



DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE
Communications Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Catholic Diocese of Charlotte Updates Community on Response to Past Abuse

- *2002 protection and reporting protocols help create safer environment and boost accountability*
- *Independent investigators conducting comprehensive record review to help produce list of credibly accused clergy*

CHARLOTTE, N.C., (Aug. 12, 2019) – The Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte today launched a series of information sessions for news media to learn more about its ongoing response to sexual abuse issues from the past and how protections put in place 17 years ago are working today.

The diocese also shared details about its effort to publish the names of all clergy who have served in the Charlotte diocese and have been credibly accused of child sexual abuse. An independent investigative firm is conducting a comprehensive review of all clergy personnel files dating back to the diocese's inception in 1972 to search for any indication of sexual abuse of a minor. The diocese's goal is to publish a list of credibly accused clergy by the end of the year.

In addition to Monday's information session in Charlotte, the diocese plans to meet with media elsewhere in the 46-county region served by the diocese. Those sessions are planned for this fall with details to be announced.

"The Diocese of Charlotte has zero tolerance for child sexual abuse, and we are committed to transparency and accountability in our handling of this crime," said the Rev. Patrick J. Winslow, vicar general and chancellor of the diocese. "The goal of these sessions is to provide important background and context to help media – and the community – understand our efforts to account for past abuse and that strong child protections and reporting protocols put in place nearly two decades ago are working."

Monday's session also was an opportunity for media to meet Fr. Winslow, who was recently named to the second highest position in the diocese. As vicar general, Fr. Winslow reports directly to Bishop Peter J. Jugis on matters related to clergy and vocations, and acts in place of the bishop in his absence. As chancellor, Fr. Winslow also oversees the diocese's day-to-day administrative and business operations.

A noted expert and canon lawyer, Fr. Winslow joined the Charlotte diocese in 2002 and has served with distinction in several important roles, including as Promoter of Justice and as an ex-officio member of the Lay Review Board. The board investigates allegations of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by clergy and other church personnel and advises the bishop on how to respond if the board finds allegations to be credible.

On Monday, Fr. Winslow said an independent investigative firm, U.S. Investigative Security Services, has been working to complete a comprehensive review of all clergy personnel files in the Charlotte diocese, a task that involves reviewing tens of thousands of pages in more than 1,000 files.

The Church in the U.S. had no comprehensive guidelines for responding to allegations of abuse until 2002, when U.S. bishops adopted the landmark “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,” which spells out protocols for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse and puts in place rigorous prevention and accountability measures.

Since 2002, the Charlotte diocese has taken a zero-tolerance approach to child sexual abuse and has acted swiftly to report all abuse allegations to authorities, remove clergy from ministry, and publicly report the names of those clergy found credibly accused. The diocese is unaware of any allegations against practicing clergy. Any indication of abuse turned up in personnel files will go to the Lay Review Board to determine whether allegations are credible and appropriate action will follow.

“Most of the allegations of child abuse we are dealing with now involve incidents that happened decades ago, and, sadly, those victims continue to suffer,” said Fr. Winslow. “We know that a full public accounting of abuse that took place at any time within our diocese is critical to promoting justice and healing for victims, and we believe the independent investigation by third-party experts will move us closer to achieving both of these goals.”

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