

## **Statement from Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann, Aug. 16, 2018**

Tuesday's grand jury report on the handling of sexual abuse allegations by six Pennsylvania dioceses over the past 70 years was a sober reminder of why the faithful, ongoing implementation of the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth must remain one of the Church's highest priorities.

The report is a heart-rending account of the inestimable harm that resulted when bishops sought to protect the Church's reputation and the perpetrators of abuse rather than respond to the reports of victims with sympathy, compassion, and definitive action.

It was accounts such as these reported in Boston and elsewhere that led the bishops' conference in 2002 to implement a series of protocols that now include the various steps that our current child protection policy is based on. It includes an independent audit done annually, with an on-site audit every third year; an Independent Review Board headed by and primarily comprised of lay experts; and required training for and criminal background checks of every adult that, in a professional or volunteer capacity, is in contact with any child in a church or school setting. The reporting of allegations of clerical sexual abuse of minors — or any other misconduct — is always taken seriously.

The allegations of misconduct by Archbishop McCarrick, which preceded the grand jury report, were even more troubling because they reveal a failure in transparency concerning his misconduct and raise grave concerns about the accountability of bishops.

I therefore welcomed today's news from the executive committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, which announced three goals: an investigation into the Archbishop McCarrick case by the Vatican, in concert with a group of predominantly lay men and women; the opening of new and confidential channels for reporting complaints against bishops; and advocacy for more effective resolution of future complaints.

I particularly welcome the news that all three of these goals will be pursued with substantive involvement by lay people in the development and implementation of the goals.

But however much I am glad to see these developments, they can in no way mitigate the shame that attaches to the deeds reported — or the pain of the victims.

I want to apologize on behalf of myself and my brother bishops for our collective failure in the past to protect innocent victims from unspeakable misconduct. And I ask for your prayers as the U.S. bishops' conference tries to implement systemic changes that will ensure greater accountability of bishops so that crimes like these can never be perpetrated — much less, ignored — again.