

Editorial: Next steps in crisis

More than three months after removing Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick from public ministry, the Holy See in early October released additional information regarding a probe into allegations of sexual abuse against the former cardinal and his rise to power within the Church. In the statement, we learned that the cardinal's removal from ministry was the result of an investigation that began in September 2017, following an allegation of abuse from the 1970s. We also learned that the results of this investigation will be combined with all of the Holy See's archived materials related to McCarrick "in order to ascertain all the relevant facts, to place them in their historical context and to evaluate them objectively," the Vatican said.

The Vatican added that it will, "in due course," make known the conclusions of this investigation – and it indicated that these conclusions might not be pretty.

"The Holy See is conscious that, from the examination of the facts and of the circumstances, it may emerge that choices were taken that would not be consonant with a contemporary approach to such issues," the Vatican said. But, it added, quoting from the pope's 2015 visit to Philadelphia, the Church is committed to "follow the path of truth wherever it may lead."

A day later, in an open letter from Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, to former nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, Cardinal Ouellet recognized "that there were failures in the selection procedures implemented in [McCarrick's] case." But the cardinal added, regarding the promotion of McCarrick, that

decisions made by the pope “are based on the information available at the time and that they are the object of a prudential judgement which is not infallible.”

This language, which lays the groundwork for the results of the current investigation, suggests that Catholics are in for more uncomfortable revelations as time goes on. But Our Sunday Visitor joins the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, in welcoming these developments.

“The truth will ensure terrible sins of the past are not repeated,” Cardinal DiNardo, who had previously announced that the USCCB is conducting its own investigation of the four U.S. dioceses where McCarrick served, said in an Oct. 7 statement. “The courage of abuse survivors who first brought the horrific truth of sexual abuse to light must continue to be matched by our courage as pastors to respond in justice.”

This Editorial Board is pleased to hear of the forward movement on the McCarrick case, and we are confident that the announced actions are the first of many important steps toward a full and truthful revelation regarding the scandal. As we have stated repeatedly in weeks past, it is essential to pursue the truth, no matter the cost. This is the only way the Church will be able to begin to heal. The truth also will help restore trust among those many Catholics who have found their faith in the Church and Church leadership shaken by recent events.

As the Vatican and USCCB move forward, we respectfully encourage the release of as much information as possible throughout the proceedings. We know all too well that the vacuum created by a lack of accessible information allows for rumors and misunderstandings among the faithful to fester. This, in the words of Cardinal Ouellet, inflicts “a very painful wound on the Bride of Christ.”

The more communication and transparency that Church leaders can provide at this time, the better. The pressure against such transparency will be great; Pope Francis and all bishops involved in this investigation will need our prayers.

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