

Statement of Archbishop William E. Lori on the Late Cardinal William H. Keeler and the Report of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury

For Immediate Release

Tuesday, August 14, 2018

“Our thoughts today must be with those who continue to live as survivors of clergy sexual abuse, especially those who will feel renewed pain and anger by today’s release of the report of a Pennsylvania grand jury. At this difficult time in the life of the Church, we in the Archdiocese of Baltimore are especially saddened and troubled by the news of the late Cardinal William H. Keeler’s failures while serving as Bishop of Harrisburg, one of six dioceses cited in the grand jury report.

“The Cardinal’s 2002 letter to the faithful of Baltimore which accompanied his disclosure of credibly accused priests included words that are even more revealing in light of today’s report: ‘The simple, painful truth is that the Church did not go far enough to protect children from sexual abuse,’ the Cardinal wrote. ‘I humbly ask forgiveness for my mistakes. Please pray for me so that I may better serve.’

“As a result of today’s painful revelations about the Cardinal’s failures to protect children while serving as Bishop of Harrisburg, it is no longer the plan of the Archdiocese to name the proposed new Catholic school in Baltimore after Cardinal Keeler.

“The findings of the Grand Jury, which follow recent revelations about alleged abusive behavior by Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, are rightly a cause for anger, disillusion and pain among many in our Church. These feelings toward the Church must be met with more than prayers and promises. They must also be met with action by any and all with responsibility for ensuring the safety of children and others in our care. It is clear that any such efforts must include lay involvement, for no longer can we expect the faithful to entrust this to the hierarchy, alone. Try as we have, recent revelations have not only proven that there is more work to be done, but also have resulted in the loss of the precious trust of many of those we are called to serve.

“Since my arrival as Archbishop of Baltimore some six years ago, I have made the healing of survivors and the strengthening of our existing child abuse prevention policies a top priority. Key to our efforts is the strength of our Independent Review Board and our mediation program for survivors of abuse. Both of these rely heavily on the independent leadership of laity, which will be integral to the credibility of any effort to advance reforms in the Church to bring about greater trust, accountability, and transparency. These are all critical to our ongoing and daily efforts to protect those in our care and to promote healing among those the Church failed to protect.

“In this dark hour in the life of the Church, those of us who have been called to lead humbly ask forgiveness and prayers for those who failed in their duties as ministers of the gospel by placing clerical and institutional good above the welfare of those they were called to serve, these they were duty-bound to protect. My prayers today are with the survivors and their families, with the faithful of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and with the many good and holy priests, deacons and religious who selflessly serve in the example of Jesus Christ each and every day in this local Church.”

To see a video of Archbishop Lori’s reflection on the abuse crisis, resources on the

Archdiocese of Baltimore's response, official statements, news articles, radio interviews and more, visit archbalt.org/accountability.