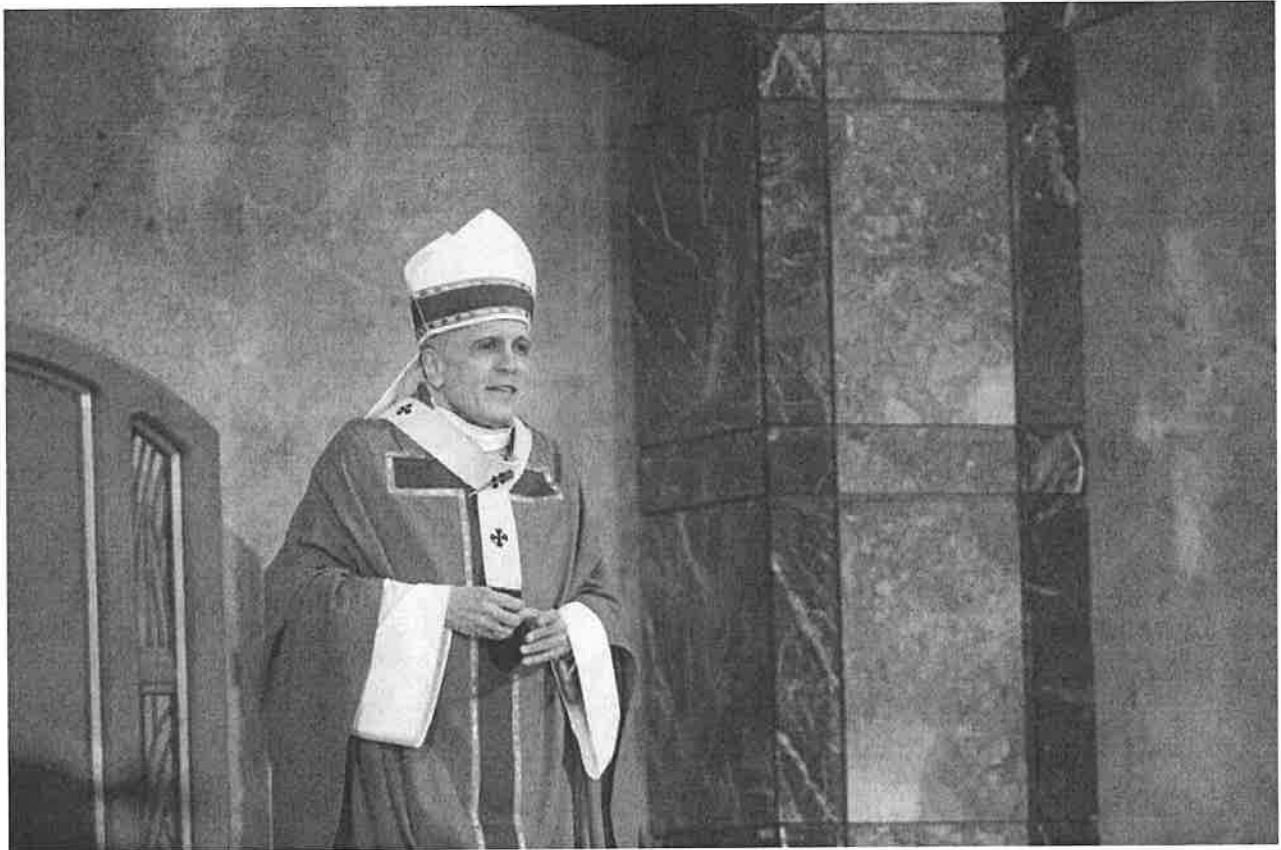


OPINION // OUTLOOK

DiNardo: Tell police if you have information about clergy sex abuse [Opinion]

By Cardinal Daniel DiNardo

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Cardinal Daniel DiNardo shares words with the congregation at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Sunday, Jan. 20, 2019, in Houston.

Photo: Marie D. De Jesús, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

We are still weeks away from Ash Wednesday and the start of the Lenten season, and yet this week like so many I am overwhelmed with thoughts and prayers of contrition as, together with the other Catholic Dioceses in Texas, we will release a list of clergy dating back to 1950 who have been credibly accused of abusing minors.

I very much appreciate this opportunity to tell you why we are releasing this list, how the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston compiled it, and where we go from here.

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First, we are releasing this list because we recognize the great and lasting harm done by persons who were supposed to represent Christ to the world, but instead committed the most heinous acts against the most vulnerable people in our society – our youth. I can assure you the genuine shame, embarrassment and outrage that accompany this week’s announcements across Texas are superseded only by the determination we collectively feel to assist victims of these acts of evil to begin or continue the healing process.

To anyone who has been personally affected by this crisis, or their families, I apologize most sincerely. I furthermore understand the anger and frustration you may harbor in your hearts concerning the perpetrators of abuse; or those who in the past may have concealed or ignored such unthinkable behavior; or even those in positions of authority today – yours truly included – who are doing our best however imperfectly to rebuild the trust of the faithful. It is my most fervent prayer that whatever pain was caused would not make you sever your relationship with the Lord, for the Lord – not man – is the truest source of hope and joy in our lives. I implore you not to let any darkness overtake the light in your life.

Let me add: we are also releasing this list because we want anyone with any additional information about any abuse of a minor that may have taken place in this Archdiocese to notify the civil authorities immediately. I recognize and indeed admire the courage required to step forward and share such traumatic experiences,

but it is critical that the civil authorities are made aware of any allegations of abuse so as to protect our children.

In terms of how we compiled this list, our team started by reviewing the personnel files of clergy whom we already knew, or whom we suspected, had been credibly accused of child sexual abuse. As it turns out, many of these cases were also reported in the media through the years.

The Archdiocese also hired a nationally respected, independent consulting firm and granted it unfettered access to review all clergy personnel and other relevant files. This review of files continues, and the Archdiocese list will be updated at the conclusion of that process.

Additionally, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston has worked with law enforcement, psychological and other experts - and I can tell you that I have accepted every recommendation these experts have made as it relates to the "credibly accused" clergy presently on our list.

Despite our best efforts to ensure that this information is accurate and complete, we know that this list may include errors or be incomplete.

Finally for now, where do we go from here?

In a few weeks, I will also go to Rome and the Vatican, where I will once again share with the Holy Father my firm conviction that the time for action and accountability at all levels of the Church cannot wait.

Over the last two decades, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston has devoted tremendous resources to protecting our children. While the only acceptable number involving any form of abuse is zero, statistics show the Church has made important, material strides especially since the Dallas Charter was adopted in 2002. But we can and must do better, which is why the Catholic Dioceses in Texas are joining together in releasing this list this week.

DiNardo is the archbishop of Galveston-Houston and is the current president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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