



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



Bishop Michael F. Olson
Letter to the Faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth
Regarding Former Cardinal McCarrick
and
the Protection of Minors and the Vulnerable
in the Diocese of Fort Worth

July 28, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Ministry in the Church is a grace from God that carries with it sober responsibility. Ministry is not a right to be claimed by anyone as an entitlement; rather, it involves a covenantal trust established through our Baptism as members of the Church established by Christ.

We see in the scandalous crimes and sins alleged to have been committed by now former Cardinal McCarrick, the violation of that trust and the grave damage caused to the lives and health of his purported victims. This scandal and pain are compounded by the horrific fact that reportedly one of his victims was his first baptism after his priestly ordination.

The Holy See has removed the former Cardinal from public ministry following an investigation that found allegations that he sexually abused a teenager almost 50 years ago while serving as a priest of the Archdiocese of New York to be credible. As each day passes, we learn that the former Cardinal not only allegedly perpetrated abuse against minors but also against subordinates including priests, seminarians, and members of the laity. The evil effects of these actions were multiplied by the fact that financial settlements were arranged with victims without transparency or restrictions on the former Cardinal's ministry.

Although he has now resigned from the College of Cardinals and has been suspended *a divinis* with direction to live a life of prayer and penance in seclusion, the alleged crimes of the former Cardinal have caused such further damage to the integrity of the hierarchy and mission of the Church that his prompt reduction canonically to the laity should be strongly deliberated, as has been the case for many other priests, for reconciliation and healing in the light of the justice and merciful redemption as won by Christ and promised to all who are alienated by the corruption of sin. Justice also requires that all of those in Church leadership who knew of the former Cardinal's alleged crimes and sexual misconduct and did nothing be held accountable for their refusal to act thereby enabling others to be hurt.

The Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth and I have zero tolerance for sexual abuse against minors, as well as against vulnerable adults by its clergy, staff, and volunteers, including me as bishop. This is manifested

both in our policies and in our actions. During my nearly five years of serving as your bishop, I have always taken prompt action in removing priests, deacons, staff and volunteers when credible allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct have been established. Our process has included transparently calling for victims, with due respect for protecting the identities of the victims.

Our seminarians, priests, deacons, and religious and lay staff are taught to recognize and to report boundary violations without fear of retribution, no matter the status of the perpetrator.

Please continue to pray for the reported victims and the families who have been hurt by the alleged crimes and sins of former Cardinal McCarrick and others. Pray also that we can work together to respond not only in word but in action to prevent further crimes and transgressions. Seeking your prayers and pledging you mine, I remain,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael F. Olson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA
Bishop of Fort Worth