

Bishop Doherty Message to the Diocese

Aug 16, 2018

- **Bishop Doherty's Statement in the continuing aftermath of reports about Archbishop McCarrick (end of June) and the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report (August 14) on Six Dioceses.**

It is necessary for me to address the following points:

1. Accountability of American Catholic bishops. I can tell you that a reform of policy and practices is under way. I am part of talks about how this will be configured. Serious discussions started when we became aware of Archbishop McCarrick's abuses.

2. Cardinal DiNardo's statement is a public statement (August 16, 2018). It provides a basic outline of a response to questions about Archbishop McCarrick's career and advancements. It does not range to all other issues because we have to get the response to this "right" in order to know that we can adequately address other challenges. So this effort is benefitting from exceptional focus in the coming weeks, and asks for a visitation from Rome and lay investigative experts from the United States. Cardinal DiNardo's statement makes clear that our efforts will be more fully defined—and communicated—as administrative and plenary meetings make progress in September and November. But the work has already started because urgency and integrity demand it.

3. My public denunciation of Pennsylvania abuses, negligence and omissions: I cannot state too strongly my disgust for what happened, nor my shock and sorrow for the many victims and survivors. The evils that we read about in the 40th Statewide Investigative Grand Jury's report have come into the light. The report variously describes the results of human weakness or malice, Church administrative mistakes, a lack of bravery in naming what was truly happening, and combinations of the three.

The bishops and priests who had no part in the evildoing are now suffering a humiliating aftermath. The men and women in religious orders who had no part in the evildoing are suffering. The lay faithful are stunned and disappointed. Reactions vary from stunned sorrow to a hopefulness that now some real work and healing can begin.

4. We pastors are encouraged to speak in our churches. Earlier in the year, I related an encounter at one of my out-of-town meetings. A mother of grade school aged children reported that she and her husband had not heard their pastor, in his own voice, support diocesan safe environment protocols and processes that he himself is subject to since long before their children were born.

Bulletin announcements are not enough. If I were a parish pastor now, I might make an announcement before each Mass this weekend so that people might have a serious thought to hold onto, and pray for, all the way through the Mass.

The announcement can be simple. Here is a (longer) example: “Before we start Mass, I want to say something about serious matters that are on everyone’s minds. What our bishop and priests really think about protecting children has often been published everywhere, but you need to hear my own endorsement in my own voice. I support the child safety protocols of our diocese, I support and participate in the background check and periodic trainings we are required to do. It hurts that anyone would question my personal commitment to the safety of children and young people. I trust that each of you shares in the same commitment to be part of the Church’s mission to respect and protect people of every age. May we continue to encourage each other as we strive to live and pray with an integrity worthy of God.”

5. Since 2002, the dioceses and religious orders in the United States have made quite significant measurable improvements in safe environments. All of our diocesan policies for the safety of minors can be found online at <https://dol-in.org/safe-environment-1>

The latest annual national report on Protection of the Young, released June 1, 2018, is available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/2017-Report.pdf> This is the fifteenth annual report that reflects audited efforts by dioceses in the United States.

Source: <https://www.dol-in.org/bishop-doherty-message-to-the-diocese-aug-16-2018>