



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Richmond

July 30, 2018

To the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese:

Many of you have read the recent announcement and decision by our Holy Father, Pope Francis, to accept the resignation of the former Archbishop of Washington, Theodore E. McCarrick, from the College of Cardinals. Since the initial allegation of child sexual abuse was substantiated and made public in June by the Archdiocese of New York, more allegations have been brought forward that are deeply troubling, gut-wrenching and which rip at the heart and the trust within the Catholic Church.

I recognize our Catholic faithful are appalled, as I am as well, by the disturbing allegations that have come to light in these last few weeks regarding the former Cardinal. The abuse of any vulnerable individual is shocking, especially at the hands of those called to be shepherds of the Lord's faithful. Allegations of sexual harassment and claims of abuse of power are equally disturbing.

Because of my connection to the Archdiocese of Washington, I can understand this may raise questions for you. It is important that I clarify my role and what it involved in the brief time I served the former Cardinal as his priest-secretary.

My first assignment was in 2001 while still serving as priest-secretary to Cardinal James A. Hickey. I was asked to also assist as priest-secretary to his successor, Cardinal McCarrick for six months. Despite the double assignment during those six months, most of my time was spent with the elderly Cardinal Hickey – with whom I worked for nearly a decade. In 2003, I was assigned to the Chancery for a year as one of two priest-secretaries at the time for Cardinal McCarrick as his appointment scheduler. During that year, Cardinal McCarrick traveled frequently in his work with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and in his other duties as Cardinal.

Earlier this month, the Archdiocese of Washington conducted its own review of records and found, at this time, “no claim – credible or otherwise – has been made against Cardinal McCarrick during his time in Washington.” (For full statement visit: <https://adw.org/statements-regarding-cardinal-mccarrick/>). Throughout the time that I was in Washington, I can tell you I was not approached by anyone with any allegations or evidence of sexual harassment or abuse involving the Cardinal.

In consideration of the Holy Father's decision, there is a canonical process in place and we must allow the process and any potential civil procedure to take its course.

I am committed to ensuring the protection and care of all God's children in the Diocese of Richmond. Also, Saturday's announcement by the Vatican is an opportunity for the Church to discuss candidly what possible reforms are needed that involve allegations of sexual harassment and abuse by clergy, regardless of their position within the Church. I would welcome such a discussion with my brother bishops.

I encourage you to continue to pray for all involved – especially those impacted by the allegations, asking Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the United States, to guide and protect the Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ 

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond

For a reference on earlier statements regarding Cardinal McCarrick, please visit the following related links:

[Statement from the Archdiocese of Washington](#)

[Statement of Cardinal Theodore McCarrick Archbishop Emeritus of Washington](#)

[Statement of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York](#)

[Statement of the Most Reverend James F. Checchio, Bishop of Metuchen](#)