



December 18, 2002 - Opening Remarks from Bishop Lennon's Press Conference

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I said on Sunday at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross these past months and days have been very momentous and unique in the history of the Archdiocese of Boston and tragic for all the faithful, especially for those who suffered sexual abuse. In a personal way this is true for me as I was asked by the Holy Father to assume on a temporary basis the leadership of the Archdiocese of Boston as an Apostolic Administrator.

Having accepted this position, I did so relying on God's Grace to guide me. I also look forward to receiving the support, advice and prayers of the people of the Archdiocese, the clergy, consecrated and lay faithful. I am grateful for the support I have already received as so many look for a new beginning.

In accepting the position of Apostolic Administrator, I did so in full accord with the teaching of the Church on the role of a Bishop. This entails being a teacher, a priest, and a pastoral leader, in union with the whole Catholic Church and for the Faithful of the Archdiocese of Boston.

In light of this three-fold role of bishop, I wish to mention a few issues which are uppermost on people's minds and three immediate priorities of mine: 1. support of victim-survivors; 2. protection of children and prevention of further abuse; 3. fostering unity among the faithful of the Archdiocese.

First, I stand fully committed to responding to victim-survivors of sexual abuse as children or as teenagers by members of the clergy. This response will be on several levels. I will support efforts to arrive at a settlement of claims as soon as possible which will be fair and equitable for all the victims of clergy sexual abuse. Aware that there have been ongoing discussions, this morning I have asked counsel for the Archdiocese to request that all parties set aside, except for activity mandated by the court, the day to day litigation activities for a period of time so as to permit all parties to actively pursue the potential for a comprehensive settlement of all cases. Having consulted with Mrs. Barbara Thorp of the Office of Healing and Assistance Ministry, we will also continue to provide counseling and offer outreach support to victim-survivors.

I also will begin to meet with victim-survivors who wish a meeting with me. Respectfully listening to them, I hope to learn the depth of their suffering. I will extend to each of them my apology on behalf of the Church for the abuse which they have suffered.

Second, the Essential Norms passed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and now promulgated to be effective March 1 will be faithfully adhered to here in the Archdiocese of Boston, as will the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People also issued by the Conference.

Having received this new law for the United States, Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures will be issued to support and detail how the Norms will be carried out.

I am grateful to the Commission for the Protection of Children of the Archdiocese of Boston for their document Recommendation for Policies for the Prevention of Child Abuse and the Response to Allegations of Abuse and for the counsel and advice from many others I have received regarding these matters. All of this will be instrumental in my reaching decisions on issuing Policies and Procedures.

Along with the Norms and the Charter, it is my heartfelt prayer that these Policies and Procedures, and most of all a true and lasting spiritual renewal rooted in a personal acceptance of God and His teachings, will result in children being safe from future abuse.

Third, as a teacher of the faith, a priest and a pastoral leader I will strive to present our Catholic teaching on the mystery of the Church as founded by Jesus Christ so that all the members of the Church with their bishop may be united



in faith with one another. In a special way I will rely on the help and advice of the priests of the Archdiocese in furthering this work.

This unity is so essential, for it is the very will of Jesus Christ as he prayed the night before his death - "Father, may they be one as you and I are one". This unity will be increasingly realized as we all rely on God, as I said in last Sunday's homily, and enter ever more fully in union with Him, especially through the sacramental life of the Church. Relying on ourselves we are unable to truly be Church; it is only with God that this can be accomplished, for it is His Church, His legacy to us to carry on His presence in the world by following His teaching and by carrying out His mission.

As I conclude these remarks I am aware, and as time passes I am sure to be even more aware, that decisions that I will have to make may not be acclaimed by all. I can only pledge to all the faithful of the Archdiocese - the priests, deacons, consecrated and lay faithful - that whatever I decide will follow upon their prayer and advice, as I strive to fulfill my responsibility as Apostolic Administrator before God.

Please pray for me as I pray for you.
Thank you

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