News



by Catholic News Service

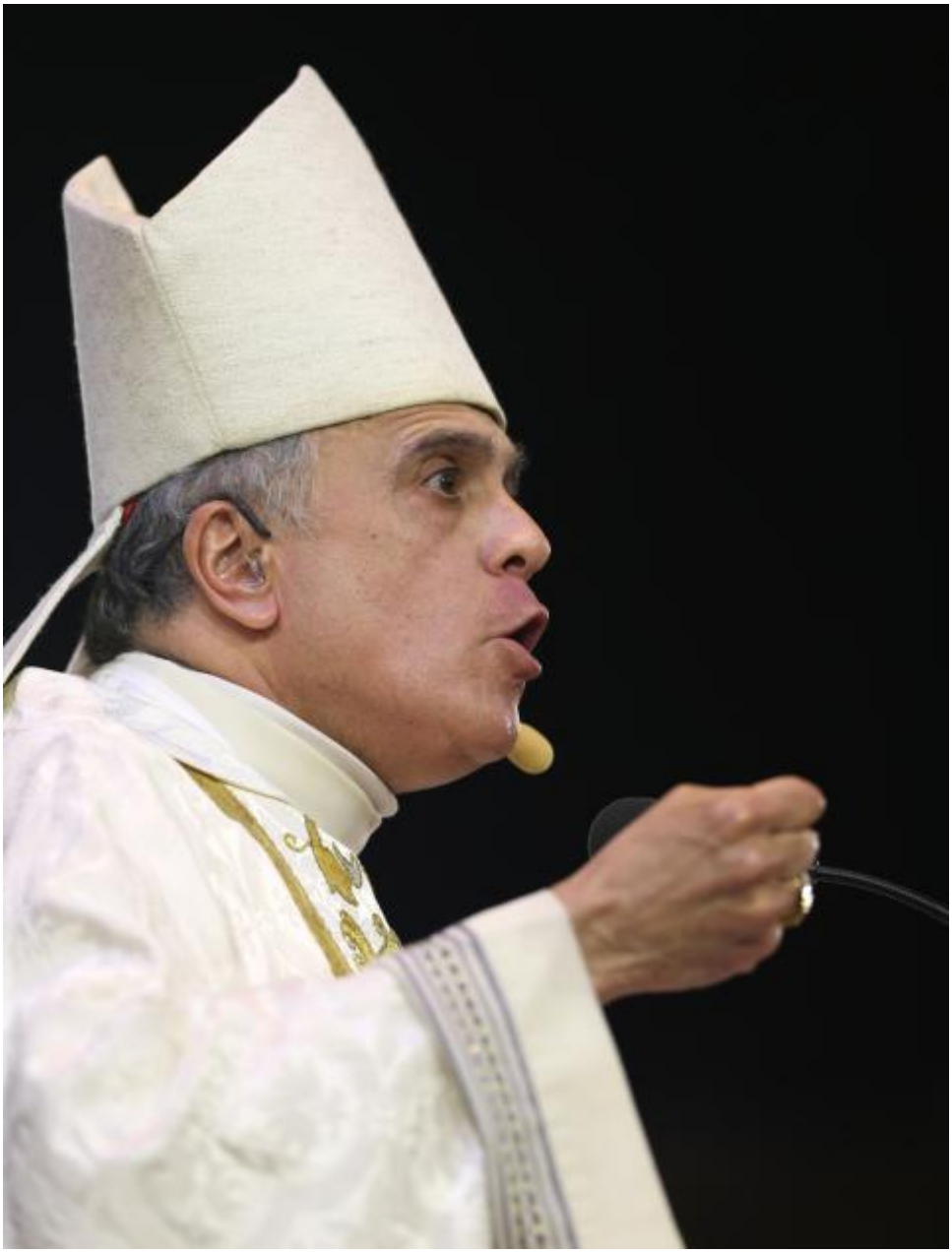
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Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, concelebrates the closing Mass at the 2017 Convocation of Catholic Leaders in Orlando, Fla. (CNS/Bob Roller)

The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said he was "eager for an audience" with Pope Francis to gain his support for the bishops' plan to respond to the clergy sexual abuse crisis.

In an Aug. 27 statement, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston also said that the questions raised by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, former nuncio to the

United States, in a letter published by two Catholic media outlets "deserve answers that are conclusive and based on evidence."

"Without those answers, innocent men may be tainted by false accusations and the guilty may be left to repeat the sins of the past," the cardinal said.

In his 11-page letter, published Aug. 26, Viganò accused church officials, including Pope Francis, of failing to act on accusations of abuse of conscience and power by now-Archbishop Theodore McCarrick. Viganò claimed he told Pope Francis about McCarrick in 2013.

Viganò, who served as nuncio to the United States from 2011 to 2016, wrote that he was compelled to write his knowledge of McCarrick's misdeeds because "corruption has reached the very top of the church's hierarchy."

In his statement, DiNardo reiterated an Aug. 16 call for an apostolic visitation, working with a national lay commission granted independent authority, to investigate the "many questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick."

He also said he convened members of the USCCB Executive Committee Aug. 26 and that they "reaffirmed the call for a prompt and thorough examination into how the grave moral failings of a brother bishop could have been tolerated for so long and proven no impediment to his advancement."

The plan earlier outlined by DiNardo also called for detailed proposals to make reporting of abuse and misconduct by bishops easier and improve procedures for resolving complaints against bishops.

DiNardo again apologized to abuse survivors and their families. "You are no longer alone," he said.

The statement explained how since 2002, professionally trained staff have worked with the U.S. church to support survivors and prevent future abuse. He pointed to the steps the church has put in place in response to abuse including the zero-tolerance policy regarding clergy abuse: safe environment training in diocesan offices, parishes and schools, background checks for church workers and volunteers working around children, victim assistance coordinators, prompt reporting to civil authorities and diocesan lay review boards.

"In other ways, we have failed you. This is especially true for adults being sexually harassed by those in positions of power, and for any abuse or harassment perpetuated by a bishop," DiNardo said.

"We will do better. The more she is buffeted by storms, the more I am reminded that the church's firm foundation is Jesus Christ. The failures of men cannot diminish the light of the Gospel."

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The entire text of Cardinal Daniel DiNardo's statement appears below.

"In communion with the Holy Father, I join the Executive Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in taking upon ourselves his exhortation, 'this open wound [of abuse] challenges us to be firm and decisive in the pursuit of truth and justice.'

"On August 1st, I promised that USCCB would exercise the full extent of its authority, and would advocate before those with greater authority, to pursue the many questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick. On August 16th, I called for an Apostolic Visitation, working in concert with a national lay commission granted independent authority, to seek the truth. Yesterday, I convened our Executive Committee once again, and it reaffirmed the call for a prompt and thorough examination into how the grave moral failings of a brother bishop could have been tolerated for so long and proven no impediment to his advancement.

"The recent letter of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò brings particular focus and urgency to this examination. The questions raised deserve answers that are conclusive and based on evidence. Without those answers, innocent men may be tainted by false accusation and the guilty may be left to repeat sins of the past.

"I am eager for an audience with the Holy Father to earn his support for our plan of action. That plan includes more detailed proposals to: seek out these answers, make reporting of abuse and misconduct by bishops easier, and improve procedures for resolving complaints against bishops. Inspired by his recent letter to the people of God, and his motu proprio of two years ago, As a Loving Mother, I am confident Pope Francis shares our desire for greater effectiveness and transparency in the matter of

disciplining bishops. We renew our fraternal affection for the Holy Father in these difficult days.

"To the survivors of abuse and the families who have lost a loved one to abuse, I am sorry. You are no longer alone. Since 2002, hundreds of professionally trained staff across the country have been working with the Church to support survivors and prevent future abuse. Nationwide, the Church has a zero-tolerance policy toward priests and deacons who abuse, safe environment training, background checks for those working around children, victim assistance coordinators, prompt reporting to civil authorities, and lay review boards in dioceses.

"In other ways, we have failed you. This is especially true for adults being sexually harassed by those in positions of power, and for any abuse or harassment perpetrated by a bishop. We will do better. The more she is buffeted by storms, the more I am reminded that the Church's firm foundation is Jesus Christ. The failures of men cannot diminish the light of the Gospel. Lord, by the help of your mercy, show us the way to salvation."