



4.6.2018

Introductory remarks from Anne-Marie Welsh
Director, Communications Office

Good morning. Thank you for being here today for this very important announcement from the Diocese of Erie.

As most of you know, today we are announcing one of the most significant revisions we've made to our *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*. We plan to share the details of several aspects of this multifaceted initiative.

Bishop Lawrence Persico will provide remarks, and then as usual, we will make one-on-one interviews available for each of you. In addition to Bishop Persico, Monsignor Edward Lohse, our vicar general and director of the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth, will be available.

I also want to introduce Cindy Zemcik, who has been serving as coordinator of the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth since June of last year. We are pleased to have her leadership within the office.

But I'd like to begin with a few comments to provide some context for today's announcement.

You had some notice about today's event because when the Diocese of Buffalo released the names of clergy who had been credibly accused of sexual abuse, a reporter called to ask us if we planned to do the same.

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Our answer was yes, we have been gathering information and preparing to do so for some time.

As you will see by the scope and depth of what we share today, this effort has been an important, long and complex process taken on by the Diocese of Erie. The effort took time because we are committed to doing it correctly and because we are covering a period of decades.

Six years ago, we took a new step, going public for the first time with the name of a priest who was credibly accused of inappropriate behavior with a minor. Earlier this year, we announced two more cases involving clergy.

We now are collaborating with independent, professional investigators and lawyers who are trained and equipped to handle these cases.

We have protocol in place to reach out pastorally to victims, and to parish and school or other communities immediately affected by these situations.

In addition, we now offer this information to the public through the media.

Bishop Persico has made it a priority to get a handle on exactly what information the diocese had on file about criminal and inappropriate activity on the part of anyone involved with minors within the church in the Diocese of Erie going back more than 70 years.

As has been reported, early in his tenure, Bishop Persico invited District Attorney Jack Daneri to go through all our files, and that process was begun.

Mr. Daneri's investigators had to suspend their efforts in September 2016 when the Pennsylvania Attorney General included our diocese among the six that are now part of the grand jury investigation into sex abuse within the church.

We, of course, have cooperated with the investigation.

Bishop Persico will provide more details about what that has meant.

As I said, this has been a very long and complex undertaking. We are announcing vitally important initiatives today that we believe will help keep children safe and hopefully encourage healing for victims.

It is work that needed to be done. We are not here to pat ourselves on the back. We carry the burden of responsibility for the victims who were abused by the very people who were supposed to serve and inspire them. So, what we present to you today is done with contrite hearts.

And now I invite Bishop Persico to come forward for his statement.