



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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My Dear People of the Archdiocese of San Francisco,

As I write this message to you, I am in Baltimore, Maryland, for the plenary assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. I can tell you I came prepared to work with my fellow bishops to move aggressively forward in dealing with the abuse issues that are confronting our Church right now, and will continue to do so.

I was surprised along with everyone else at the announcement that Pope Francis requested the U.S. bishops to delay implementing any new provisions until after he meets in February with the presidents of the various Bishop Conferences throughout the world. While this initially came as a disappointment, we have to trust the wisdom of our Holy Father, who sees the wider vision of the Universal Church. As St. Paul says, we are all members of the Body of Christ, and whatever happens with any one member affects the whole body. Any decision of the U.S. bishops will likely have a felt impact in other countries throughout the world. While we in the United States are feeling some impatience over this, it is good that we move together on it with our wider family of faith, under the direction of the Shepherd of the Universal Church. In the meantime, we, your bishops in the United States, will continue to make provisions locally that are within our competence, while maintaining unity with the Bishop of Rome.

At the level of our own Archdiocese, as many of you know I have recently completed five town hall meetings held throughout the Archdiocese, as well as continued my consultations with advisors, our priests, and the Archdiocesan Independent Review Board (IRB). I want now to bring you up to date on my next course of action in our Archdiocese to deal with the crisis of faith many have described to me as caused by clergy sexual abuse and its mishandling.

First, I offer my sincere thanks to all those who came to the town hall meetings to share experiences, concerns and ideas for dealing with the crisis. Perhaps a total of 1000 people attended these meetings, and another 1000 have viewed a town hall video on-line. This video is still available at <http://bit.ly/SFArchTownHall>. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to John McCord, a member of the IRB and a victim-survivor himself of clergy sex abuse, who movingly shared his experiences as both a survivor and an IRB member at the town hall meetings.

At these public meetings, I shared factual information about cases of sexual abuse and misconduct within the Archdiocese over the past thirty years. Our preliminary review showed that in the 1990's there were six instances of alleged abuse by clergy, and that there were three cases of abuse alleged to have occurred in the year 2000. There have been no allegations of any clergy abuse of minors said to have occurred since then.

In those town hall meetings I also spoke of the work of our Independent Review Board, whose duties include:

- Advising the Archbishop on any allegations of sex abuse of minors by Church personnel;
- Monitoring priests who have been removed from ministry for having abused minors (even if just once);
- Reviewing, and advising the Archbishop on, our safe environment policies and our procedures in reporting abuse.

Our safe environment policies include background checks of all employees and volunteers who have regular contact with minors, on-line training of such employees and volunteers, as well as students in all of our schools and faith formation programs and their parents, on how to be alert to signs of abuse and how to report abuse. All Church personnel are informed that they are mandated reporters, and are trained on how to report abuse. You may read for yourselves all of our policies and procedures on our Archdiocesan website at <https://sfarchdiocese.org/policies-index>: scroll down to C5-C8.

Importantly, I am engaging an outside, independent consultant to review all priest personnel files held by the Archdiocese from 1950 to the present. That review will include any allegations received since that time and how they were handled. This will be a review of the files of perhaps 4000 clergy personnel who have worked within the Archdiocese during that time period. This work will take a while, and when it is done I will report back the results to the Archdiocese.

Wednesday of last week, as I exited St. Patrick's church after the Memorial Mass for the deceased homeless, a woman confronted me and asked me if I cared about children who are abused by priests. I told her that I care about all children who are abused, no matter who the abuser is. The scandal of sexual abuse of minors is not confined to the Church; it is rampant all throughout our society. I hope the experience of our Church will serve as a catalyst for all sectors of our society to deal more aggressively in rooting out this societal scourge. And while I find encouragement in the progress our own Church has made in trying to do so, there is still more to be done. We need always to be vigilant and never, ever become complacent. I therefore continue to take under consideration possible further responses and modifications to policies and procedures of our Archdiocese, in order to attend to the need for ongoing improvement in the way we handle this most grave responsibility of the Church and her ministers.

Thank you again for your prayers, for your love of the Church, and for your support of our priests.

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Salvatore Cordileone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Most Reverend Salvatore Cordileone
Archbishop of San Francisco