

Remarks of Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
News Conference
Friday, May 4, 2012

Good afternoon. Thank you for being here.

I'm pleased to share with you today that the work of the special team investigating the 26 priests publicly placed on leave by Cardinal Rigali last year is now largely done. Eight of the 26 cases are being announced today. Most of the remainder will be announced in a matter of weeks.

You'll recall that the 2011 grand jury report challenged the Archdiocese to review certain cases of past allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy as well as some cases involving violations of the Archdiocese's *Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries*.

The Archdiocese has reviewed these 26 cases with the intensive examination of a veteran Philadelphia child abuse prosecutor, Mrs. Gina Maisto Smith, and a multi-disciplinary team of recognized experts in the field of child protection. Moreover, the multi-disciplinary team's findings were then studied by the reinvigorated Archdiocesan Review Board. These two groups included doctors, police officers, former prosecutors, victims' advocates and other people with experience in the broad societal problem of sexual abuse of minors.

The process of reviewing these cases was designed to ensure that the decisions announced today reflect our commitment to protect children, assist victims, restore the integrity of the Priesthood and provide evidence to the broader community that it can have confidence in these outcomes. I've been in Philadelphia for eight months, and I've tried as quickly as possible to understand all of the many issues facing our local Church. During that time, preventing sexual abuse and protecting children has been—and will remain—a priority for me and for this Archdiocese.

No lesson from the abuse scandal is more important than the understanding that the people who suffer most are the victims. Over the years, as part of my ministry as a bishop, I have met personally with many victims and this humbling experience has taught me that no words can sufficiently describe the hurt a victim feels. I have in the past and again today share my deep sadness and again offer a heartfelt apology on behalf of the Archdiocese to all victims of clergy sexual abuse.

I noted at the outset that today we are announcing eight decisions in these 26 cases. Three priests have been found suitable for ministry. Five priests will not return to ministry although they retain the right to appeal this decision to the Holy See. A ninth priest is now deceased, and his case cannot be concluded.

The remaining 17 cases cannot be announced today, and people will obviously want to know why. When Cardinal Rigali began this process more than a year ago, he pledged to do an exhaustive review of all these cases. The task of investigating past allegations of sexual misconduct is complex and time-consuming. It cannot be hurried or abbreviated without violating the whole purpose of the review. I should also mention that we've been very limited in what we can say about these cases because of current legal proceedings and the gag order put in

place to protect those proceedings.

We cooperate fully with law enforcement and refer all our cases to the local district attorney. Six of the 26 cases have not yet been cleared by law enforcement, so our own internal investigation has not begun. In two more of the 26 cases, we've just recently received clearance from law enforcement, and our internal investigation is now proceeding. But in the final nine cases, all our investigations are complete, and the cases are awaiting either examination by the Archdiocesan Review Board or a decision by me. As a result, these will be announced very soon.

Information about the cases announced today is on our website and will be available in all parishes this weekend.

I realize that you'd like me to provide considerable detail about these cases. That I cannot do. And I need to balance the need for transparency with the pain already felt by victims—pain which we acknowledge and do not wish to compound. It's important for the victims themselves to control to whom, when, and how extensively they disclose their accounts, and we support whatever that decision may be.

I do think it's important to share with you more information about the process we used to arrive at these final decisions. In every decision I relied on the counsel of more than 20 experts in two separate bodies. The first is a special multi-disciplinary team, led by Mrs. Smith. The other is our Archdiocesan Review Board. Members of both groups are with us here today, and I'd like to thank them for their valuable work. They come from various professional disciplines and have dedicated their lives to child protection—to the investigation of sexual offenders and support for victims of sexual violence. On our website you can find more details about their background and credentials. I thank each one of these men and women for undertaking this serious task. I reviewed each case personally and made the final decision regarding every one of them. I met personally this week with each of the eight priests whose cases have been completed and delivered the outcomes that are now being shared with you.

In resolving these cases, we've also made significant changes in our process for investigating sexual abuse allegations and violations of *The Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries*. Last year, the Archdiocese removed the investigative function from our victim assistance program. We created a separate Office for Investigations and appointed Mr. Al Toczydlowski, former Philadelphia Deputy District Attorney, as its head to ensure immediate referral to law enforcement, to ensure cooperation with county district attorney's offices and thorough investigation so that thorough investigations can be part of the canonical process. This office uses a trained forensic interviewer to take victim statements in an effort to reduce any potential re-victimization.

The clear division between victim assistance and investigation allows our victim assistance efforts to focus exclusively on the needs of victims. Last summer, the Archdiocese appointed Ms. Leslie Davila to head those efforts. She comes to us from the Philadelphia District Attorney's office; and she has more than 15 years of experience in working with victims of crime, including victims of sexual assault. Ms. Davila's office and these new practices are also

now a permanent part of the Archdiocese.

The investigative work of Mrs. Smith's multi-disciplinary team will conclude with the resolution of the administrative leave cases. Future allegations of sexual abuse of minors will continue to be examined by the Archdiocesan Review Board. With the guidance of Mrs. Smith, Mr. Toczydlowski, and Ms. Davila, I have added new members to the Review Board. I am confident that this board is one of the best in the country.

We've taken many steps in the past year to reform and improve the way the Archdiocese lives up to its duty to protect children. There are enhanced policies and procedures for handling allegations of sexual abuse of a minor which are under final review. Going forward they will reflect the lessons learned from this process. For example, we take all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by clergy to the Archdiocesan Review Board; but we do the same now for all complaints involving violations of *The Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries*.

We will now begin our parish restoration initiative—a program titled Honesty, Healing, and Hope in Christ, which is led by our Victim Services Consultant, Ms. Mary Achilles. Mary will discuss it in greater detail shortly. This is a program about dealing with sexual violence. It's about providing support to parishioners as they and the wider Church seek to build an environment that is safe for all families and welcoming to those who have been victimized.

Before I turn the podium over to Mrs. Smith, who will briefly discuss the multi-disciplinary team and the process, let me leave you with one more thought. Catholics have struggled with confusion and anger. When a child is harmed, the Church has failed. When trust is lost, the Church has failed. When the whole community suffers as a result, the Church has failed. We can't change the past. But I pray—and I do believe—that the lessons of the last year have made our Church humbler, wiser, and a more vigilant guardian of our people's safety. That is our commitment today, tomorrow, and permanently.