

5 Things TO KNOW

BY CHRISTOPHER GUNTY
editor@CatholicReview.org

ACCOUNTABILITY and *Response*

As the U.S. Catholic bishops gather again in the nation's premier diocese — Baltimore — we review the actions and initiatives that Archbishop William E. Lori and his leadership team have implemented over the past year to evidence the commitment to greater accountability in matters related to sexual abuse and harassment by members of the clergy and diocesan personnel, while also increasing lay involvement and decision-making in the pastoral life of the church.

1 TRANSPARENCY

The Archdiocese of Baltimore implemented locally March 16 a new national reporting system for allegations against bishops that is very similar to Baltimore's system, the first in the nation, in place since January 2019. Allegations in that system are received by a retired law-enforcement chief who has never been a diocesan employee. The system is at ReportBishopAbuse.org or 800-276-1562. In Baltimore, several types of misconduct can be reported at archbalt.org; click on "Report Misconduct." The archdiocese continues to cooperate with the Maryland Attorney General's investigation, and is providing all documents and information requested by that office.



2 METROPOLITAN MODEL

The U.S. bishops adopted what is called the "Metropolitan Model," whereby the metropolitan archbishop assumes responsibility for investigating allegations of sexual misconduct or other alleged instances of malfeasance by bishops within his jurisdiction. Archbishop Lori's role in carrying out the investigation into Bishop Michael J. Bransfield, who retired from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston amid allegations of sexual harassment of adults and financial improprieties, was seen as a first-case example of the new Metropolitan Model. At the request of the archbishop, a team of five lay investigators with relevant expertise in civil law, canon law, human resources and finance carried out the investigation over a five-month period. Their report, which was completed in March, led to Pope Francis' decision to restrict Bishop Bransfield from ever again celebrating publicly the liturgy as a priest or bishop.

After the archdiocese used the model, Pope Francis (right) released "Vos Estis Lux Mundi" ("You Are the Light of the World"), which set new global norms for safeguarding children and holding leaders accountable. The U.S. bishops affirmed those norms in June.



CNS PHOTO | VATICAN MEDIA

3

ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL



CHRISTOPHER GUNTY | CR STAFF

A newly established Archdiocesan Pastoral Council met for the first time Sept. 14 for a formation retreat and orientation about the work of the archdiocese. The council – which is charged with representing the concerns of the laity, advising Archbishop Lori and proposing pastoral initiatives – includes 10 members representing the various geographical regions of the archdiocese, as well as three members representing the African American, Hispanic and young adult communities. Council members got a briefing from archdiocesan staff members on the structure and pastoral priorities of the archdiocese – focusing on the goal to make missionary disciples promoted by Pope Francis and by Archbishop Lori in his 2015 pastoral letter, “A Light Brightly Visible.”

4

FORUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Archbishop Lori participated Sept. 25 in a forum at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., titled, “The Church Crisis: Where Are We Now?” The four panelists – including the archbishop, law-enforcement consultant Kathleen McChesney, abuse survivor Juan Carlos Cruz and journalist Peter Steinfels – discussed initiatives nationwide to reverse past failings to deal effectively with the issue of child sex abuse and restore trust and credibility among the Catholic faithful in church leadership. During the forum, the archbishop said the numbers of abuse cases are significantly down, “but one case is still too many.”

He emphasized that it is necessary always to see the charter and norms not just as policies to be complied with. Rather, he said bishops and their coworkers need to have “a conversion of mind and heart.” The protection of children and care for survivors has to be as much a part of the church’s life as evangelization, Catholic education and raising up vocations, the archbishop said.



COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

5

LISTENING AND ENGAGING



COURTESY ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

The archbishop and other archdiocesan leaders have been listening to and engaging with people about the scandals, including 18 listening sessions around the archdiocese before the bishops’ November 2018 meeting. Archbishop Lori also appeared at a Theology on Tap event March 25 in Annapolis, during which he talked about the ongoing crisis impacting the Catholic Church here in the United States and internationally. He outlined the actions underway in the archdiocese to restore trust and ensure utmost levels of accountability for all in ministry, including bishops and clergy, as well as lay employees and volunteers. He took a range of questions and encouraged those gathered to live their faith conspicuously and to help bring about the renewal that is necessary, even while so many are engaged with the vital

work of the Church to serve others and particularly those most vulnerable. In September, the archbishop, members of the Independent Review Board and archdiocesan staff met with abuse survivor Marie Collins before she gave a talk in Baltimore.