

PRESIDENT OF U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS ISSUES STATEMENT
AT CLOSE OF MEETING ON THE PROTECTION OF MINORS IN THE CHURCH
February 24, 2019

Rome – Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has issued the following statement on the final day of a four-day meeting attended by Presidents of Bishops' Conferences from across the globe.

Cardinal DiNardo's full statement follows:

“The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.” Psalm 145:18

These have been challenging, fruitful days. The witness of survivors revealed for us, again, the deep wound in the Body of Christ. Listening to their testimonies transforms your heart. I saw that in the faces of my brother bishops. We owe survivors an unyielding vigilance that we may never fail them again.

How then to bind the wounds? Intensify the Dallas Charter.* Pope Francis, whom I want to thank for this assembly, called us to “concrete and effective measures.” A range of presenters from cardinals to other bishops to religious sisters to lay women spoke about a code of conduct for bishops, the need to establish specific protocols for handling accusations against bishops, user-friendly reporting mechanisms, and the essential role transparency must play in the healing process.

Achieving these goals will require the active involvement and collaboration of the laity. The Church needs their prayers, expertise, and ideas. As we have learned from diocesan review boards, a comprehensive range of skills is required to assess allegations and to ensure that local policies and procedures are regularly reviewed so that our healing response continues to be effective. All of the models discussed this week rely upon the good help of God's people.

I and the bishops of the United States felt affirmed in the work that is underway. Enhanced by what I experienced here, we will prepare to advance proposals, in communion with the Holy See, in each of these areas so that my brother bishops can consider them at our June General Assembly. There is an urgency in the voice of the survivors to which we must always respond. I am also aware that our next steps can be a solid foundation from which to serve also seminarians, religious women, and all those who might live under the threat of sexual abuse or the abuse of power.

In our faith, we experience the agony of Good Friday. It can cause a sense of isolation and abandonment, but the Resurrection is God's healing promise. In binding the wounds now before us, we will encounter the Risen Lord. In Him alone is all hope and healing.

May I also add a sincere word of thanks to the many who prayed for me and for all that this meeting be a success.

* The *Dallas Charter* is the shortened name for the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* that was issued as a result of a meeting of U.S. bishops in Dallas about the sex abuse crisis. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website (USCCB.org), the *Charter* “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.”