



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

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STATEMENT

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Cardinal Justin Rigali is currently in Rome attending the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist. Mr. Martin Frick, L.S.W., one of the Victims Assistance Coordinators of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, accepted the letter from SNAP on behalf of the Cardinal.

In response to the letter, the general contents of which were made public earlier today, the Archdiocese responds:

“The Archdiocese of Philadelphia will take whatever steps are necessary to insure that young people in our care are kept safe from harm. The Archdiocese supports strengthening Pennsylvania laws in order to better protect children including lifting the criminal statute of limitations for sexual offenses against children but does not want to see proposed legislation before commenting specifically.

We also support enhancing the Child Protective Services Law which involves mandatory reporting requirements. Since 2002, the policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has been to report every allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, whether made by a minor or an adult who was abused in the past, to law enforcement authorities.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia also supports amending the Child Protective Services Law to require background checks in non-school organizations. Since 2003, priests, deacons, religious, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff and volunteers in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia who have regular contact with minors in the course of their work for the Archdiocese are required to undergo police and child abuse background checks.

Cardinal Rigali and others in administration have acknowledged and apologized for errors and mistakes in judgment. In addition, the Cardinal has acted decisively to remove all priest perpetrators from active ministry. Twelve men have been laicized, or removed from the clerical state, as well. Now Cardinal Rigali is focused on moving the Archdiocese forward. Priest administrators, along with other dedicated and faithful priests and lay administrators, are important to the work of healing and looking to the future.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia continues to be a leader in the training and education of our employees and volunteers who work with children and in training children themselves. 40,000 adults have been trained since 2003 in the ongoing Safe Environment program for those involved in ministry and service to young people. Safe Environment teaches adults their roles as protectors of children, models of appropriate behavior and advocates for young people. More than 110,000 young people have also been trained since 2003 in the Safe Environment program which teaches them grade-appropriate lessons concerning personal boundaries and healthy relationships.

Victims Assistance Coordinators (215-587-3880) of the Archdiocese continue to offer caring and compassion to those who have been victims of sexual abuse by clergy and Cardinal Justin Rigali has stated repeatedly that he offers his deepest apologies to any victims of sexual abuse by clergy. In a recent pastoral letter the Cardinal said, “I know that no amount of words could ever truly repair the harm caused to those abused as children by unfaithful priests. Nonetheless, I wish to express, once again, my profound sorrow to the victims for the pain they have endured and continue to endure.”