

## **President of U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Makes Statement at Close of Public Sessions; Fall General Assembly, Baltimore Nov. 12-14**

BALTIMORE—On the final day of the public sessions of the U.S. Bishops fall general assembly in Baltimore, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston and President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, delivered the following remarks Nov. 14.

Cardinal DiNardo's full address follows:

“Brothers, I opened the meeting expressing some disappointment. I end it with hope.

My hope is first of all grounded in Christ, who desires that the Church be purified and that our efforts bear fruit.

In late summer on your behalf, I expressed our renewed fraternal affection for our Holy Father. In September the Administrative Committee expressed for all of us our “love, obedience and loyalty” for Pope Francis. Now together with you today, gathered in Baltimore in Plenary Assembly, we the members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops pledge to His Holiness our loyalty and devotion in these difficult days. I am sure that, under the leadership of Pope Francis, the conversation that the global Church will have in February will help us eradicate the evil of sexual abuse from our Church. It will make our local efforts more global and the global perspective will help us here.

Brothers, you and the speakers we have heard from have given me direction and consensus. I will take it as a springboard for action. Listening is essential, but listening must inform decisive action. Let me take this moment to thank the many survivors and experts who have given us such good counsel and direction these last few days.

When the summer's news first broke, we committed to three goals: to do what we could to get to the bottom of the Archbishop McCarrick situation; to make reporting of abuse and misconduct by bishops easier; and, to develop a means of holding ourselves accountable that was genuinely independent, duly authorized, and had substantial lay involvement.

Now, we are on course to accomplish these goals. That is the direction that you and the survivors of abuse across our country have given me for the February meeting in Rome. More than that, in the days prior to the meeting of episcopal conference presidents, the Task Force I established this week will convert that direction into specific action steps. Some of those actions steps include:

- A process for investigating complaints against bishops reported through a third-party compliance hotline. We will complete a proposal for a single national lay commission and a proposal for a national network relying upon the established diocesan review boards, with their lay expertise, to be overseen by the metropolitan or senior suffragan.
- Finalizing the Standards of Accountability for Bishops.

- Finalizing the Protocol for Removed Bishops.
- Studying national guidelines for the publication of lists of names of those clerics facing substantiated claims of abuse.
- Supporting the fair and timely completion of the various investigations into the situation surrounding Archbishop McCarrick and publication of their results. We are grateful for the Holy See's Statement of October 6 in this regard.

We leave this place committed to taking the strongest possible actions at the earliest possible moment. We will do so in communion with the Universal Church. Moving forward in concert with the Church around the world will make the Church in the United States stronger, and will make the global Church stronger.

But our hope for true and deep reform ultimately lies in more than excellent systems, as essential as these are. It requires holiness: the deeply held conviction of the truths of the Gospel, and the eager readiness to be transformed by those truths in all aspects of life.

As the nuncio reminded us on Monday, "if the Church is to reform herself and her structures, then the reform must spring from her mission of making known Christ, the Son of the Living God." No system of governance or oversight, however excellent and necessary, suffices alone to make us, weak as we all are, able to live up to the high calling we have received in Christ.

We must recommit to holiness and to the mission of the Church.

Brothers, I have heard you today. I am confident that in unity with the Holy Father and in conversation with the Universal Church in February we will move forward.

There is more to be done, but what we have done is a sign of hope.

Commending everything to the intercession of Our Lady, we pray together . . .