



Holding Bishops Accountable

The following is an updated version of Bishop Cary's column in the 16 June 2019 *Diocesan Chronicle*.

In May 2019 Pope Francis lightened our burden when he issued new rules for the conduct of bishops throughout the world. These norms mandate that bishops “establish . . . public, stable and easily accessible systems” of reporting specified violations of chastity authority by bishops, priests, or deacons. A report is to be “protected and treated in such a way as to guarantee its safety, integrity and confidentiality.” The bishop who receives it “shall transmit it without delay” to the bishop of the diocese where the events occurred, as well as to the bishop of the cleric named in the report.

An allegation against a bishop is forwarded both to the Vatican and to the Metropolitan of the Province of the accused bishop. This point needs explaining.

A Province is a geographical grouping of diocesan bishops coordinated by a Metropolitan—that is, an archbishop. The dioceses of Baker, Boise, Helena, and Great Falls belong to the Province of Portland; Archbishop Sample is our Metropolitan. (The other metropolitans in our region are the archbishops of Seattle and Anchorage.)

Upon receipt of an allegation against a bishop in his province, the Metropolitan requests permission from Rome to commence the investigation. Once authorized, he may utilize

experienced investigators to gather and assess relevant information from files, persons, and institutions as necessary. At the conclusion of the investigation the Metropolitan transmits the documented facts of the case as well as his assessment of them to the appropriate office in the Vatican, which then issues a judgement. (This is the process which brought Theodore McCarrick to justice under the direction of Cardinal Dolan of New York.) If the Metropolitan is accused, the new norms specify that the case be entrusted to the senior bishop in the region.

Reporting Misconduct involving a Bishop

This spring the new reporting system was implemented in our region. To report allegations that a diocesan bishop has himself committed sexual abuse or has intentionally interfered with a civil or church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious, please contact

Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBARS)

Office: (800) 276-1562

Email: ReportBishopAbuse.org

This line receives reports about sexual abuse *only*. Other complaints about a bishop—regarding, for example, priest assignments, church closings, or preaching and teaching—should be addressed to your diocesan bishop directly.

May be accessed on the Diocese of Baker website on the **Protection of God's Children** page: <https://www.dioceseofbaker.org/reporting-suspected-abuse>