

October 22, 2018

Dear Partnering Parishioners,

I wish to share this communique I received from Kenneth A. Gavin, the Chief Communications Officer for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. He has requested that I share the above information with the members of your parish family. It is important that our entire community is informed about such matters.

He writes:

Periodically, I have shared information with you about items affecting the life of our local Church. These past months have been trying ones with respect to the release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report and its aftermath. While that investigative matter did not involve our Archdiocese in any way, the findings it shared were difficult and painful for everyone to bear—most especially for survivors of abuse and their loved ones.

Today, there are two important updates on separate issues. The first involves recent legislative outcomes at the state level and the second pertains to a matter initiated by the United States Department of Justice.

Recent Legislative Outcomes in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

A number of recommendations were part of the state grand jury report released in August. Among them were reforms to criminal statutes and civil statutes in our state law aimed at punishing abusers and supporting abuse victims. Those matters have gained broad attention in the press over the past several weeks.

It's important to note, that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia continues to support reforms that will punish perpetrators and aid survivors by eliminating the criminal statute of limitations and lengthening the civil statute of limitations to allow individuals to file civil suits up until the age of 50—an action that would add 20 years to the current statute. We also support the proposal to strengthen mandatory reporter requirements. These reforms, recommended by the recent Pennsylvania grand jury, have garnered broad consensus and agreement. They are concrete steps that will protect children and hold perpetrators accountable.

The state legislature worked assiduously to tackle issues related to child protection and abuse survivor assistance while in session during the week of October 15th. Unfortunately, earnest efforts to find common ground and a path forward to support all those who have suffered were met with resistance.

Despite the outcome of the recent debate, we remain steadfast in fulfilling our responsibility to individuals who have been harmed—no matter when that harm occurred. The Archdiocese continues to recognize its responsibility to provide an opportunity for sexual abuse survivors whose cases are time-barred from pursuing civil claims to share their experiences, identify their abusers, and receive compensation to assist their healing and recovery.

Archbishop Chaput recently voiced his intention to create or participate in an independent, voluntary program that will include a panel of qualified experts to review individual cases and determine financial assistance for those who have been abused. To that end, we will honor our commitment to victims and we intend to play an active, positive role in efforts aimed at providing true healing and hope through programs already in place as well as new programs that will be administered independently of the Church.

Subpoena Issued by Federal Grand Jury

Beginning on Thursday, October 18th, news outlets reported that a federal grand jury had issued subpoenas to Catholic dioceses throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The media has also broadly reported that this investigative process will look at matters relative to sexual abuse of minors.

As communicated to the media through an official statement on October 18th, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia did receive a federally issued subpoena, which requires the production of certain documents and it will cooperate with the United States Department of Justice in this matter. As this is an active federal investigation, we are not able to comment further at this time.

This most recent development is disconcerting after all that we have witnessed over a period of many years. However, it is important to remember that over the past 15 years, the Archdiocese has put into practice a wide range of reforms to protect young people and provide assistance to survivors of abuse. For further information regarding those comprehensive efforts, please visit www.AOPpledgetoProtect.com.

Please share the above information with the members of your parish family. It is important that our entire community is informed about such matters.

Media attention regarding the above is likely to be ongoing. Our interaction with the press is managed through my office. Kindly contact me at kgavin@archphila.org or 215-587-3747 should you need assistance in that regard. Know of my gratitude for your generous service to all those entrusted to your pastoral care and of my prayers for you and your intentions.

Sincerely,
Kenneth A. Gavin
Chief Communications Officer
Archdiocese of Philadelphia