

Diocese of Norwich
Office of the Bishop
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MOST REVEREND
MICHAEL R. COTE, D.D.

August 21, 2018

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are, as one family in Christ, heartsick over what we have learned in recent days and weeks from the Pennsylvania grand jury report and the accusations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick. These revelations have reopened the pain and sorrow of a spiritual crisis sadly not yet fully eradicated.

As your Bishop and servant of our merciful Lord, I offer my deepest apology on behalf of the Church to the victims of child abuse and their families suffering painful life-long consequences. I am grievously sorry for the horrific sins against the most vulnerable among us. We pray as one united community of faith for healing.

We condemn the abhorrent behavior of those who betrayed the trust of the Church and unthinkably violated the innocence of God's children.

To be clear, the condemnation extends to any Church administrator, fellow bishop or official who failed to act decisively at the time to remove offenders from ministry and report them to authorities. There are those close to the history of this scourge who would propose that Church administrators at the time were under-informed, misinformed and unprepared to manage the crisis at a time much less knowledgeable on the subject than today. To those who would offer such a proposal, I borrow the words of a fellow Christian, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who knew that in a crisis of suffering, "the time is always right to do the right thing." Those who were responsible within the Church to swiftly remove the offenders from ministry and did otherwise are to be held responsible no matter how many years or decades ago they sinned by not acting -- by not doing the right thing. We bishops included.

We in the Diocese will continue to follow an absolute zero tolerance policy toward those who committed crimes against God's children; and now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops will expand the zero tolerance policy to include those who failed to act to prevent further occurrences. This will mean a significant oversight role by the Laity, especially experts in law enforcement, psychology, and other relevant disciplines. You will be hearing more from me as these new concrete measures begin to take shape. You will be closely informed.

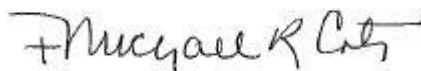
Please know that there is no higher priority within the Diocese than the protection and spiritual welfare of our young. The Diocese of Norwich continues our longstanding commitment to the support and healing of victim-survivors of abuse and reaffirms our commitment to protect our children, young people, and vulnerable adults from harm. Attached is a brief update on the progress of the diocesan policies, protocols, and training concerning abuse prevention and the protection of children and young people. For more information, please visit the website of the Office of Safe Environments:

<https://www.norwichdiocese.org/Find/Diocesan-Offices/Safe-Environments>

As we work together to fully overcome this crisis, we are strengthened to know that our faith through the power of God's love will overcome sin. It is with resolve, prayer and the hope of Christ that we now embark on the path to renewal. As expressed by the Holy Father Pope Francis, "Through the baptismal grace the Holy Spirit has placed in the hearts of the faithful, may we grow in the gift of compassion and in justice committed to a culture of care that says 'never again' to every form of abuse."

We stand together across this diocese in dedication to that pledge.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael R Coats". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Bishop of Norwich