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**Statement of Cardinal Justin Rigali  
Regarding Administrative Leaves**

These have been difficult weeks since the release of the Grand Jury Report: difficult most of all for victims of sexual abuse, but also for all Catholics and for everyone in our community.

The Grand Jury Report, issued last month by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, called into question the way in which the Archdiocese handles allegations of child sexual abuse and asserted that as many as 37 priests remain in ministry "... *after* the Archdiocese learned of accusations or reports of their inappropriate behavior or sexual abuse of minors" (*Grand Jury Report issued February 10, 2011*).

Since 2005, the Archdiocese has worked very hard and we believed that we were on the right path, making significant progress in the protection of children and in the investigation and handling of abuse allegations. In fact, the present investigation of sexual abuse began as a result of reports from the Archdiocese to the District Attorney's Office. The 2011 Grand Jury Report, however, presented us with serious concerns that demand a decisive response.

As Archbishop of Philadelphia, it is my responsibility to respond to this Report transparently. I am determined to work for a solution that deals effectively with this issue in the Church and I share with the District Attorney's Office and the Grand Jury the desire to deal definitively with the concerns noted in the Report. I will continue to do so in cooperation with the District Attorney's Office.

In reviewing the concerns of the Grand Jury, it became clear that we needed additional and independent expertise in place to evaluate allegations of sexual abuse. That is why I turned to a veteran child abuse prosecutor, Gina Maisto Smith, and asked her to re-examine both the cases of concern for the Grand Jury and the way in which the Archdiocese handles allegations of sexual abuse of minors. She brings 15 years of experience to bear in assessing, investigating and prosecuting child sexual abuse allegations.

Her initial examination has concluded, and I have accepted her initial recommendations.

*(more)*

Working to allay concerns in the community about the suitability of priests to minister and wishing to ensure that our processes are entirely effective, yesterday I placed twenty-one priests on administrative leave, effective immediately. These are in addition to the three who were placed on leave in February, after the report was released.

While on administrative leave, all of these priests will not publicly exercise their ministry.

Among the remaining cases, five additional priests would have been subject to administrative leave. However, one who was already on leave and two who are incapacitated have not been in active ministry. Two others no longer serve in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and, as both are members of a Religious Order, the Archdiocese has notified the Superiors of their Religious Orders and the Bishops of the Dioceses where they are residing.

The remaining eight priests will not be subject to administrative leave. A review of these cases by Mrs. Smith found no further investigation is warranted.

I want to be clear: These administrative leaves are interim measures. They are not in any way final determinations or judgments. Mrs. Smith will now lead a team of experts to investigate more fully each case.

I know that for many people their trust in the Church has been shaken. I pray that the efforts of the Archdiocese to address these cases of concern and to re-evaluate our way of handling allegations will help rebuild that trust in truth and justice.

As we strive to move forward today, I wish to express again my sorrow for the sexual abuse of minors committed by any members of the Church, especially clergy. I am truly sorry for the harm done to the victims of sexual abuse, as well as to the members of our community who suffer as a result of this great evil and crime.

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