

STATEMENTS regarding Law Suit filed by Jeff Anderson against all the dioceses in California

From: Msgr. Albert Bahhuth, Moderator of the Curia, Vicar General,
Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Sent: Tuesday, October 2, 2018 6:04 PM

To: ADLA All Parishes; ADLA All Pastors; ADLA All Parish Business
Managers; ADLA All Active Clergy; ADLA All Deacons; ADLA All DREs;
ADLA All HS Principals; ADLA All ES Principals; ACC Community

Subject: ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING LITIGATION FILED TODAY

I am writing to advise you that today Jeff Anderson, a lawyer who has been active in sexual misconduct litigation since the 1980s, held a press conference to announce that his law firm had filed a lawsuit on behalf of an adult individual against the California Catholic Conference and all the dioceses in California, including the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The lawsuit also names the Archdiocese of Chicago. At the press conference, Mr. Anderson and the participants alleged that the dioceses, their bishops and other leaders covered up and concealed clergy misconduct. We have not had the opportunity to fully review the lawsuit filed today.

As Archbishop Gomez has stated in the messages that he continues to share with you, all of us in the Archdiocese are committed to taking every step necessary to ensure that we are protecting the people we are called to shepherd, especially our young people, and we hold ourselves to full accountability to you and the whole family of God. For information on the effort of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for protection of minors, reporting and prevention of abuse, visit: www.archla.org/protecting

Below are the statements issued by the California Catholic Conference and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in response to the press conference and filling of the lawsuit.

STATEMENT FROM CALIFORNIA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE of BISHOPS

“We have not had more than a brief opportunity to review the lawsuit filed this morning by Mr. Anderson, but two things stand out. First, it appears that all of the information provided in the news conference this morning came from public sources and has been available for years; and, second, that none of the information provided describes the positive steps taken by California dioceses over the past 15 years to protect children and young people from abuse.

“In 2003, all dioceses in California began implementing the reforms called out in the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People approved by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops the year before.

“Every diocese in California has instituted fingerprinting and background checks for priests, staff and any volunteers working around children and young people. All of them offer Safe Environment programs to train students and staff in identifying and preventing abuse. Every diocese has adopted a “zero tolerance” standard to make sure no one with a credible accusation of abusing children is allowed to function as a priest and all dioceses have an Independent Review Board, primarily consisting of lay persons, to advise bishops on whether or not an accused priest would be allowed to return to ministry.

“Over the course of the last 15 years, millions of students in Catholic Schools and religious education have gone through training, along with hundreds of thousands of staff and volunteers. Tens of thousands more have been fingerprinted and background checked.

STATEMENT FROM ARCHDIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES re Anderson Litigation.

“The Archdiocese has not been served with the lawsuit. However, the complaint and report presented by Jeff Anderson today is based on information which was made public by the Archdiocese in 2013 with the release of the Archdiocese’s clergy files associated with the 2007 global settlement as well as the 2004 Report to the People of God and other information released and publicly available for over a decade. The Archdiocese has also cooperated in three grand jury investigations in our efforts to be forthcoming and cooperate with law enforcement on matters of abuse. The clergy files and other information can be found at <http://clergyfiles.la-archdiocese.org/listing.html>

“The Archdiocese has acknowledged and taken responsibility for the failures and mistakes in the way abuse cases were handled in the past and instituted a strict “zero tolerance” policy to ensure that allegations of abuse would be reported to authorities and that anyone found to have committed abuse — whether a priest, deacon, religious or lay person — would be held accountable and permanently removed from ministry in the Archdiocese.

“The Archdiocese has also instituted abuse prevention and reporting programs for adults and minors; fingerprinting and background checks for employees and volunteers at parishes and schools; clergy formation programs to prevent abuse; and a Victim’s Assistance Ministry Office to provide pastoral care and support for victims as well as ensure reporting to law enforcement.

“Since these programs were established more than 15 years ago, more than 329,000 adults have been trained in abuse prevention and reporting; 1.4 million Catholic school students have received age appropriate training

that teaches them to understand appropriate and inappropriate boundaries and gives them the tools that empower them to take action and report if they feel uncomfortable, scared or confused; and more than 168,000 adults have been fingerprinted and undergone background checks.

“These programs and policies do not take away from the very real harm that was done and the trust that has been broken in the Church. However, they are a testament to the commitment of the people of the Archdiocese, the majority of whom are lay Catholics who have worked for almost three decades to implement and carry out these programs to ensure:

- that abuse is reported to the police and investigated regardless of the statute of limitations;
- that victim-survivors and their families receive healing support; and
- that anyone found to have abused a minor at any time in their lives, regardless of whether a member of the clergy or a lay person, is not allowed to serve in any capacity in the Archdiocese under zero tolerance.

“For more information regarding the Archdiocese’s programs and policies on the protection of young people and the prevention of abuse, visit www.archla.org/protecting.