



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



Statement on the Administrative Committee of the United States
Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Plan of Action

September 20, 2018

Transparency and accountability are necessary to assist compassionately and respectfully the healing of victims of sexual abuse and misconduct especially as perpetrated by bishops, priests, or deacons. Transparency and accountability are required for the integrity of the teaching, administrative, and sacramental responsibilities of the office of bishop, the ministry of priests and deacons, and for the safety of the Church's faithful parishioners. Through consultation with those who have been abused, concerned parents, laity and experts in law enforcement, the USCCB is committed to continue to combat this evil of predatory sexual abuse.

As a member of the USCCB's Administrative Committee, I personally support our plan of action to address the scandalous, immoral and criminal acts of sexual abuse perpetrated by clerics against minors and vulnerable adults. Protecting others from sexual abuse requires accountability for an ongoing vigilance and attentiveness to avoid complacency and to improve policies, practices and awareness.

The establishment of a third-party reporting system for fielding and addressing allegations of acts of sexual abuse against minors or acts of sexual misconduct with adults perpetrated by bishops is necessary for safety and integrity. The leadership of laity in this proposed system that reports to civil and ecclesial authorities is a safeguard for protecting the confidentiality of those who have been abused or harassed so that they might be heard without fear of reciprocity.

The further development of a Code of Conduct for Bishops is an appropriate start towards integral accountability and transparency in light of the Gospel within the Catholic Church. The Code will address the silent negligence of bishops who fail to address and to report purported acts of sexual abuse by clergy. It will also include a proposal of laws and norms to restrict and remove a bishop in the event of credible and substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of minors or sexual harassment of adults made against the bishop.

Finally, I wholeheartedly support the USCCB's call for a full investigation into the case of former Cardinal McCarrick, including his alleged assaults on any minors, priests, or seminarians, as well as any responses made by any civil or church authorities in response to these allegations. I would add that such an investigation should involve a report to be delivered in a timely manner.

Let us pray for all survivors of sexual abuse and for a united effort in combatting this evil and criminal behavior that has afflicted the Church and our society.