



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

Office of Communications and Planning

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Statement from Archbishop Carlson Regarding Recent Sexual Abuse Findings

ST. LOUIS – Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson, Archbishop of St. Louis, released the following statement regarding the recent sexual abuse findings:

The recent allegations of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults by Catholic clergy as revealed by a grand jury investigation in Pennsylvania are extremely disturbing. Priests are called to be spiritual fathers to their people, and bishops are called to be shepherds of their flock, to protect the people in their care. We know that in many cases that has not happened. The trust of the faithful has been violated.

We must act on behalf of the victims of this abuse in order to bring to them the love, healing, and light of Christ.

Our own Archdiocese of St. Louis has not escaped the scourge of clergy sexual abuse over the past few decades. Since 2002, the archdiocese has renewed its efforts and made every attempt to protect those who cannot protect themselves and to ensure that the light of Christ is present everywhere—especially where children or vulnerable people are present.

I pledge my continued commitment to the protection of children and young people. Our archdiocesan policy regarding the protection of children is stringent, thorough, and includes multiple points of accountability. All clergy, seminarians, employees, and volunteers whose service in the Church brings them into contact with children must have a regular background check. Since 2002, over 100,000 adults who are employed by or volunteer in our parishes and institutions have participated in the professionally developed program, “Protecting God’s Children.” The program equips those who serve the Church to foster a safe environment for our children and vulnerable adults.

In the fall of 2017, a former member of the FBI conducted a complete review of our child protection and Review Board policies and procedures. Our program was judged to be thorough and comprehensive.

Established in 2002, the Archdiocesan Review Board currently consists of a majority of lay members not employed by the archdiocese who review every allegation of clergy sexual abuse and provide me with advice concerning allegations. I have always followed the advice of this board. The board includes lay members with backgrounds in law enforcement, medical ethics, psychology, psychiatry, and a medical doctor whose expertise is in the diagnosis and treatment of juvenile sexual abuse.

Our seminary’s admission process involves a thorough psychological evaluation, which includes detailed knowledge of the man’s mental and psychological health. The seminary has two full-time lay psychologists to assist in human development, and each man meets regularly with an in-house spiritual director and formation advisor. In addition to all these points the faculty, administration, formation advisors, and psychologists gather three times a year to discuss the progress of each seminarian in every dimension of his formation, so that any potential problems can be identified and addressed.

Today no clergy against whom a substantiated claim of abuse of a minor has been made have permission to conduct priestly ministry in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. I support and encourage anyone with an allegation to contact law enforcement.

The Church relies on the help of God’s grace to remain firm in Her resolve and effective in Her action to protect children and young people. I will be inviting the priests of the Archdiocese of St. Louis to join me in offering Masses for all victims of sexual abuse. I pray that we may always express the pure love of Christ particularly for children and the most vulnerable in our midst.

#CatholicSTL