News



People attend Mass at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption in San Francisco May 19, 2024. The San Francisco Archdiocese is facing calls to publish its list of clergy credibly accused of sexual abuse. (OSV News/Bob Roller)

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A lawyer for abuse survivors has accused San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of "endangering kids" by allegedly refusing to release the names of credibly accused priests — charges the archdiocese strongly denies, citing its compliance with the church's norms for handling clerical abuse.

Attorney Jeff Anderson held a Jan. 6 press conference outside the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption in San Francisco, claiming that Cordileone had promised to issue such a list three years earlier, but had not done so.

Anderson — who represents several survivors associated with the Archdiocese of San Francisco's Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing, according to the archdiocese — said Cordileone and his predecessors had "kept secret for decades" about "credibly accused offenders" and "predators."

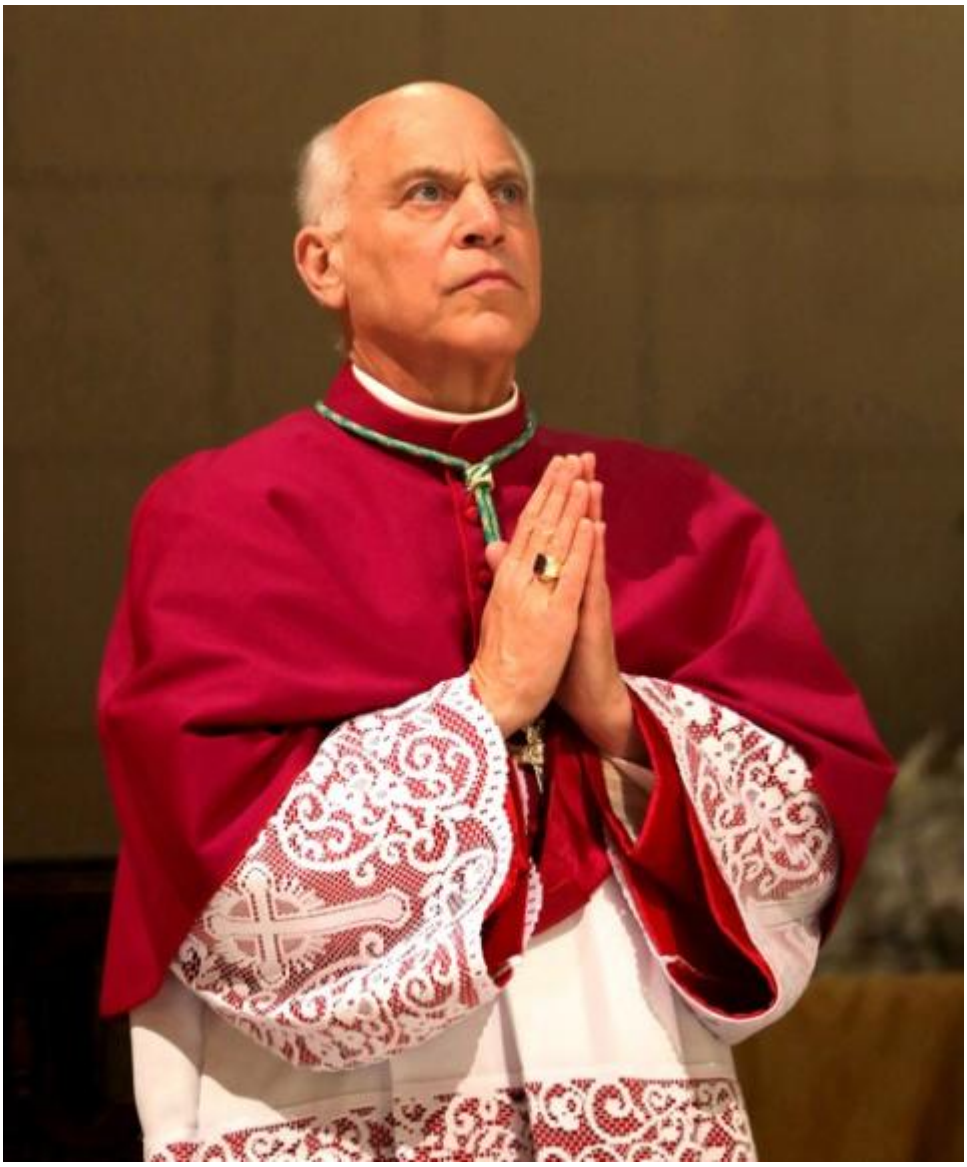
In a Jan. 6 statement provided to OSV News, the Archdiocese of San Francisco said, without naming Anderson directly, that the press conference had included "several unfounded personal attacks … made against Archbishop Cordileone to damage his reputation and commitment to protecting survivors of sexual abuse."

The archdiocese outlined in detail its procedures for compliance with the Dallas Charter, saying that it "treats every accusation of sexual abuse seriously" and that "immediate steps are taken to protect the rights of both the alleged abuse survivor and the alleged abuser." Such compliance also entails an annual third-party audit submitted to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

During the media event — which was livestreamed on the YouTube channel of Anderson's firm — Anderson was accompanied by fellow attorneys and several survivors, two of whom, he said, had filed complaints with the Vatican that same day, detailing their concerns regarding Cordileone's handling of their cases.

Anderson named the survivors, who spoke during the press conference, although OSV News is withholding their names pending direct confirmation of their consent to

share.



San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone prays during solemn vespers and a Holy Hour at Mission Dolores Basilica in San Francisco May 18, 2024. The San Francisco Archdiocese is facing calls to publish its list of clergy credibly accused of sexual abuse. (OSV News/Bob Roller)

"We demand that the Vatican, that the pope, remove Archbishop Cordileone from his post for gross malfeasance, for deception, for deceit, for conscious choices, time and time again … for choosing to protect offenders instead of those that need protection — that is, the kids," even following "more than 450" abuse claim cases brought against the archdiocese, said Anderson.

In August 2023, when it announced it was filing for Chapter 11, the Archdiocese of San Francisco said the "overwhelming majority" of these abuse claims "stem from allegations of sexual abuse that occurred 30 or more years ago involving priests who are no longer active in ministry or are deceased."

The two survivors' complaints against Cordileone were filed under "Vox Estis Lux Mundi" ("You are the light of the world"), a motu proprio Pope Francis issued in 2019 outlining global legal procedures for how the church should deal with clergy sexual abuse, including procedures for investigating bishops. Following a three-year experimental period, "Vos Estis" was definitively promulgated in March 2023.

"Vos Estis" is one of two key documents that lay out broad protocols for the response of the Catholic Church in the U.S. to sexual abuse by its clergy, religious and other pastoral leaders.

In 2002, as a number of clerical abuse scandals emerged, the U.S. Catholic bishops implemented the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." The document — commonly called the Dallas Charter — lays out a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The charter also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of abuse.

A number — though not all — of U.S. dioceses and eparchies have published lists of clergy found to be credibly accused of abuse.

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However, the Dallas Charter does not specifically require that such lists be released, although it mandates that dioceses and eparchies "are to be open and transparent in communicating with the public about sexual abuse of minors by clergy within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved," and "especially … with regard to informing parish and other church communities directly affected by sexual abuse of a minor."

Regarding calls for the "credibly accused list" — which one survivor at the press conference called "very important," describing the lack of one as "the absence of truth" — the archdiocese said, "The list that some media outlets and plaintiff attorneys refer to demands naming anyone who has been accused of abuse whether

sustained or not, and without any due process.

"In other words, if someone wanted to accuse one of abuse, all that a person needs to do is make an accusation and one would appear on the list without any opportunity to defend oneself," said the archdiocese. "This is unjust for those who have been falsely accused."

The archdiocese pointed to its list of clergy in good standing as a primary reference, and noted that "Vatican officials, and even Pope Francis himself, have spoken against publishing names of accused priests unless a final sentence of guilt has been issued in a proper judicial process."

In its statement, the archdiocese also said that the two "Vos Estis" complaints cited during the press conference "have nothing to do with the acts covered" by the motu proprio, but that "the Archdiocese and the Archbishop will cooperate fully with whatever process may be deemed necessary by higher authority."