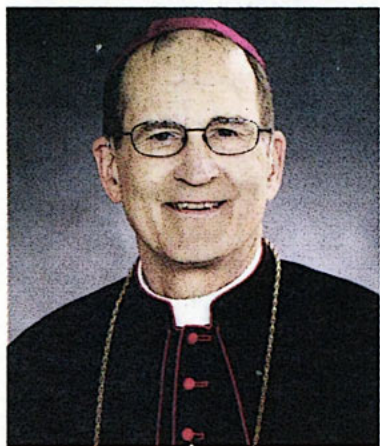


Be Not Afraid

Recent meeting of the bishops



by Bishop John M. LeVoir

As you have read or heard, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops held their fall meeting in Baltimore from November 12 through 14. In light of the recently publicized scandals involving bishops, the main business of the meeting was to formulate procedures that would hold bishops accountable for preventing and handling sexual abuse by clergy. There was also expected to be a proposal to investigate thoroughly the Archbishop McCarrick matter.

The bishops had expected to discuss and vote upon three important measures of accountability that had been proposed: 1) a process for investigating complaints against bishops reported through a third-

party compliance hotline; 2) a proposal for a single national lay commission to process complaints and allegations against bishops, modeled on diocesan review boards; and 3) a set of standards of accountability for bishops. The bishops were surprised when they were told on the first day of the meeting that the Holy See had instructed them not to vote on these measures.

In lieu of voting, the Holy See instructed that consideration of these new measures be delayed until they could be discussed at a special meeting called by Pope Francis for February 2019, to be held in the Vatican. That meeting, which will include the presidents of the world's bishops' conferences, will address the sex abuse crisis globally.

The bishops had a lengthy discussion of the abuse crisis and what initiatives might be taken to address offending bishops. Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo will bring the fruits of the discussion to the February meeting in the Vatican. Cardinal DiNardo also formed a task force to study the initiatives and report back to the bishops. The task force includes Cardinal DiNardo, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, and Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory.

With regard to the McCarrick matter, the Holy See has pledged to investigate thoroughly the allegations made against him. About the investigation, Pope Francis said: "We will follow the path of truth wherever it may lead." The Archdioceses of New York, Newark, and Washington, DC., along with the Diocese of Metuchen, are also conducting their own investigations of the McCarrick matter.

The bishops are determined to bring healing to victims and survivors, and justice to bishops who fail in their duty. They are committed to a complete investigation of the McCarrick matter. They are also committed to working with the Holy See on the global crisis. Please continue to pray that the crisis will be addressed thoroughly and promptly.

Chapter 11

The Minnesota Child Victims Act temporarily removed (for three years) the civil statute of limitations for historical claims of child sexual abuse. In order to settle the claims brought against the diocese, the Diocese of New Ulm filed for Chapter 11 Reorganization under the Federal Bankruptcy Code on March 3, 2017. The diocese continues to work its way through the Chapter

11 Reorganization process. Progress is being made, but the process takes time and effort. Reorganization is the fairest way to resolve sexual abuse claims while allowing the Church to continue its essential work of serving people in our local communities.

I again extend my deepest apologies on behalf of the Diocese of New Ulm to victims and survivors of clergy sexual abuse as minors. Victims and survivors have shown incredible courage by stepping forward to help prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again. Victims and survivors must be treated with dignity, and just compensation is owed to them, as well as our daily prayers. These are integral to the healing process. Please see the diocesan website for further information.

The Rosary and the prayer to St. Michael

Pope Francis, in light of the recent crisis in the Church, has recommended to all Catholics to recite the Rosary, as well as the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, seeking the protection of Mary and the assistance of St. Michael. Please join me in praying these prayers daily. See the diocesan website for the Prayer to St. Michael.

Hope and healing

I will continue to preside at Eucharistic adoration on a regular basis, in different parishes in the diocese, with opportunities for healing prayer, Confession, and spiritual counsel for hope and healing. Pope Francis has reminded us that we all bear wounds. These celebrations are opportunities to bring the healing power of Christ to bear on our wounds. Please visit the diocesan website for more information.

Pray for priests and deacons

Please continue to pray for your priests and deacons, and to support them, especially during this time of crisis in the Church. Also, please work together with them to plan for the future of our parishes, area faith communities, and diocese.

Christmas

It is vital for us to remember at Christmas time that it is Jesus Christ, God the Son, who took flesh in the womb of Mary, whose birth we will celebrate. Mary, the new Ark of the Covenant, presents the Lord to us for our worship. May our hearts dance for joy.

Bishop LeVoir's December calendar can be found at www.dnu.org/calendar/.

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U.S. bishops adopt new anti-racism letter; first in 40 years

BALTIMORE, MD – At the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) fall general assembly Nov. 12-14, 2018, in Baltimore, the bishops voted overwhelmingly to adopt and promulgate a new pastoral letter on racism, the first since 1979's "Brothers and Sisters Unto Us."

The formal statement, "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love," A Pastoral Letter Against Racism, was approved by a two-thirds majority vote of 241 to 3 with 1 abstention. The letter also condemns the rise of anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiment and xenophobia.

In 2017, the U.S. bishops formed a committee to address what Church officials have described as a resurgence of racism and bigotry in the United States and in the Catholic Church.

The USCCB Cultural Diversity in the Church Committee, chaired by

Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, M.Sp.S., of San Antonio, Texas, spearheaded the letter's drafting and guided it through the voting process.

Bishop Shelton J. Fabre, of Houma-Thibodaux, LA, chairman of U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and chair of the sub-committee on African American Affairs within the Cultural Diversity Committee, issued the following statement: "The entire body of bishops felt the need to address the topic of racism, once again, after witnessing the deterioration of the public discourse, and episodes of violence and animosity with racial and xenophobic overtones, that have re-emerged in American society in the last few years.

"Pastoral letters from the full body of bishops are rare, few and far between. But at key moments in history the bishops have come together for important

pronouncements, paying attention to a particular issue and with the intention of offering a Christian response, full of hope, to the problems of our time. This is such a time."

Unlike the 1979 pastoral letter, "Open Wide Our Hearts" is much more explicit about the oppression faced by Native Americans, African-Americans and Hispanics throughout history.

Although the new pastoral letter acknowledges that words will not be enough to root out racism in the United States, it says that

Catholics must acknowledge their own sinfulness and the ways they have been complicit in the evil of racism and we must educate ourselves and work toward dismantling systemic forms of oppression because racism goes against human life and dignity.

The letter said that the Church must be as outspoken against racism as it is against abortion, assisted suicide, and the death penalty.

The full text is posted at www.usccb.org/racism.

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