



Diocese of Austin

6225 Highway 290 East · Austin, TX 78723
(512) 949-2415 · Fax (512) 949-2521
www.austindiocese.org

Office of the Bishop

August 19, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Thursday, Cardinal DiNardo, as President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, sent a letter to the bishops in the United States. He noted that we are faced with a spiritual crisis that requires not only spiritual conversion but practical changes to avoid repeating the sins and failures of the past.

He made this statement in response to the recent allegations involving Archbishop McCarrick who allegedly engaged in sexual conduct with seminarians and minors. The Cardinal's statement was also made in response to the recent report out of Pennsylvania which revealed allegations of sexual abuse of children by 300 Pennsylvania priests over a 70-year period, as well as the failure of the bishops at the time in addressing the abuse.

As Cardinal DiNardo stated, this news has brought great sadness, anger, and shame to the Church in the United States. I, too, am shocked and saddened. These failures, by we as bishops, have caused deep pain and violated the trust that the faithful expect from the Church and her leaders. I ask you to pray for victims of sexual abuse. I also plead with you to report acts of abuse, especially abuse against children. Finally, please pray for our Church.

In 2002 we implemented the Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Program in the Diocese of Austin, which requires background checks of every person involved in ministry in the Diocese and requires those persons to attend an educational program on matters of abuse. I remain committed to this program, primarily for the safety of our children as well as others.

Several months ago, our Diocesan EIM Review Board began the process of working to improve our procedures by which complaints against clergy and other ministers in this diocese are filed and received. We believe that these improvements will make the complaint process more efficient and bring more clarity. I called for this review because of the actions of brave individuals who came forward with complaints and who later called upon us to improve our procedures. I thank them for their perseverance and patience. We hope to launch the improvements in the very near future.

We must continue our work to eradicate abuse in our church.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez
Bishop of Austin

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