



**COMMUNICATION FROM THE
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA:
THE ARCHDIOCESAN REVIEW BOARD IN CONTEXT**

May 19, 2011

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia continues to move forward, renewing its commitment to the protection of children, to victim assistance and to ensuring the integrity of the priesthood. Since the release of the Grand Jury Report on February 10th, it has been a high priority of the Archdiocese to address the serious concerns which the report raised. Our approach has been to carefully and urgently reexamine, reevaluate and strengthen our processes in dealing with allegations of the sexual abuse of minors.

From the outset, the Archdiocese decided not to take a stance of defensiveness, not to enter into point-by-point debates, and not to engage in confrontations which would distract from our commitment and goal. Instead, the Archdiocese decided to place every energy and effort at the service of the essential task at hand.

A recent commentary published in *Commonweal* by the chair of the Archdiocesan Review Board was reflective of her own opinions and not those of the entire board. This piece, and the media coverage that followed, have misrepresented the Archdiocese and its commitment to directly addressing the issues of sexual abuse. The Archdiocese recognizes the independent nature of the Review Board and values the expertise and contribution of its individual members. Despite the pain and negative effects caused by the article, the Archdiocese remains committed to the work ahead, collaborating with the Review Board, to which it is most grateful. A clarification, which includes information already provided, follows below:

Facts Regarding Actions Taken:

- According to the Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* dioceses are to "have a review board that functions as a confidential, consultative body to the bishop. The board is to advise the diocesan bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of a cleric's suitability for ministry." Our Review Board has made every effort to do just that.
- Following the release of the Grand Jury Report on February 10th, Cardinal Rigali, joined by Auxiliary Bishops Timothy Senior and Michael Fitzgerald, as well as Gina Maisto Smith, the veteran child abuse prosecutor with the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, met with the members of the Archdiocesan Review Board at their request on February 19th to discuss their reaction to the grand jury report and to introduce Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith had already been hired on February 16th by Cardinal Rigali to review cases of concern to the Grand Jury, as well as the procedures employed by the Archdiocese, and to assist in its communications in the course of dealing with the District Attorney's Office.

- Cardinal Rigali created the position of Delegate for Investigations on February 11th. The first priority of this new position is to serve as a central point for receiving and reviewing all reports of sexual misconduct and to insure that they are immediately reported to law enforcement and Child Protective Services. In addition, the Delegate has the task of developing new processes and procedures for the investigation of sexual abuse allegations, including the presentation of those cases to the Review Board. On March 7th, Al Toczydowski, a former Philadelphia Deputy District Attorney with over 30 years experience, began his work in this position.
- On February 23rd the Review Board members presented a letter to Cardinal Rigali that demonstrated their commitment to collaboration, concluding, “We must not lose sight of our goal and we must not lose our commitment to achieve that goal.” In the letter, the Review Board noted that this is not a time for “defensiveness or animosity.” The Review Board also observed “We have nothing to hide and the Archdiocese has nothing to hide.” The letter outlined significant improvements that over time had already been implemented by the Archdiocese and provided a list of serious and thoughtful additional recommendations.
- On March 18th, Bishop Fitzgerald, Mrs. Smith and Mr. Toczydowski attended the regularly scheduled Review Board meeting. At that time, Mr. Toczydowski was introduced to the group and his responsibilities were explained. Mrs. Smith spoke regarding the cases of concern to the Grand Jury and her processes in reviewing them. At this meeting members of the Review Board agreed to make themselves available to Mr. Toczydowski to contribute to the draft of new policies.
- The Review Board’s recommendations were given to the Delegate for Investigations and have already in large part been incorporated into the draft of revised policies for the handling of allegations of sexual abuse. On June 11th, the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Review Board, that draft policy will be presented to the members of the Review Board with an opportunity for them to offer input and further discussion.

In the days, weeks, and months ahead, the Archdiocese will continue to address the task at hand, renewing our commitment to protect children, provide victim assistance, and ensure the integrity of the priesthood. As the Review Board members wrote in their letter to Cardinal Rigali: “Together, and with the help of our colleagues in law enforcement and victims’ services communities, we can move forward with renewed resolve.”