-being of families and residents during this difficult time. Special attention and care of the system’s 4,300 dedicated employees has also been a priority in ensuring their safety and well-being. The quality care and services ArchCare is privileged to deliver because of its Catholic mission is needed today more than ever.

Let me now update you on the ongoing efforts to respond to sexual abuse. Sorry to bring it up, but, again, you tell me you would rather hear it from me.

In September, 2019, [Judge Barbara Jones](#) and I held a press conference to release her findings and recommendations on how well this archdiocese was living up to its promises in responding to the nauseating horror that is sexual abuse. You may recall that Judge Jones and her firm, Bracewell, spent a year carefully examining our priest files, studying our policies, procedures, and protocols, and interviewing archdiocesan staff, and concluded that, thankfully, the archdiocese, “faithfully followed its policies and procedures and responded appropriately to abuse complaints, and is committed to supporting victims-survivors of abuse.” She also made some helpful recommendations on how the archdiocese might do even better.

We have made good progress on implementing Judge Jones’s recommendations. Highlights include:

- An Administrator has been appointed for our Archdiocesan Review Board, Kevin Reynolds, an attorney who most recently served as senior vice president, human resources and chief legal officer of a major life insurance company
- A new, outside, professional, firm with a more diverse background and investigative experience has been retained to investigate allegations of abuse.
- New members have been added to our Lay Review Board, including a psychiatrist who is board certified in both child and adolescent psychiatry and adult psychiatry, and a federal judge.
- An electronic case management system has been installed, to track every sexual abuse complaint from first report through final resolution.

In addition, we have further delineated the responsibilities for our Safe Environment Director, Victim Assistance Coordinator, and Administrator of the Review Board, to avoid the possibility of something “slipping through the cracks.”

I have asked Judge Jones to give us a check-up to assess our progress on following through on her recommendations, and I will keep you posted on her findings. Our commitment to *transparency, accountability, and action* continues.

Following our annual audit conducted by StoneBridge Partners, the archdiocese was once again found to be in compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, as we have every year since the first audit in 2003/2004.

As has been the case for quite some time, the claims of abuse that are being filed against the archdiocese, mainly through cases filed under the Child Victims Act (CVA), deal with actions that allegedly took place many years, often decades ago. There have been no substantiated claims of abuse concerning acts alleged to have occurred recently. There is no priest or deacon of the Archdiocese of New York currently serving in public ministry who has a credible and substantiated claim of abuse against him.

And, our [*Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program*](#), begun in 2016, continues to offer a compassionate response to those who seek it out, having come to resolution with more than 300 cases thus far.

While this is reassuring, we must continue to be vigilant in meeting this scourge head-on.

We must also recognize that the road ahead will continue to be challenging as the remaining Child Victims Act cases are filed. John Cahill, our Chancellor, has provided me a snapshot of where we stand with the CVA cases. It's sobering. Here is how he summed it up:

- On February 14, 2019, Governor Cuomo signed the Child Victims Act into law. The CVA enlarged the statute of limitations for civil litigation related to claims of child sexual abuse, and created a limited “look back” window suspending the applicable statute of limitations.
- The CVA “look back” window was initially set to last one year, from August 14, 2019 to August 14, 2020. In May 2020, the legislature voted to extend the window for an additional 1-year period, and Governor Cuomo signed the 1-year extension into law in August 2020. The window is now set to close on August 14, 2021.
- This law will have a major impact on our archdiocese as we move forward.
- Like many other secular and religious institutions, we have been served with hundreds of suits related to CVA claims, some going as far back as the 1940s.
- The Archdiocese and its parishes, schools, and charities has selected strong legal counsel to represent them in these cases.
- The Archdiocese purchased comprehensive insurance coverage over most of the alleged time period, with Chubb being the primary insurance carrier from 1956 - 1996.

- For victim-survivors who have waited for justice, the Archdiocese is committed to assisting the courts with the prompt resolution of claims which are meritorious under the law and to the litigation of other claims to determine their validity.

Please bear in mind that these lawsuits are not limited to priests, as a number of lay people – foster parents, coaches, or teachers, for instance – are identified as alleged abusers and that some individuals are named in multiple lawsuits, including claims against alleged abusers over whom the archdiocese had no control or no prior claims. Regardless of who the accused was, though, the archdiocese remains committed to responding with compassion, respect, and understanding.

We are also still waiting for the release of the so-called “McCarrick Report” by the Holy See, detailing the damning story of former-cardinal Theodore McCarrick. That could be another black-eye for the Church. But, better that the story come out, in all its awful detail, to both bring some measure of peace to the victim-survivors, as well as serve as a lesson on how to prevent a similar recurrence in the future. We can thank Pope Francis for keeping his promise to undertake and release this report.

Let me conclude with a word about archdiocesan finances. As I’ve mentioned in previous letters, the archdiocese faces some significant financial challenges. Thanks be to God, your generosity to your parishes continues to be strong, and almost all of our parishes now have ways for people to give electronically through We Share – online giving, which has been a big help; if you haven’t yet signed up to support your parish in this way, please give it serious consideration. Still, parish income continues to be less than it was a year ago, and our Cardinal’s Annual Stewardship Appeal and other fundraising efforts will all likely fall short of last year’s total. Add to that increased need from our parishes, schools, and charities, along with other mounting expenses, and it is not difficult to understand the uphill climb ahead of us. I’ll continue to keep you informed.

Might I ask for your prayers, for those continuing to suffer the effects of the coronavirus that they may have a return to health, those victim-survivors of sexual abuse that they might find peace and reconciliation, those of the archdiocese, particularly its clergy, who work every day to serve you well and faithfully, and, finally, during this month of all souls, all those faithful departed still in purgatory, that through God’s mercy they might be soon be with Him for all eternity in Heaven.

With gratitude to you, and prayerful best wishes, I am,

Faithfully in Christ,



Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan

Archbishop of New York