

Statement of Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo:
November 20, 2018

Last week the bishops of the United States met for our annual fall meeting in Baltimore. The top issue on the agenda was the recent scandal of clergy abuse, including abuse committed by bishops. Prior to the meeting, the bishops' conference leadership had prepared several measures for debate and approval: standards of conduct for bishops, appointment of a lay board to investigate allegations against bishops, and protocols for retired bishops accused of wrongdoing.

As the meeting began, the bishops received an instruction from the Vatican to delay a vote on these measures. While this was frustrating to all the bishops present, it seems this decision was made in light of the upcoming February meeting of all the presidents of bishops' conferences throughout the world with Pope Francis. At that time, the Holy Father intends to address these issues on a global scale and respond to the abuse issue throughout the entire Church.

Some have questioned whether the Pope and bishops are taking this matter seriously, and I can assure you that every bishop at that meeting was determined to take action. I am disappointed at the delay, but I can see the value of taking time to act in a way that will be in accord with the Pope and the universal Church. I am encouraged by this and other actions of Pope Francis, who already removed Archbishop Theodore McCarrick from the College of Cardinals and began a full investigation into his misconduct. The Pope has also removed several bishops in other countries accused of abuse, and others may follow. I am also certain that the bishops of the United States will enact measures of accountability that will purify and strengthen the Church entrusted to us by Christ.

In the Diocese of Fargo, I will continue to assure the safety of our young people and demand the integrity of our clergy and lay church workers. We will continue to follow all civil laws on reporting requirements. I will also depend on the expertise of our lay review board to assist me with abuse cases that come to our attention. And I will hold myself to the same standards that we expect of all our clergy. Let us join together in praying for victims of abuse and for the healing of the Church. God bless you.