

Office of the Bishop

September 17, 2018

My dear Brother Priest:

I feel that as a follow-up to the release last Thursday of the expanded list of San Diego priests who have credible allegations of abuse of a minor, I should address several points in preparation for our fuller discussion at the Convocation.

This release was an effort to meet the critical challenge that our own people and the wider society are making to us to be as transparent as possible about the scope of the abuse crisis in our nation. The Council of Priests last week devoted almost its entire meeting to the abuse issue and the McCarrick issue and the impact these scandals are having in San Diego and Imperial counties. Substantial time was devoted to the questions of transparency on abuse questions. I have also discussed the question of transparency with other bishops in the state who are moving toward making public the names of the priests who have been credibly accused of the sexual abuse of a minor in their dioceses.

All of these discussions deepened my inclination to issue a complete list of those priests who have been credibly accused of the sexual abuse of a minor in our diocese. There are three principal reasons why I took this step. The first was to meet the legitimate public expectation within the Catholic community and society as a whole that our diocese is not hiding the extent of abuse nor the identities of those who have sexually abused minors. The second reason arises from the reality that the healing of victims of abuse is increased by the Church's acknowledgement of the crimes that were visited upon them. The third reason is to invite other victims of the listed priest perpetrators to come forward for healing, acknowledgement and compassion.

The list we released on Thursday was an expansion of the list of credible accusations that the diocese released publicly as part of the global settlement of abuse claims a decade ago. In adding each new name to the list, the administrative leadership team of the diocese tried to evaluate carefully what allegations should be judged credible for this listing, being guided by the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

One of the most vexing problems confronting us in preparing to address the questions that would arise in the media about the priests on this list is the widely varying level of documentation in our records about cases that reach back to incidents that occurred half a century ago. For the period in which Bishop Brom was bishop of San Diego, we have robust records on incidents that either took place or were reported during his tenure. But existing files for the 1960's and 1970's are sometimes sparse, and for this reason we were

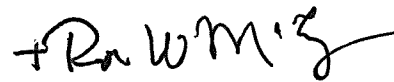
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unable to provide the reporters with sometimes basic information. Remember, this was a time before the Church had come to the full recognition that reassignment after abuse was gravely evil, and that secrecy in handling abuse cases with minors was a cancer in the Church. It was regarding questions about these earlier periods and cases that I spoke to Peter Rowe of the Union Tribune about the lack of systematic record-keeping that is deeply problematic for us as we face the future.

We are moving toward an era which the public and public authorities will have more specific questions about the history of the handling of the sexual abuse by minors in our diocese and throughout the nation. For this reason, it is crucial that we have an independent and credible review and reorganization of all our records pertaining to allegations of abuse of minors. Tomorrow I will consult with the Independent Review Board that investigates allegations of abuse against minors to try to identify how we can launch such a review. Then I will discuss this question with all of you in the larger conversation that we will be having at the convocation.

Recognizing how hard these days are for you, I continue to pray for your strength and give thanks for your sacrifices to the Lord.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. W. McElroy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Most Reverend Robert W. McElroy  
Bishop of San Diego