



## DIOCESE OF RALEIGH Office of Communications

7200 Stonehenge Drive Raleigh, North Carolina 27613 919-821-9730 [www.dioceseofraleigh.org](http://www.dioceseofraleigh.org)

**TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Sisters, Seminarians, Catholic Center Staff**

**FROM: † Luis Rafael Zarama, J.C.L., Bishop of Raleigh**

**RE: Response to the resignation of Cardinal Theodore McCarrick**

As Bishop of the Diocese of Raleigh and a member of the Ecclesiastical Province of Atlanta which consists of the dioceses of Charleston, SC; Savannah, GA; Charlotte and Raleigh, NC, I share with you the following statement of our Metropolitan Bishop, Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory.

I join with my fellow bishops in praying that our Church and our leadership will be renewed and transformed by the light of Christ and have the courage to take the necessary next steps.

=====

### **Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory's statement in response to the resignation of Theodore McCarrick**

ATLANTA— “As shepherd of the Catholic Church in Atlanta and united with my brother bishops under Pope Francis in service to Jesus Christ and His Church, I express my profound anger, sadness, and distress concerning sexual abuse by Church leaders of children, young people and those over whom they exercised authority. My anger and disappointment, shared by Catholics and others, are only heightened by the reality that leaders who have engaged in or neglected to protect others from such damaging and deviant behavior have for many years failed to be held accountable—and have even risen in leadership positions. We must do better — for the sake of all victims and survivors of sexual abuse, and for the sake of everyone whom we serve in the name of Jesus Christ.

“Catholics everywhere, myself among them, are stunned and justifiably angry at shameful, unrelenting recent revelations of bishops accused of abuse or mishandling allegations of abuse – behavior that offends and scandalizes the people of God entrusted to our care. Specifically, we are enraged by the actions of Theodore McCarrick, the disgraced former Cardinal. We also recognize that any pastoral negligence in protecting our people is similarly grievous, and we’ve recently seen alarming reports alleging such rampant reckless disregard in Chile, Australia, Honduras, Guam, and other places around the globe.

“We are weary of this cloud of shame that continues to shroud Church leadership and compromise our mission. I am personally disheartened because in 2002 I stood before the body of bishops and the people of God as President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and made assurances in my own name and that of the Church in the United States that this crisis of faith and leadership was over and would not be repeated. I sincerely believed that the unprecedented steps we took at that time would help to heal this wound in the Body of Christ. And so they have, though obviously not completely or even sufficiently.

“I am saddened because once again our many good and generous ordained ministers of the Gospel are seen as suspect not because they have done anything wrong — indeed, our charter and norms forcefully apply when allegations are made against them — but because those charged with assuring the faithful of their fitness for ministry have. People everywhere are disillusioned because the Church’s bishops are seen as failing in our responsibility to govern, to sanctify, and to teach, as Christ would have us.

“I am hurt because my respect and fraternal esteem for Theodore McCarrick were clearly misplaced. I never personally worked with him in any pastoral context, having only encountered him as a fellow member of the United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops, but his public devotion to the Church's social justice agenda was highly regarded. I never knew or suspected the hidden side of a man whose admired public persona concealed that of a violator of foundational Christian morality and of young people who trusted him. Like any individual who discovers far too late that a friend has a history of moral misconduct, I now stand dumbfounded that I was so unaware and naïve. I know that many other bishops feel the same.

"People are angry, as well they should be, that our Church is once again viewed as a haven for criminal deviant behavior. I know our priests are hurt that they are again being judged with a jaundiced eye, as perhaps too dangerous to be trusted with the Church's children. Our people are disappointed with bishops in general who seemingly cannot or will not act decisively to heal this festering wound. They are perplexed and sickened that the Holy See may well have dismissed multiple warning signs that should have halted Theodore McCarrick and others earlier in their careers. They are disheartened that situations both here in the United States and in other countries continue to dominate social media and call into question everything the Church has done to safeguard children and adults from manipulation and violation.

"Several days ago I met with our Archdiocesan seminarians during their annual convocation. I told them directly and specifically that if any person in any context made advances or exhibited behavior that made them feel uncomfortable or threatened, they are to notify the Director of Vocations, one of the Auxiliary Bishops or me personally so that we may take swift and appropriate action — pastoral and legal. Their parents and family members should know that these young men are in safe and respectful environments, and that, as their Archbishop, I will not tolerate any activity that threatens to harm or intimidate them.

"While the current leadership of the USCCB considers next steps, I strongly encourage that they engage the laity in reviewing and recommending courses of action that will assure the faithful that we are serious in curing this blight from our Church and from episcopal governance once and for all.

"When we first established a national lay review board in 2002, conference leadership faced pushback because some felt that we were improperly ceding control of the ministry of bishops. Given the situation we face today, oversight by laity may well provide the only credible assurance that real and decisive actions are being taken. Our trustworthiness as bishops has been so seriously compromised that acting alone — even with the best of intentions and the highest principles, policies and plans — may not move the hearts of the faithful to believe.

"I pray that this moment, and these days, weeks, and months ahead, will be an opportunity for light to break through the darkness, and for darkness to be exposed to the light. I pray that all victims and survivors of sexual abuse will come forward and receive the help, support, and healing they need. And I pray that our Church and our leadership will be renewed and transformed by the light of Christ and have the courage to take the necessary next steps.

"Like so many of you I am angry, but I am not overcome by despair. I hope and I pray that the Holy Spirit will cleanse and strengthen the Church. My anger has not led me to hopelessness; I pray yours has not either. I am grateful for your witness of faith and hope, even in difficult times."

<https://georgiabulletin.org/news/2018/08/archbishop-wilton-d-gregorys-statement-in-response-to-the-resignation-of-theodore-mccarrick/>