

ADDRESSING RECENT QUESTIONS REGARDING THE CHILD ABUSE CRISIS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BY Daniel Cardinal DiNardo

In Matthew 16:24, the Lord instructs his disciples, and all of us, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross ...” As followers of Christ, and as a Church greatly challenged by the clergy abuse scandal, I recognize as a Church leader that we have no more important cross to take up and bear today than restoring the trust of the faithful. That means confronting the evil of abuse wherever it is found and working with the law enforcement and other agencies to see that justice is served.

The vast majority of our priests serve with selflessness and fidelity, but the vile and horrid acts of a small minority has shaped the perception of the media and many in the public about all priests – and now, our bishops. While this is understandable, it is regrettable and it is only through actions based on faith and just principles that this evil that afflicts the Church will be eradicated.

To this end, I have spent much of the last two months in Rome both at the Synod of Bishops and working with the leadership there urging action on the abuse scandal. While in Rome, I met twice with the Holy Father to share with him the universal desire of my brother bishops in United States to see urgent action taken to ensure that Church figures at any level who harm minors are held accountable.

Meanwhile, I also joined with the other bishops across Texas to announce that we will all release a comprehensive list of priests dating back to 1950 who have been credibly accused of sexually abusing minors by the end of this coming January. To help us meet this goal, the Archdiocese engaged nationally respected experts called the Kinsale Group to help compile and validate this important list.

Most recently, I was in Baltimore to lead the November meeting of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, where we were hoping to announce action items to expand the Dallas Charter of 2002 – also called the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* – to encompass bishops as well. After the publication this summer of the shocking conduct of Cardinal McCarrick and the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report, the Holy Father expressed his support of taking whatever actions are necessary to confirm the positive and effective reforms stemming from the Dallas Charter and to see these reforms permeate Church leadership.

No one was more frustrated than I when we received word just hours before the Baltimore conference that the Holy See wanted the Bishops in the United States to withhold action prior to the February 2019 meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops Conferences of the Catholic Church world-wide, of which I am a member. Still, we were able in Baltimore to further prepare our proposals for the February meeting in Rome.

Closer to home, regarding Father Manuel La Rosa, we met with his male accuser in August 2018 to hear about his complaint which dates back to the late 1990s. After our meeting, Father La Rosa was removed from ministry. The law requires that child abuse allegations are reported to either Child Protective Services or law enforcement. While we reported this allegation to Child Protective Services, we have reviewed our procedures and in the future we will contact both law enforcement and Child Protective Services simultaneously. We continue to cooperate fully with this investigation.

As other media outlets have reported, two of our other priests remain in ministry who have each been accused of sexually abusing a minor in the 1970s and 1980s. Both priests denied the allegations, and each accusation was reviewed by the Archdiocesan lay review board comprised of individuals with backgrounds in law enforcement and mental health, who after reviewing the facts, recommended that both priests be allowed to continue in ministry. These are the only accusations made against either priest who have each served more than 40 years in the Archdiocese.

This Archdiocese takes every allegation of wrongdoing brought to our attention seriously, and is fully

cooperating — and will cooperate — with any and all investigations related the clergy abuse of minors. In that sense, the Church of today is different than the Church of the 1970s and 1980s. We recognize the only way to resolve the abuse crisis and restore trust with the faithful is to address any and all accusations of abuse squarely and transparently. While the Church as a whole has made important strides especially since 2002 in addressing this evil, we still have important work to do. We can, and will, do better.