

Archdiocesan statement on Jeff Anderson & Associates Press Conference:

Monday, January 6, 2025

One of the plaintiff attorneys associated with our Chapter 11 proceedings held a press conference today accusing the Archdiocese of San Francisco of mishandling certain sexual abuse claims and not publishing a list of “credibly accused” clergy. Several unfounded personal attacks were made against Archbishop Cordileone to damage his reputation and commitment to protecting survivors of sexual abuse.

We want to be clear that the facts about our abuse claims process, reporting and leadership of Archbishop Cordileone are exemplary despite what was alleged in the press conference and reported by some media outlets. With each allegation, we carefully follow our processes and procedures, which are outlined below. We remain committed to the healing and care of survivors who have suffered because of the sins of Church ministers. We pray for the Archdiocese, parish communities, schools, and all survivors of sexual abuse and for the eradication of this shameful crime from our society as a whole.

As we have indicated previously, the overwhelming majority of the alleged abuse within the Archdiocese of San Francisco occurred in the 1960s and 70s, and into the 80s, and involved priests who are deceased or no longer in ministry. A significant number of the complaints originally included unnamed individuals. During the claims process over the past year, some names did become available, and this allowed us to initiate the independent review process.

To safeguard against abuse, the Archdiocese has maintained and improved awareness and education for children and adults. It uses stringent processes to screen volunteers, employees, and priests. Today, while sexual abuse continues to be a widespread societal problem, occurrences of abuse within the Catholic Church are [very rare](#), and we believe the Church has set the standard for other organizations, showing what can and should be done to protect children.

Our Process for Protecting Children

The Archdiocese treats every accusation of sexual abuse seriously and immediate steps are taken to protect the rights of both the alleged abuse survivor and the alleged abuser.

When a sexual abuse lawsuit is filed, the Archdiocese addresses allegations through appropriate legal channels. Following the filing of an accusation against a priest, the priest is taken out of active ministry while an investigation is pending. Our protocols rely on an Independent Review Board to address allegations of sexual abuse. A qualified investigator investigates an allegation and submits a report to the IRB, whose members include an abuse survivor, a psychologist, two physicians and a retired police officer. Their recommendation helps to determine the best course of action. For example, if the IRB finds that there is sufficient evidence tied to an allegation to warrant a canonical trial, and if the outcome of that trial results in a conviction, then the accused priest would be permanently removed from ministry, unless he freely agrees to be so removed prior to the trial. If, on the other hand, the IRB finds that an accusation is not sustained, then, in justice, the priest is reinstated to active ministry and damage to his reputation is remediated.

The most important thing is that the vulnerable be protected. The record of Archbishop Cordileone and the actions of his predecessors in recent decades show that archdiocesan policies have been effective in doing this. Moreover, like every other diocese in the country, it is audited by professional independent auditors for compliance with its policies, and every year has been found to be in compliance.

More information on our process can be found at sfarch.org/protecting-children/

“Credibly Accused” List

At the press conference, a demand was made that the archdiocese release a list of “credibly accused” clergy who have been accused of abuse. The list that some media outlets and plaintiff attorneys refer to demands naming anyone who has been accused of abuse whether sustained or not, and without any due process. In other words, if someone wanted to accuse one of abuse, all that a person needs to do is make an accusation and one would appear on the list without any opportunity to defend oneself. This is unjust for those who have been falsely accused.

The Archdiocese of San Francisco publishes a more responsible list on its [website](#) with the names of priests and deacons in good standing who have faculties to minister in the Archdiocese. Those with questions about a priest or deacon can refer to this list.

It is also important to note that high-ranking Vatican officials, and even Pope Francis himself, [have spoken against](#) publishing names of accused priests unless a final sentence of guilt has been issued in a proper judicial process.

In a private response on the question of publishing lists identifying clerics accused of sexual abuse of minors issued in 2016, the [Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts](#) decreed that the publication of such lists (short of a determination of guilt in a court of law and subsequent permanent removal from ministry) for reasons of transparency or reparation does not rise to the level of a legitimate denial of the natural right to a good name.

Vos Estis Complaints

In 2019, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter titled *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, which established new procedures for handling cases of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. Its aim was to hold bishops and other religious leaders accountable for their actions in addressing allegations of sexual abuse. Today’s press conference referred to two *Vos Estis* complaints that were filed against Archbishop Cordileone.

While these complaints have nothing to do with the acts covered by [Vos Estis](#) (cf. Title I, article 1, §1a), the Archdiocese and the Archbishop will cooperate fully with whatever process may be deemed necessary by higher authority.

Pray for Survivors of Sexual Abuse

As Archbishop Cordileone communicated previously, now more than ever, we need to take recourse to prayer. While the great majority of these sins of sexual abuse were committed many decades ago, it is a sign of Christian solidarity to join together on a daily basis in praying the rosary, spending an hour each week in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and fasting on Fridays for the survivors of abuse, for the mission of our Archdiocese, and for the eradication of this shameful crime from our society as a whole. God is pleased by such prayer and penance, and doing so will open our hearts to the blessings He wishes to lavish upon us.