



February 2009
Year of St. Paul

Dear Friends,

Since my arrival as your archbishop on August 28, 2002, I can honestly say that no one topic has taken more of my time, thought, and prayer than the issue of Clergy sexual abuse. During these past six-and-one-half years, I have often written about this issue, talked about it, met with victims-survivors and their families, visited parishes where abusive priests had served, talked with parishioners, parish leaders, community leaders, experts, done media interviews, and answered, it seems, hundreds of different questions.

Some people ask, "Why do you keep talking about this? Can't you let this quiet down and go away? Enough already, it's in the past."

I know better. First, it is never over for those who have been victims. Second, this issue will be with the Church for decades to come, and rightfully so. We need to remain vigilant in our resolve to do everything in our power to ensure nothing like this can ever happen again.

While some people tire of the topic, others continue to ask me questions – and I have included the ones I am most often asked in this material. Sometimes I tire of answering them, but I know I must, and it reminds me that there are a lot of secondary victims in this crisis.

My hope is that through the questions and answers provided here, our Church in southeastern Wisconsin will take another step along the path of healing and reconciliation.

With prayerful best wishes, I am,

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of Milwaukee

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Clergy Sexual Abuse in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Questions and Answers with Archbishop Timothy Dolan

Why don't you bishops apologize for what happened?

We have, and we will continue to do so at every opportunity.

Two popes -- Pope John Paul II and our present Holy Father, Benedict XVI -- have apologized, most recently during Pope Benedict's visit to the United States in April 2008. An acknowledgement of the scandal and an apology to victims-survivors was part of almost all of the Holy Father's remarks.

The presidents of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, since this scandal became public in 2002, have also done so: Archbishop Wilton Gregory, Bishop William Skylstad, and Cardinal Francis George.

As your archbishop, I have apologized frequently: privately, as I have met with dozens of victims-survivors and their families, and corresponded with dozens more; and, publicly, in "listening-sessions," visits to parishes where an offender had been assigned, and often through media interviews, writings, reports and columns.

The victims-survivors tell me I can never say it enough, so, I now do so again: as a bishop, I sincerely apologize for the horrors, crime, sin, and scandal of those priests who sexually abused a young person, and for the terrible mistakes

made by some bishops who in the past may have reassigned such priests. May God forgive us; may those hurt and their families forgive us; may God's people forgive us.

Why don't you bishops try to find out why all this happened?

Perhaps you know that the bishops of the country have enlisted scholars at the renowned John Jay University in New York City to undertake a rigorous study of the causes and context of this awful crisis. Advocates for protection of young people have called their studies (two of the projected three studies are now finished and public) "unprecedented," and "very helpful" in helping all of us understand what is not just a problem in the Church but in all of society. You may wish to access these studies and they are available at www.usccb.org/nrb/johnjaystudy/

Why don't you tell us who these abusive priests are?

The names of all diocesan priests against whom there has been a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor were released on July 9, 2004. The names were published in the media then, and are continually listed on the archdiocesan Web site www.archmil.org. That listing is updated when any new information becomes available.



If there were a newly discovered offender – thank God, there has not been over the last five years – that name would also be publicized. Many on the list are deceased. Law enforcement officials and local parishes in the area where laicized offenders now reside have been informed of the name and address of those on the list who reside in their jurisdiction.

Why don't you release all the documents and files of these offenders?

The case files on offending priests were made available to the Milwaukee County District Attorney for review. They would also be available to district attorneys in any of the 10 counties of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. The archdiocese freely made these records available to law enforcement officials, and will do so again in the future if a new case arises.

What we have not done is unilaterally released these documents to the media, to advocacy groups or plaintiff attorneys. A personnel file contains confidential information, most of which has nothing to do with this crisis. A priest has the right to correspond with his bishop, as do a priests' parishioners, without fear such communications will be on the evening news. No other profession has been asked by demanding voices to publicize all the files of their employees and collaborators. For example, the personnel files of school teachers who have been convicted of such a crime are not released to the public. Nor are their names posted for public review.

I thought the Archdiocese of Milwaukee had publicized the names of all priests with substantiated allegations of sexual abuse. Why do I keep hearing news about religious order priests?

What's most important is that no priest – whether a diocesan priest or a religious order priest – can ever publicly function as a priest in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee if they have a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. Religious order priests are subject to the same standards upheld in *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. When a religious order priest requests faculties to minister publicly within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, that priest's superior is required to provide the following information:

- A copy of the religious order's policy on its response to sexual abuse;
- Written documentation that no substantiated reports of sexual abuse of a minor exist concerning the priest in question.

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has published the names of all diocesan priests with substantiated allegations on the archdiocesan Web site since 2004. I have suggested religious orders do the same. Religious orders function separately from the archdiocese and are under the supervision and authority of their own leadership, so I cannot force them to publish this information. However, I do encourage them to share the same information regarding offenders as we do. They have assured me, and these



assurances have been verified by independent monitoring agencies, that any of their offenders residing in the archdiocese are supervised and can never publicly function as a priest.

Why don't you do what Pope Benedict XVI did and meet with victims-survivors?

I have met . . . often . . . with victims and their families . . . and I will keep doing so when asked. These meetings are private and I don't publicize them out of respect for the victims-survivors and their families.

In May 2002, the archdiocese held listening sessions all over southeastern Wisconsin. And, after I arrived in Milwaukee, I participated in two days of listening sessions with victims-survivors at the Midwest Airlines Center.

Why don't you just forget attorneys and sit down with those abused and tend to their needs and grievances in a Christian way?

Five years ago, I asked the Center for Dispute Resolution at Marquette University to develop and implement an independent mediation process to which every victim-survivor would be invited and respectfully received. This would be independent of the Church and give individuals a "neutral" and, hopefully, non-threatening way of coming forward for resolution.

Through this system, resolution has been reached with more than 170 victims-survivors who accepted the invitation. With the help and expertise of independent mediators, almost every one of the participants arrived at a sense of resolution with the archdiocese, taking into consideration pastoral, financial, emotional, and spiritual issues. As I announced when initiating this endeavor five-years ago, the archdiocese was prepared to sell any property not essential to the Church, or designated by the donor for another purpose, in an attempt to meet the just requests of victims. Attorneys were not involved in this initiative, unless requested by the victim-survivor, and except at the mediation's conclusion to review the final resolution.

Why don't you bishops drop your opposition to legislation to lift the statute of limitation on abuse?

There are a number of reasons the Archdiocese of Milwaukee opposes a legislative "look back" or "window" that would eliminate the statute of limitations on clergy sexual abuse.

First, the statute of limitations is an historically valued, traditionally revered principle of law to guard the rights of those accused, as "getting at the truth" becomes very difficult and perilous with the passage of time. Legal scholars agree with this assessment, and testimony in front of the Wisconsin Legislature, as well as a 2003 opinion from the State Attorney General, indicate such a change would be unconstitutional.



Two, the proposed “lookback legislation” is terribly unfair. It targets the Catholic Church, while abuse of youth is epidemic and more problematic in other areas of society, e.g., families, public schools, athletics, youth organizations, counseling sessions, government agencies, and present as well among clergy of other faiths.

Three, even if other entities, such as government agencies or public schools, were included in such legislation, they would be protected by “caps” limiting the amount that can be awarded to the victim to \$50,000. This means, of course, that plaintiff attorneys would hardly be interested in such a case because the potential monetary damages are restricted. Such a “cap” does not apply to the Catholic Church or other religious groups. This is simply unfair.

Finally, the 700,000 faithful and generous Catholic people of southeastern Wisconsin are not at fault. Their money was given to the Church for its mission of charity, service and education, and they should not be punished for something for which they bear no blame.

That sounds like you are more worried about money than justice?

The best justice would be for those who committed these crimes to be in jail, but criminal statutes of limitations exist as well, and prevent that from happening. The Archdiocese of

Milwaukee supported legislation in 2004 to lengthen the statute of limitations, and require clergy to be mandatory reporters.

What the Church can do is make sure any priest who has a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, can no longer function publicly as a priest ever again. This we have done.

But what about the money? Don't victims deserve some measure of justice?

Victims-survivors tell us that money is not their motivation. Nonetheless, we know that a financial component helps individuals on their road of healing and is, in many cases, a necessary part of reaching resolution.

That's why we have the independent mediation system that has assisted just such a process.

At the same time, the archdiocese has limited resources. Part of my responsibility as your archbishop is to balance the Church's responsibility and resources, for people who rely upon the Church to serve and meet their needs, with the needs of those who have been harmed.



All this is talk. Why haven't you taken practical steps to see that this mess never happens again?

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, adopted by the bishops of the United States and approved by Rome, has been called the most rigorous measure ever taken by any organization to protect children. We promised never to allow a priest against whom an accusation of sexual abuse of a minor has been substantiated, to publicly function as a priest ever again. In fact, many of these men have been returned to lay status.

We initiated an aggressive training program required for all who work or volunteer with our children and youth – e.g. priests, deacons, sisters, teachers, volunteers, day care workers, coaches, youth ministers. These programs focus on recognizing the symptoms or cues of sexual abuse and what to do about it. More than 35,000 people have been trained. We also conduct criminal background checks on Church personnel and volunteers.

We promised to reach out pastorally to those hurt, and have done so energetically. Our Victim Assistance Coordinator, Amy Peterson, is widely admired for her compassion and care.

We have a long way to go. But there has indeed been progress. At our recent bishops' meeting in Baltimore, a woman who serves on the National Review Board observed, "My kids are safer today in the Church than anywhere else."

Big deal. We don't believe you anyway, so all of this is hot air. You should arrange outside, aggressive, objective groups to examine what you say you're doing.

An independent National Review Board, made up of jurists, law enforcement officers, child advocates and psychologists, regularly holds us accountable as a national bishop's conference. Our archdiocese has its own Review Board, similarly composed, to do the same for us locally. The members of our archdiocesan review board are:

Reverend James Connell
Stephanie Russell
Margaret Farrow
Dr. Donald Hands
Dr. Anthony M. Kuchan
Dr. Charles M. Lodl
Dr. Josefina Castillo Baltodano

Each year, independent forensic auditors, mostly former FBI agents, visit the archdiocese to make sure we are keeping our promises and are in compliance with the Charter. We have been found in complete compliance with each audit.

We are also blessed with a Community Advisory Board in the archdiocese, composed of victims-survivors, their families, psychologists, law officials, and child welfare advocates. I meet with them about nine times a year, asking their wisdom on our obedience to the promises we have made.



When are you going to tell us the whole story?

In my over six years as your archbishop, I have published an Annual Report (<http://www.archmil.org/resources/ShowResource.asp?ID=2432>) on all we are doing and continue to do, and how much all of this has cost us. In addition, I have written about it and addressed it publicly many, many times and will continue to do so as long as necessary. Please tell me what else I can tell you.

But how could Archbishop Weakland knowingly move these perpetrators and allow them to be reassigned to a new parish?

We've now learned, especially through hearing the stories of victims and their families, that such an action is indefensible and is certainly no longer the practice today. Sadly and tragically, this was sometimes done in the past, not only, horribly by this archdiocese, but by other organizations, groups, and professions. It seems incomprehensible today, but years ago, the crime of sexual abuse of a minor was, sadly, treated very differently. Whether it was school teachers, family members, youth leaders, coaches or priests, the issue usually was treated privately and, often, secretly. Civil authorities didn't

want to deal with the crime, district attorneys and judges didn't always prosecute offenders; doctors, psychologists and therapists thought counseling would "cure" someone, and often "reassignment" was recommended as part of the process. Archbishop Weakland himself has admitted that, in hindsight, this practice was a terrible mistake.

In 2002, when the clergy sexual abuse scandal became a national story, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee informed people that six men with past substantiated allegations were serving in pastoral assignments throughout the archdiocese. After the Charter was adopted, each of those six were removed from ministry.

Project Benjamin, the archdiocese's initial response to victims of clergy sexual abuse, was started in 1989, and was one of the first programs of its kind in the country. Project Benjamin was a community group. Its goal was to reach out to anyone who had been victimized, and provide an outlet for people to report clergy sexual abuse.

One major outcome of this scandal is that, we pray, no victim-survivor of sexual abuse today feels alone, isolated or that they have nowhere to turn to tell of their experience. And, we know that any priest who has abused a young person may never serve in public ministry again.



Why should I give a dime to you people responsible for this big fat mess? It will only go to lawyers and for settlements.

A lot of people ask that. I can see why they would. What I can say is that money given for specific purposes, e.g., donor designated, has not been used for any of expenses of addressing the issue of clergy sexual abuse.

Gifts to the annual Catholic Stewardship Appeal have been used solely to fund vital programs and ministries of the archdiocesan Church. I can also tell you that the pledges to the *Faith In Our Future* Capital Campaign are directed to an independent trust, not owned by the archdiocese.

However, every penny the archdiocese has is a gift from the people. No way to hide it: this is a major financial hardship in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and for the Catholic Church in the United States. In this archdiocese alone, the cost has been staggering: more than \$25 million.

But, withholding contributions doesn't hurt your bishops or the few priests who committed these horrible crimes. It hurts the very people the Church tries to help every day through education, service, support, outreach to the poor, formation, prayer and worship.

And, the work of the Church goes on – with us, without us, or even in spite of us! God's people, while legitimately upset with Church leaders, and while demanding reform and accountability, have still been outstandingly generous.

In today's economy, that is even more important. Our faithful people recognize this. For instance, the annual Catholic Stewardship Appeal, which provides monies for the education and service programs of the archdiocese, continues to exceed its annual goal. The *Faith In Our Future* Capital Campaign for Catholic education and faith formation is on target to reach its goal, and a Trust has been established to ensure those contributions can only be used for the purpose designated by the donor. What a tremendous tribute to the wisdom and generosity of our Catholic people.

Well . . . we're still mad at you!

I can understand that. All I can do is keep at it, working to regain your trust. You have my commitment to do just that.