

CONVERSATIONS

Excerpts from Archbishop Hebda's statement on 'Action & Accountability' (August 31, 2018):

In recent days, I have continued to hear from many concerned people: young parents worried about the safety of their children, seasoned parishioners wondering when this crisis may end, priests asking how they can serve their parishioners when they themselves no longer know who is trustworthy, and bishops regretting that we were so slow to seek the help of lay experts and act with fuller transparency. In the midst of this darkness, it is the Lord's promise that he will be with us always (Mt 28:20), that he will never abandon his Church, that gives me hope. As the darkness of the past is brought to light, I am trusting in St. Paul's insight that what is illuminated will itself be light (Eph. 5:13).

With that in mind, allow me to briefly describe the actions that have been taken in this local Church. Working with the lay volunteers on our Archdiocesan Ministerial Review Board, Corporate Board of Directors and Finance Council, along with many other volunteers, employees and clergy throughout the Archdiocese, we have constructively and openly confronted our failures – the failures that led to criminal and civil charges, bankruptcy, a loss of trust and a weakening of our moral voice. Although we have more to do, we have come a long way. In 2015, we entered into a far-reaching Settlement Agreement with the Ramsey County Attorney's Office that requires us to take verifiable actions to prevent future abuses. The agreement has improved the way we respond to victim/survivors; the way we hold priests accountable; the way we accept, prepare and promote seminarians; the way we train our priests, employees and volunteers; and how we educate our children and youth in every parish and Catholic school in the Archdiocese. It has helped to improve our culture. We have not only abided by that agreement, but have done more than it requires. This has been verified in court every six months. More recently, we worked with victim survivors to file a joint plan in the bankruptcy court that financially compensates those who have been harmed in our Archdiocese.

Certainly, we cannot rest on these actions alone. There will be challenges in the future, but we now draw on the expertise of a broad range of individuals, primarily laity, to address those issues with integrity, objectivity and transparency.

Regarding accountability for bishops around the world: I fully support engaging lay leadership. Church leaders must be judged by outsiders who have the independence, objectivity and expertise to be fair and credible. We need the assurance that any cleric - whether a newly ordained priest or a Pope - who abused minors or knowingly protected or enabled such abusers, will be held accountable. The same is true for those who abuse their position to take advantage of vulnerable adults, persons receiving spiritual care or seminarians.

In conclusion, I am fully committed to the course we are on to correct our failings, advance accountability, assist those harmed and prevent future abuse.

To read the full letter please visit stvictoria.net/conversations

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What is St. Victoria doing to keep children, youth & vulnerable adults safe?

All people of trust must meet the 'Enhanced Essential 3'



Background Checks

Full criminal background checks are mandatory for all clergy, staff and volunteers prior to working with young people. Rechecking happens every three years.



Safe Environment Training

All clergy, staff and volunteers working with young people are required to attend VIRTUS : Protecting God's Children prior to working with young people. Retraining happens every three years.



Codes of conduct

All clergy, staff and volunteers working with young people are required to attend code of conduct training and sign a code of conduct prior to working with young people. Re-signing happens every three years

Who is holding St. Victoria and the Archdiocese accountable?

On December 17, 2015 the Ramsey County Attorney's office and the Archdiocese entered into a settlement agreement. An overarching goal of the agreement is for the Archdiocese to foster a vigilant culture for the prevention of sexual abuse and the promotion of ongoing assistance for victims and survivors. An external audit firm, Stonebridge Business Partners, is auditing the Archdiocese every six months. During its August 21, 2017 report, Stonebridge found the Archdiocese to be in substantial compliance with the agreement. And in 2018, the court commended the Archdiocese for its "impressive" compliance.

What might be our response to these issues as Catholics?

- Condemn sinful acts and help expose wrongdoers
- Listen and minister to those who are hurting, with open hearts and open hands
- Pray for forgiveness and reconciliation
- Seek God's guidance and grace, for ourselves and the Church
- Gather together to listen to and encourage one another
- Make sure it never happens again!

For a list of resources visit stvictoria.net/conversations