



**ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE**  
OFFICE OF THE CARDINAL

September 25, 2002

Dear Friend in Christ,

In recent months, you have read, heard and seen much about the crisis in our Church regarding child sexual abuse. I want to take this opportunity, at a time when our Archdiocese is charting a new course on this disturbing issue, to write to you directly.

I, along with my fellow bishops in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, have worked to address this crime and sin since my arrival in 1989. We have strived to be diligent in removing all priests and others in the employ of the Church credibly accused of abuse. And we have reported all allegations to the appropriate civil authorities.

However, the simple, painful truth is that the Church did not go far enough to protect children from sexual abuse. After much reflection and prayer – and following a thorough review of our records, going back decades – I have decided that we must be more open and transparent in our efforts to eradicate this evil within our Church. Therefore, we are making public an accounting of priests and religious men who have served in the Archdiocese and have been accused of child sexual abuse. We also are releasing an accounting of the funds expended as a result of this issue. This is part of the transparency and openness called for in the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People approved by the U.S. bishops in Dallas.

My fellow bishops and I must respond to the violence already visited on our children by saying we are sorry. At times, we have let our fears of scandal override the need for the kind of openness that helps prevent abuse. In the past, we sometimes have responded to victims and their families as adversaries, not as suffering members of the Church. I am deeply sorry for the harm done to children entrusted to our care.

As a result, the Catholic Church in the United States has been experiencing a crisis of trust – a crisis brought on by horrible and criminal actions, and by inaction and secrecy. Our faith calls upon us as believers to forgive. But we leaders of the Church must earn forgiveness and rebuild trust by being resolute, consistent, open and accountable in our actions. We make an absolute commitment:

- To protect children;
- To reach out to victim-survivors of abuse;
- To ensure that there is no place in ministry in our Church for those who harm children; and
- To commit to the truth, reaching out to victim-survivors and preventing future abuse, with:
  - o Public disclosure of priests and others credibly accused of child sexual abuse,
  - o Public disclosure of amounts paid in counseling assistance and to settle lawsuits, and
  - o Public disclosure of costs associated with priests removed from ministry due to abuse.

I realize that releasing decades of information on one day may be overwhelming and disturbing to many among the faithful. I understand that transparency must be an ongoing process. Our accounting is based on what we know today, and may change based on information that comes to light in the months and years ahead. I pledge that if and when we learn more, we will report more. We will not make public any information concerning victims. However, I share the concern of some that this release of information, while intended to bring healing, could cause pain to some victims who fear that disclosing their abusers' names may bring them unwelcome attention.

Recognizing each of these realities, I have come to the conclusion that public disclosure is the right thing to do. Ultimately, there is nothing to be gained by secrecy except the avoidance of scandal. And rather than shrinking from facing this scandal – which, too often, has allowed it to continue – we must address it with humble contrition, righteous anger and public outrage. Telling the truth cannot be wrong.

I pray our actions will:

- Help provide survivors with the strength to come forward, knowing they are not alone and their Church values and believes them – so we may apologize and offer assistance.
- Help protect children by rooting out and preventing this evil – making clear that the Church will not tolerate child sexual abuse, and shining a purifying and healing light where darkness has allowed abuse to continue.
- Help remove suspicion from the priests who serve and guide our parishes and our people. They are the heart and soul of our Church, and we have no reason to believe that any among them has committed the crime of child sexual abuse.

Since the mid-80s, the Archdiocese has worked to take an aggressive stance in dealing with child sexual abuse. We have a long history of removing priests accused of misconduct. Prior to this disclosure, allegations of child sexual abuse by 28 priests who served in the Archdiocese have been made public. But as with society, our understanding of this crime has evolved over the years. In years past, insufficient understanding led to insufficient action.

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People is very clear on what it means by child sexual abuse: “Sexual abuse [includes] contacts or interactions between a child and an adult when the child is being used as an object of sexual gratification for the adult. A child is abused whether or not this activity involves explicit force, whether or not it involves...physical contact, whether or not it is initiated by the child, and whether or not there is discernible harmful outcome.”

While this definition is broader than that contained in civil laws concerning child sexual abuse, the Archdiocese will act in accord with this standard. We will allow civil authorities to make determinations of what is legal or illegal. We will allow the medical establishment to determine what constitutes mental illness or health. The Church will focus on right and wrong.

Child sexual abuse, regardless of any other factor, is evil. Those who commit child sexual abuse will not continue in any form of ministry. Since the 1930s, according to our records, 41 diocesan priests and 42 religious men and priests of other diocese have been accused of child sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Baltimore – including 26 who died before victims came forward. None is currently in any ministry in the Archdiocese.

Additionally, as steward of the donations you entrust to the Church for good works, I have a responsibility to account for our expenditures. We have attempted to focus the use of these funds, as it relates to child sexual abuse, on healing – including treatment for those who were harmed as children, as well as priests whose sickness has manifested itself in acts of evil.

According to Archdiocesan records, in the past 20 years, insurance carriers for the Archdiocese and religious communities have reached settlements totaling \$4.1 million in eight cases involving child sexual abuse. These settlements were negotiated and paid by insurance companies, not with Archdiocesan funds. A small amount, totaling approximately \$32,000, was paid to victims by perpetrators. The facts in six of the eight cases where settlements were reached, accounting for almost all of the funds paid to victims, were public and covered in the media.

Additionally, a review of available Archdiocesan records indicates that, in the last 15 years, \$419,186 has been paid for victims' counseling expenses, \$112,520 was paid in legal expenses for representation of accused priests, \$616,201 for basic living expenses for suspended priests, and \$387,019 for psychiatric treatment and ordinary medical expenses for suspended priests.

I encourage you to read the more detailed information regarding accused priests and financial information at the Archdiocese's website, [www.archbalt.org](http://www.archbalt.org), or by picking up a copy of *The Catholic Review* at your parish, if you are not a subscriber.

I am determined to improve communication among the Catholic community within our Archdiocese. On our website and in *The Catholic Review*, you will find a schedule of 10 listening sessions, throughout the Archdiocese, at which I and my fellow bishops will hear and address the concerns of our community. I also would like to continue to build on the discussion I am initiating today – regarding this and other matters of import in the Church – using technology. I would be grateful if you would register your email address by visiting the homepage of our website, or by emailing the Archdiocese at [communications@archbalt.org](mailto:communications@archbalt.org). We will begin sending a weekly email update to keep the faithful informed of the Church's work, and, hopefully, to provide a spark for broader discussion of our faith.

The Church, like all institutions comprised of flawed human beings, will encounter people who do bad things. Among the 12 men chosen by Christ, one betrayed Him. The opportunity to rise above betrayal, and continue to do good in the name of Jesus, lies in how an institution responds. If Judas' betrayal had not been confronted – and if the other 11 had not carried on in servant leadership, the Church and its centuries of good works might not exist. We each must answer evil with personal acts of holiness. While taking responsibility for the betrayal of priests who abused children – and serving those they harmed – we must rededicate ourselves to the mission and faith served by the remaining 11 apostles.

In times of scandal and drift, leaders and saints rise to renew the Church. During the years following the Reformation, one such leader, St. Francis de Sales, stepped forward to help reclaim the Church from corruption and sin. He described the scandals of his day as “the spiritual equivalent of murder.” That phrase rings especially true today, in considering the harm done to children when a person they – and their parents – trust completely, abuses their trust and their faith.

Survivors of abuse, who summon the courage to testify about the damage done to their lives and their hearts, are leaders helping to renew the Church today. The priests who serve selflessly and protect consistently the souls entrusted to our care, are leaders renewing the Church today. And the many people – including clergy, religious and laity – living our mission of service to others, are leaders renewing our Church today.

We bishops have a responsibility to recommit ourselves to loving and serving the faithful. I humbly ask forgiveness for my mistakes. Please pray for me so that I may better serve.

Now, is a pivotal time for our Church. Now is the time to answer scandal with witness, service and holiness, rededicating ourselves to embody Christ on earth. We must come together, rather than turn away, in response to this terrible problem, restoring trust at every level within our Catholic community. I pray that from this pain the Church will emerge, purified and more holy. Now, please God, we must lead and we must serve.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William E. Kicanas".

Archbishop of Baltimore

# COMMITMENT TO ACTION: PROTECTING AND HEALING

Through our actions and inactions, I and my fellow bishops have opened a gulf between bishops and priests and the people we serve. The first step in bridging this chasm, rebuilding trust and achieving reconciliation, is reaching out to – and personally apologizing to – the victim-survivors of abuse by clergy.

- Along with Bishops Newman, Bennett and Malooly and other diocesan leaders, I will meet with victim-survivors to listen to their concerns and personally apologize – until every victim who desires such a meeting has been heard.

## To Protect Children

Nothing is more important than protecting children. For some two decades, we have worked toward this goal, as it relates to child sexual abuse. We are ashamed that we have not always succeeded. Therefore, we must do more.

A public accounting is the first step – openness helps prevent abuse; secrecy enables it. We must make clear that child sexual abuse is abhorrent, a crime and a sin. There is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who sexually abuse children. And all priests and lay leaders must clearly understand: there is no place in any Church ministry for those who sexually abuse children. We will not take risks with parents' children.

- ♦ All priests, deacons, lay, parish and school leaders participated in the Archdiocese's first mandatory convocation on child sexual abuse on August 29, 2002, at which we:
  - o Trained leaders to ensure a safe environment for children;
  - o Updated and clarified Archdiocesan policies and procedures on preventing, responding to and reporting sexual abuse; and
  - o Laid the foundation for a system that ensures accountability, through reporting and site visits.
- ♦ The leaders present at the convocation, in turn, are required to train all employees who come in contact with children – as well as all new employees – when they return to their schools, parishes and other

places of employment.

- ♦ We have reviewed and updated our Child Protection Policy to include new protections and enact a zero tolerance policy for offenders.
- ♦ We are reviewing and updating all screening procedures and background checks for seminarians – which have been considerably tightened in the past fifteen years.
- ♦ All people in positions of ministry will have criminal background checks performed.
- ♦ All volunteers with direct access to children will be subject to reference checks and will be checked against Maryland's sex offender registry.
- ♦ Children involved in Church activities will be instructed that they should not be treated or touched by adults in a manner that makes them uncomfortable – and encouraged to report such concerns to their parents and/or a designated adult.

## To Promote Healing

- ♦ We will continue to provide for treatment and counseling for all victim-survivors who come forward.
- ♦ We will continue to report all situations where there is reason to believe a child has been abused to civil authorities, cooperating fully with criminal investigations and prosecutions.
- ♦ We will make public, to the affected parishioners and to the media, all credible accusations of abuse.
- ♦ We will continue to rely on an Independent Review Board, comprised overwhelmingly of lay people, to make recommendations concerning abuse cases and policies.
- ♦ We will remove from ministry all priests and others credibly accused of abuse.
- ♦ We will retain a lay social worker dedicated to victim outreach.
- ♦ We have established a toll-free number, (866) 417-7469, staffed to receive calls concerning child sexual abuse and to provide help.

Our actions and words must leave not an ounce of doubt that those who harm children have no place in the Church, that children will be safe, and that we embrace those who have been hurt.