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OFFICE OF  
THE ARCHBISHOP

As a Catholic Bishop who has experienced firsthand the unfolding of the sexual abuse crisis in the Church since 2002, recent revelations of abuse in Pennsylvania and regarding former Cardinal McCarrick are a cause of renewed outrage, feelings of betrayal, and hurt for me personally. The same is true for our priests and religious, and above all for our Catholic people, many of whom are shaken in their faith or who even question their continued practice of the faith in light of the sins and crimes of certain priests and bishops.

The clergy who betrayed the trust placed in them and who grievously sinned against their high calling have failed our people by teaching and preaching moral precepts while failing to live by them. And with regard to the accountability of bishops, I fully support the preliminary four-point plan adopted by the Administrative Committee of the United States Bishops' Conference as announced on September 19 (<http://www.usccb.org/news/2018/18-152.cfm>).

To those who have been victims of child sexual abuse by clergy, and to the parents, siblings, and friends of those who were abused – I ask, the Church asks – for forgiveness. Healing and reconciliation continue to be an essential but not easy goal, given the terrible effects that these sins and crimes can cause in the lives of victims, to whom the Church owes the deepest expression of sorrow and apology.

In light of all that has been written and continues to be written about clergy sexual abuse over the years, people in the Archdiocese of Hartford justifiably want to know what is the current situation in the Archdiocese of Hartford, and what has been done by the Archdiocese of Hartford to protect children over the past couple of decades or so. I appreciate this opportunity to respond to those questions.

Let me begin by addressing our current situation and stating some very important facts. Over the past two decades, two Archdiocesan priests have been credibly accused of sexually abusing a minor during that entire period, and both of those priests were criminally charged and prosecuted for their crimes. Although even two are two too many, it is extremely important to know that clergy sexual abuse of minors has not been occurring widely in the Archdiocese of Hartford for at least the past 20 years.

Second, there are no Archdiocese of Hartford priests currently in ministry in the Archdiocese of Hartford who have had credible allegations of child sexual abuse asserted against them. That is the result of the zero-tolerance policy that has been in effect since 2002. Such priests have been removed from ministry and not returned to service in the Church.

Let me now address what the Archdiocese of Hartford has been doing since 2002 to protect children (and more recently, vulnerable adults) from sexual abuse. Since 2002, when the bishops of the United States adopted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the subsequent Church reforms have resulted in an array of best practices and even groundbreaking policies and procedures to keep children safe. In addition to adopting and enforcing the zero-tolerance policy, the Archdiocese of Hartford also implemented the following programs and procedures:

- It has reported all claims of sexual abuse by personnel of the Archdiocese of Hartford to the State's Department of Children and Families without regard to how long ago the alleged abuse occurred and without regard to the credibility of the claims.
- It updated its written policy regarding sexual abuse matters to clarify the need to report claims and the steps to be taken in handling such claims.
- It established a Review Board comprised principally of lay people from different professions to serve as a confidential consultative resource to review abuse claims and provide advice to me on how to respond to them.
- It established a Safe Environment Program that provides ongoing education and training both to adults and children in how to recognize all aspects of sexual abuse and exploitation and how to respond appropriately if and when it is encountered. As examples, since 2003, the Archdiocese of Hartford has trained 52,725 adults, and during the period July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017, over 34,000 children participated in an age appropriate program.
- It established a requirement of criminal background checks on all of its personnel who have contact with children (and later, vulnerable adults) in their ministries.
- It established a Victim Assistance Coordinator whose function is to reach out to victims and offer assistance of various types, psychological counseling, spiritual counseling, etc.
- It established a program where every victim is offered the opportunity to meet and speak with me or my designee to discuss their sexual abuse experience and related spiritual issues.
- It voluntarily undergoes annual audits by an outside, independent agency whose function is to determine whether all requirements of the Charter are being complied with. The Archdiocese of Hartford has been found to be in compliance with the Charter each year.

The protection of children and vulnerable adults and keeping them safe is our highest priority. I hope that this information provides reassurance that the Archdiocese of Hartford has taken and will continue to take these matters very seriously.

I will continue to pray twice daily, and offer Mass regularly, for all victims of child sexual abuse by clergy, and their families, especially those in our Archdiocese. May God have mercy on us all.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair  
Archbishop of Hartford

[www.archdioceseofhartford.org](http://www.archdioceseofhartford.org)