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The Catholic Standard, archdiocesan newspaper of Washington, published a question-and-answer interview July 31 with Washington Cardinal Donald Wuerl about the next steps for the archdiocese in light of the sexual abuse allegations made against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, a former cardinal and retired archbishop of Washington.

This story includes excerpts of that interview where the cardinal discussed his hope that all victims of abuse would come forward for healing and mentions his conversations with priests and seminarians in the archdiocese about the allegations.

"The news regarding Archbishop McCarrick was a great shock to our church in Washington. There is understandable anger, both on a personal level due to the charges, but also more broadly at the church," Wuerl said.

He said Catholics have "lived through such scandals before and they are demanding accountability."

The cardinal said it was "understandable that some people hear this latest news and see it as confirmation of their lack of faith in the church, or their lack of trust in its leadership. People were rightfully angry over the child sex abuse scandals, which we continue to address. It means we must work harder."

He also said the action taken by Pope Francis, accepting McCarrick's resignation from the College of Cardinals July 28, shows "an understanding that we must move swiftly to address claims of any form of abuse or serious breach of trust by ministers of the church, no matter who they may be or what position they may hold. Acknowledging such grave breaches of trust and seeking forgiveness open the doors for healing."

Wuerl noted that as details have unfolded in this case, he has continually emphasized that the archdiocese's first concern "must always be with those who have suffered abuse. In this case, as with other cases, it is imperative that the leadership of the Catholic Church encourage survivors to step forward, address abuse claims, and focus its attention and care on the survivors of abuse."

He said the archdiocesan spiritual and pastoral ministries will "continue to console, heal and nurture those most in need. We will support them and their families and provide assistance to help them find peace and experience the healing power of God's grace."

News about McCarrick, who was archbishop of Washington from 2001 to 2006, also impacted archdiocesan priests and seminarians and the cardinal said he has had frank discussions with them about it.

The priests, he said, "in particular feel the pain of the failure of a brother priest." They also told him that when there is a failure in the actions of one priest, they "all are somehow held accountable."

During the discussion with them, he said: "We all recognized the pain and sadness of the human condition, our need for God's grace every day to carry out our ministry and our need to support one another just as we struggle to support the faithful entrusted to our care."

"We discussed the media accounts of rumors involving Archbishop McCarrick and that until the New York allegation was made public, there really had been no substantiation of them, certainly not here in Washington. And I was asked whether I had any knowledge of the specific allegation in New York, which I had never heard before. So it was frank conversation."

Regarding his discussion with archdiocesan seminarians, the cardinal said his concern was that "they would not have their zeal and idealism in any way tarnished

by the failure of any priest."

"One of the consoling things for me in that meeting, as I listened to their comments and observations, was the recognition that these young men are firmly grounded in their faith and their spiritual life is truly focused on Jesus, the Lord," he said.

He also said he was impressed with their maturity. "They are the heirs of the experience of social media and so are really not completely shocked by such tragic news. Disappointed yes, but sexual abuse in our culture and society is not news to them."

Wuerl said that at every ordination and throughout the year when he talks with priests and seminarians about the priestly vocation, he reminds them of the "holy life to which we are called, and about the faithful love that is at the heart of priestly ministry."

"Remaining true to that call, trying to be icons of Christ in our community and our world, is needed today more than ever," he said.

In the wake of the allegations against the retired archbishop of Washington, the cardinal said he hopes Catholics in the archdiocese "would not lose sight of the larger vision of our church." Across the archdiocese, he noted, "we have many, many fine priests, deacons, and religious; we have lay staff and volunteers in parishes and Catholic Charities, who do amazing things for their neighbors every day."

He said for all of the "necessary attention we must give to the current crisis, I would hope that as part of the healing process we come to see the good we accomplish every day and that we continue to share God's love across our archdiocese."

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The cardinal said the archdiocese continues to make every effort to address abuse, pointing to its enforced child protection policy and the Child Protection Advisory Board that meets regularly. He also said the annual audit by an outside professional audit team "has consistently affirmed the quality of our protection and education programs and our fidelity to the 'Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.'"

The attention currently being paid to make sure abuse doesn't happen "does not mitigate in any way the pain these alleged actions have brought on the survivors and their families, and on the members of the church," he said. "We are at a moment where, again, we must acknowledge such wrongdoing whenever it occurs. We must continue to press forward with what was started in the June 2002 meeting in Dallas to address, as a conference of bishops, the question of clergy abuse."

Wuerl said the "starting point for our own healing is the recognition that God is with his church and that the church does not depend on any individual human being" because "God's grace is at work among us."

He urged Catholics to pray, saying it "helps us see beyond the failure of any person and helps us hold fast to the mystery of God's goodness at work in this world and in the church, the mystical body of Christ, and in the priesthood that is lived in so many good, effective, caring and faithful priests."

"We should pray for all who may have in any way been harmed by Archbishop McCarrick, and we should also pray for him," he said.

The cardinal said he has personally "drawn great consolation" from recognizing the church's divine and human aspects that the "church is the home of Christ's continuing presence in the sacraments" but it "all that is transmitted through human beings."

"In the long history of the church," he noted, "not all bishops, the successors to the apostles, have been perfect. That is a reality which we live with because we understand that we are all sinners in need of God's grace and mercy."

"In the meantime," he said: "Our task is to support one another and to help one another to be everything that Christ asks us to be, to stand for and live in his truth."