



## National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-5413 • FAX 202-541-5410

December 16, 2020

The National Review Board (NRB) has reviewed the Holy See's "*Report on the Institutional Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to Former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick (1930-2017)*" released on November 10, 2020.

First and foremost, the National Review Board offers our profound sorrow for the hurt and pain experienced by these particular survivors, by their families and by all other survivors impacted by clergy abuse and cover up. The Church can never apologize enough for the trauma and betrayal of trust experienced by survivors.

While the McCarrick Report is precedent setting and a commendable step in addressing clerical abuse, it points out woeful and systemic failures in the lack of oversight and inaction in handling former allegations at many levels. These systemic failures must be addressed and corrected, and we believe that doing so requires ongoing efforts to build a culture within the Church unafraid to require accountability on the part of the bishops, transparency when allegations surface, the willingness of bishops to speak up and correct each other when appropriate. This will move us to the creation of a culture of safety shared by all within the Church. We must recognize that manipulators such as McCarrick prey upon the trust of their brother bishops as well as the faithful. These manipulations allow predators to continue their assaults. After reviewing the Report, many bishops have come forward with their firm commitment to transparency and accountability.

The advice of the National Review Board to the bishops unequivocally places every child and vulnerable adult in the center of our protection and safety efforts. It draws from the expertise of lay professionals in the spheres of investigation and prosecution of child abuse, criminal justice, law enforcement, child protection, education, medicine, psychology and victim's assistance ministry.

We applaud the efforts of the bishops these past years. The Church has worked diligently to correct past failures. Its primary commitment is to promote healing

and reconciliation with survivors. Policies, programs, and education in parishes and schools continue to build safe environments for all and significantly reduce the potential for further instances of abuse, even as one instance will always be one too many. It is important to take lessons from the McCarrick Report and build upon the Church's past progress.

We are grateful for the new universal law of the Church contained in the *motu proprio* *vos estis lux mundi* (“You are the Light of the World”) issued by Pope Francis in 2019, with its requirement of a new reporting system for allegations made against a bishop. When a victim reported an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by then-Cardinal McCarrick in 2017, the Archdiocese of New York began its investigation, with the assistance of lay investigators and a lay review board, resulting in an appropriate outcome. The Holy See's McCarrick Report demonstrates the necessity of the metropolitan archbishop relying upon the professional advice of laity to help ensure that an allegation is handled professionally and with transparency. We encourage any person to come forward knowing he or she will be supported.

We reiterate our grief and sorrow for the survivors of Theodore McCarrick's abuse. We pledge our own desire to walk with them, to listen and learn from them and to work for a church and society safer for all children and vulnerable adults.

We pray that we all will be faithful servants to the gospel of healing lives.

<https://www.usccb.org/offices/child-and-youth-protection/national-review-board>