News

by NCR Staff

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This article was updated at 3 p.m. Central Daylight Time with additional reactions and responses. A second update with addtitional reactions was made to this article July 31 at 8 a.m. central time

Following are responses and reactions from a variety of sources concerning the announcement July 28 that Pope Francis had accepted the resignation of Theodore McCarrick, archbishop emeritus of Washington, from the College of Cardinals, and also "ordered his suspension from the exercise of any public ministry, together with the obligation to remain in a house yet to be indicated to him, for a life of prayer and penance."

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark. McCarrick led the Newark archdiocese 1986-2000.

> "The somber announcement from the Vatican this morning [July 28] will impact the Catholic community of the Archdiocese of Newark with particular force. This latest news is a necessary step for the Church to hold itself accountable for sexual abuse and harassment perpetrated by its ministers, no matter their rank. I ask my brothers and sisters to pray for all who may have been harmed by the former Cardinal, and to pray for him as well."

Robert M. Hoatson, a former priest of the Newark archdiocese and founder of the Road to Recovery, which advocates for victims of sexual abuse.

"Finally, but much too late, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick is forced to resign as a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church because of his sexual abuse of minors and adults over the course of decades.

"A criminal investigation must be conducted to find out which church leaders knew, what they knew, when they knew it, and what they did to cover up the immoral behavior of Theodore E. McCarrick and many other bishops, priests and deacons."

The resignation of Theodore E. McCarrick must only be the beginning of a criminal investigation of all aspects of Cardinal Mc Carrick's sexually abusive behavior with children and adults and the cover-up of his abuse and that of many other bishops, priests, and deacons in the Archdiocese of New York, the Diocese of Metuchen, the Archdiocese of Newark, and the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

Monsignor Charles Antonicelli, vicar general and moderator of the curia for the Washington Archdiocese, sent a letter to priests in the archdiocese July 25 that addressed the McCarrick issue. His instructions were to “share [the letter] with your staff and parishioners as you deem appropriate.” Some priests read the letter at weekend Masses July 28-29.

... [T]he Holy See is exclusively overseeing any further decisions [about McCarrick] and, in cooperation with this review, we will pass along any and all relevant information to the Apostolic Nunciature. To date, our offices are aware only of the same information regarding these allegations that you are seeing in media reports that express a range of specific details, concerns and opinions. We know from past experience with the failings of the Church, that this is not an issue that will simply fade away. We must do our best to address the concerns of our flocks — and the broader community — forthrightly, but also with compassion and understanding.

As he has from the initial report, Cardinal [Donald] Wuerl [archbishop of Washington] encourages us to fully share what information we have with your parishioners or others who may have questions. ... he encourages us

> to minister to those who are rightfully disappointed or angry with the news involving Cardinal McCarrick. ...
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> We all recognized the importance of sorting out fact from speculation. We understand from statements and media reports that the Diocese of Metuchen and the Archdiocese of Newark both entered into confidential settlement agreements regarding Cardinal McCarrick. Neither the Archdiocese of Washington nor Cardinal Wuerl knew about these confidential settlements until this most recent credible and substantiated allegation against Cardinal McCarrick was made public. For clarity, the Archdiocese of Washington did not participate in; make any contributions to; nor was involved in any away with these settlement agreements.
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> We reiterate the importance of bringing forth any factual information concerning any aspect of this or other instances of alleged abuse or harassment so that it may be fully and appropriately addressed. The Church, all of us, require that light be shed on these situations that impact all of us. ...

The former New York altar boy who whose abuse allegations began actions against McCarrick this year spoke to The New York Times.

> Identified, only as Mike to protect his privacy, the 62-year-old man told The Times that the news of the resignation felt like a "gut punch."
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> He said he believed that McCarrick was resigning only because he was being forced to, not because he was accepting responsibility.
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> "I am kind of appalled that it has taken this long for him to get caught," he said, in the first time he has spoken publicly. "But I am glad I am the first one that could open the door to other people."

Greg Burke, director of the Vatican press office, speaking to Reuters Television

"The important point is that McCarrick is no longer a cardinal. What this means is that, no matter how important your position, no matter how prestigious, when it comes to sex abuse you're going to be held accountable. That is the message being sent today."

Catholic News Service reported on a letter Bishop Michael F. Olson of Fort Worth, Texas, wrote to his diocese.

"Ministry in the church is a grace from God that carries with it sober responsibility. Ministry is not a right to be claimed by anyone as an entitlement; rather, it involves a convenantal trust established through our baptism as members of the church established by Christ," he said.

"We see in the scandalous crimes and sins alleged to have been committed by now former Cardinal McCarrick, the violation of trust and the grave damage caused to the lives and health of his purported victims," he continued. "The scandal and pain are compounded by the horrific fact that reportedly one of his victims was his first baptism after his priestly ordination."

Olson said the former cardinal's alleged crimes "have caused further damage to the integrity of the hierarchy and the mission of the church," and as a result "his prompt reduction canonically to the laity should be strongly deliberated."

The Texas bishop also said church leaders who knew of the former cardinal's "alleged crimes and sexual misconduct and did nothing (must) be held accountable for their refusal to act thereby enabling others to be hurt."

Kurt Martens, a professor of canon law at Catholic University, spoke to The Washington Post.

Martens said that the Catholic church has typically punished people by ordering them to conduct a life of "prayer and penance." In McCarrick's case, the Vatican has imposed that penalty before the trial has even

started — raising pressure on the church to find a stronger form of punishment.

"Because you're running out of options if you want to impose a further penalty," Martens said. "I would not be surprised if he gets dismissed from the clerical state."

The 60-year-old Virginia man who recently went public with allegations that McCarrick abused him for years beginning when he was 11 years old, spoke to The Washington Post.

James, who spoke on the condition that his last name not be used to protect his family, said he was very emotional upon learning Saturday that Francis had accepted McCarrick's resignation, signaling the church believes the accusers.

"The Vatican now knows everything, realizes the depth of his destruction in the church and that it's time to clean house," said James. As for McCarrick: "He's been guilty since the beginning of his life. And he's now realized he's cornered and can't come out."

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The Catholic reform group formed in the wake of the sex abuse scandal that engulfed the Boston archdiocese in 2002 issued a statement July 30 calling for "increased accountability and transparency."

The full statement follows:

As the Catholic clergy abuse scandal reaches a new level of intensity, particularly with Cardinal Theodore McCarrick's (credibly accused) and Archbishop Philip Wilson's (convicted) resignations, Voice of the Faithful, an organization of Catholics advocating for broader influence for lay voices in the Church, welcomes not only these actions, but also what they and other recent events mean for accountability and transparency in the future.

These two events follow a period that included in only a few months:

- Pope Francis' removal of three Chilean bishops, allegations of cover-up being brought against two Chilean cardinals and an archbishop and an investigation of the entire Chilean Church;
- sentencing of a former Vatican diplomat to five years in prison for possession and distribution of child pornography;
- removal from office of the archbishop of Guam following "certain accusations" of abuse;
- a cardinal in Australia standing trial for covering up abuse;
- the Archdiocese of Mexico City partnering with the Survivors Network for Those Abused by Priests on child protection efforts;
- some Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis parishes helping to pay settlements to clergy abuse survivors; and
- the pending release by mid-August of a grand jury investigation of abuse in six Pennsylvania dioceses.

A critical mass seems to have been reached whereby the horror of the abuse has reached the hierarchy with increased accountability, while additional investigations and survivors' stories are increasingly shining light into formerly secret abuse. The potential for a new level of transparency going forward is promising.

Voice of the Faithful and all who work for the Church can only hope.

Related: McCarrick renounces place in College of Cardinals after revelations of abuse

Trinity Washington University president Patricia McGuire, reflected on the allegations against McCarrick in a blog posting titled "Cardinal Sins."

... The allegations against McCarrick are profoundly serious and a source of sorrow for so many who knew him in the Archdiocese of Washington. (As of July 28 McCarrick has renounced his position in the College of Cardinals.) Our primary concern must be with the victims —- whether minor children or young adult priests should not matter, the fact is that a person in a position of tremendous power and deep trust allegedly

committed heinous acts for his own gratification. Could the allegations be false? Of course, but the sources seem numerous, and the facts are emerging that the allegations have been known for a long time, and some led to cash settlements. Not dispositive of absolute guilt, but not circumstances that any priest, bishop or cardinal should find himself in.

The Church's response to the massive sex abuse crisis has always seemed to lack a certain level of deep, urgent understanding of the gravity of the sin against children and other victims. Certainly, words have cascaded, gestures made, money paid out. But, somehow, the words and gestures and checks have all seemed more self-protective of the organization than truly penitential at the most profound level.

In an age when we can casually listen in on secret recordings of a presidential candidate talking about paying off a porn star, we might wonder what it will take for powerful men to understand the deep horror of abusing someone else's body for their own pleasure. #MeToo is a movement among women who have suffered grave abuse at the hands of powerful men, and yet, many men in positions of power (including the president, who recently mocked the #MeToo movement) still act like it's really no big deal. Cardinals and bishops are powerful men, so perhaps it's not unusual that they, too, have a hard time understanding the deep human impact of abuse. ...

In the end, however, the Pope and cardinals and bishops must find something else, something more: a deep, compelling, durable voice arising from the core of the Church, a practice of atonement leading to healing and reconciliation with victims and those who walk with the victims. The exercise of such a voice cannot arise from a position of power and authority, or legality and self-protection, but rather, from a posture of genuine humility and vulnerability. Such a posture requires a reduction in trappings and ritual, a simpler and more human vocabulary that begs forgiveness and expresses a level of understanding about the hurt that we have not yet heard or seen. ...

Bishop Edward Scharfenberger of Albany sent a letter to members of Albany the clergy on Friday July 26 after Fr. Desmond Rossi, a priest of his diocese, began speaking to media about what Rossi described as a culture

of harassment under McCarrick. America broke Rossi's story July 25. Following are excerpts from Scharfenberger's letter. The full text is here.

> ... No doubt you have been and will be hearing from your people about how shaken and discouraged they are over public revelations of despicable behavior on the part of a very popular and charismatic Cardinal with priests and seminarians in his care. One holy and faithful Catholic gentleman — a medical professional and a dear friend — texted me just this morning about his family's utter despondency over this and that the USCCB should disband itself: "[t]heir credibility is shot, probably for decades." ...
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> More words are not going to repair, let alone restore, the damage that has been done. Lawyering, pledges and changes in the bureaucratic structures and policy —– however well intentioned — cannot do it either. I do not see how we can avoid what is really at the root of this crisis: sin and a retreat from holiness, specifically the holiness of an integral, truly human sexuality. ...
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> Abuse of authority — in this case, with strong sexual overtones — with vulnerable persons is hardly less reprehensible than the sexual abuse of minors, which the USCCB attempted to address in 2002. Unfortunately, at that time — something I never understood — the Charter did not go far enough so as to hold cardinals, archbishops and bishops equally, if not more, accountable than priests and deacons. ...
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> Let me be clear, however, in stating my firm conviction that this is, at heart, much more than a crisis of policies and procedures. We can — and I am confident that we will — strengthen the rules and regulations and sanctions against any trying to fly under the radar or to "get away with" such evil and destructive behaviors. But, at its heart, this is much more than a challenge of law enforcement; it is a profoundly spiritual crisis. ...

In a July 26 commentary under headline, "McCarrick, Mary, and Mystery: Seeking Truth in the Moment," Catholic blogger Elizabeth Scalia, writes first about a church investigation into a statue of Mary in Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Hobbs, New Mexico, that is reportedly weeping tears of scented olive oil, and then she turns to McCarrick.

> If the tears of chrism remain a mystery, perhaps we may take it as a sign from the Mother of the Church that the Men of the Chrism need, yes, our prayers, but also something more: our help and our vigilance in facing a very difficult time of examination and needful, very likely painful correction.
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> What shall we do with that sign? Well, for one thing, we must be willing to investigate the long pattern of abuse, influence, and cover-up that involves Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick (and his enablers) as carefully and thoroughly as we investigate miracles at Lourdes and tears of the Madonna. We must be as unrelenting in discovering proofs, seeking evidences, and distrusting "easy" answers about the men who run the Church as we are over each miraculous claim we study. ... The whole story — however much it will discomfit and hurt us — needs to be revealed.
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> Even without the Virgin's tears, it is time to acknowledge, as Church, that a mighty housekeeping is in order, for the sake of millions of souls and the very future of faith itself. Housekeeping is a humble but necessary business. As priests and laity, let us get to it.

John Carr, director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University. Carr worked closely with McCarrick on policy initiatives when Carr worked for the U.S. bishops' conference in Washington.

> "As a father, I am appalled and angry. As a Catholic, I feel ashamed and betrayed. ... As a friend of former Cardinal McCarrick, I am devastated, especially for the victims and their families. I pray that these horrific developments can help end this evil of clerical sex abuse and dismantle the culture that permitted it within our family of faith."