

Archbishop Lori Announces Measures to Combat Sexual Abuse Crisis, Hold Local Bishops Accountable

For Immediate Release

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BALTIMORE, MD - In a meeting with members of the media earlier today, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore announced that the Archdiocese of Baltimore has implemented a new third-party system for reporting allegations of abuse and misconduct against him and his brother bishops. The system, known as Ethics Point, routes all such complaints directly to members of the Archdiocese's Independent Review Board, currently led by two retired judges. The members would then report the allegations to civil authorities and to the Apostolic Nuncio, the Pope's envoy in the United States who is directly involved in the supervision and appointment of bishops.

The announcement was made in advance of next month's summit in Rome, where the heads of the world's episcopal conferences are due to meet with the Pope to discuss accountability for bishops who are accused of abuse, misconduct or the mishandling of such allegations against priests and others working on behalf of the Church.

"Continued reports of past abuse by priests against minors and the mishandling of these criminal acts by bishops, as detailed by the Pennsylvania Attorney General,

have left many Catholics feeling angry and calling for change, and understandably so,” said Archbishop Lori. “There must be a ‘zero tolerance’ policy and approach for dealing with any priest, bishop, employee or volunteer who violates their office and harms in any way a young person or adult. Moreover, the high-profile case of former Cardinal McCarrick makes clear that utmost accountability must be required of all, regardless of rank.

“In 2002, the nation’s bishops drew a line in the sand by establishing clear and consistent standards of accountability and transparency for priests, deacons and others working in the Church. Those standards are working and have contributed to increased scrutiny and accountability. Now it is time for the Church to establish similar consistent standards for bishops. Therefore, I have asked that the lay Independent Review Board serve as the direct recipient for any allegations of abuse or misconduct by a bishop serving in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. I pray this step and our continued commitment to child protection will send a clear message to the faithful of this local Church that abuse of any kind will not be tolerated and that those in positions of authority, namely bishops, will be held accountable for keeping the Church safe, especially for children and others who may be vulnerable. In this we hope to begin rebuilding the confidence of trust of those we serve, and the wider community.”

In addition, Archbishop Lori told members of the local media that he has asked the Independent (child abuse) Review Board to issue an annual report to parishioners regarding the Board’s review of the Archdiocese’s handling of abuse cases the prior year. He also announced the Archdiocese was found to be in full compliance with mandatory child protection policies by an independent national auditing firm, which conducted its review in November 2018.

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