

**REPORT ON THE HOLY SEE'S INSTITUTIONAL  
KNOWLEDGE AND DECISION-MAKING RELATED TO  
FORMER CARDINAL  
THEODORE EDGAR McCARRICK  
(1930 TO 2017)**

**DRAFT/UNDER EMBARGO**

Prepared by the Secretariat of State of the Holy See  
Vatican City State 2020



## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Scope and Nature of the Report Related to Former Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick**

On 6 October 2018, the Holy Father ordered a thorough study of the documentation present in the Archives of the Dicastries and Offices of the Holy See regarding McCarrick, in order to ascertain all the relevant facts, to place them in their historical context and to evaluate them objectively.

The examination of documents was undertaken in compliance with the instructions of the Holy Father and under the auspices of the Secretariat of State. No limit was placed on the examination of documents, the questioning of individuals or the expenditure of resources necessary to carry out the investigation. The Secretariat of State, having now concluded its examination, sets forth the results in this Report on the Holy See's Institutional Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to Former Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick (1930 to 2017) ("Report"). The Report is released to the public pursuant to the Holy Father's instruction in this exceptional case for the good of the Universal Church.

This Report is based upon review of all relevant documents located after a diligent search. Within the Roman Curia, information was primarily obtained from the Secretariat of State, the Congregation for Bishops, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for Clergy and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. All relevant documents of the Apostolic Nunciature to the United States were also examined. While an explanation of the various roles and functions of the named dicasteries and officials is beyond the scope of the Report, an understanding of such matters, including the distinctions between the competencies of the dicasteries, is critical to comprehend the decision-making process described below.

Although the Holy See's examination was originally focused on documents, information was also gathered through over ninety witness interviews, each ranging in length from one to thirty hours. The interviewees included current and former Holy See officials; cardinals and bishops in the United States;



officers of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB); former seminarians and priests from various dioceses; several of McCarrick's secretaries from Metuchen, Newark and Washington; and lay people in the United States, Italy and elsewhere. Unless otherwise indicated, the interviews referred to in the Report took place between May 2019 and October 2020.

The Holy See's examination included review of statements and other documents received from individual participants in the interview process, as well as review of the testimony collected during the administrative penal procedure conducted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in late 2018 and early 2019. The Holy See also received materials from Catholic entities in the United States, including the USCCB, the Diocese of Metuchen, the Archdiocese of Newark, the Archdiocese of New York, the Archdiocese of Washington and Seton Hall University.<sup>1</sup> The materials were gathered for the sole purpose of contributing to this Report and are not authorized for any other use.

Consistent with instructions, the Report describes the Holy See's institutional knowledge and decision-making related to McCarrick, as placed in historical context. As emerged over the course of the examination, the relevant context includes McCarrick's activities, accomplishments and travels, which all bore upon Holy See decision-making. The knowledge and actions of individuals and institutions in the United States are likewise discussed to the extent that they are relevant to the Holy See's decisions.

This Report does not examine the issue of McCarrick's culpability under canon law, since that question has already been adjudicated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. While the Secretariat of State's examination was not focused on discovering the precise nature of McCarrick's misconduct, numerous individuals who had direct physical contact with McCarrick were interviewed in connection with the Report.<sup>2</sup> During extended interviews, often emotional, the persons described a range

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<sup>1</sup> Section XXIX.

<sup>2</sup> Section XXVIII.



of behavior, including sexual abuse or assault, unwanted sexual activity, intimate physical contact and the sharing of beds without physical touching. The interviews also included detailed accounts related to McCarrick's abuse of authority and power. The individuals' full accounts, which proved extraordinarily helpful to the examination, were carefully reviewed, were made available to Pope Francis and are preserved in the Holy See's archives.

Because this Report is focused on institutional knowledge and decision-making related to McCarrick, only the accounts that were known to Holy See officials or to members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the United States before late 2017 are set forth in the Report, with victims' consent and approval. Any person who was victimized by McCarrick of course remains free to share his experiences publicly, as several have already done. For readers who have suffered from sexual abuse or sexual harassment, the sections of the Report that recount incidents involving McCarrick, including Sections VI, IX, X.C, XIX.D, XX and XXVIII, could prove traumatizing and should be approached with caution. Some sections of this Report are also inappropriate for minors.

With respect to his international activities, McCarrick worked on behalf of many different religious and secular entities over the course of five decades. McCarrick traveled abroad for the USCCB, Catholic Relief Services, the Holy See, the United States Department of State, the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, and a range of other private and governmental entities and individuals. McCarrick also engaged in initiatives and traveled of his own accord.

Regarding international work coordinated with the Holy See, McCarrick's activities often constituted a form of "soft diplomacy," based upon pastoral work and cultural, educational, scientific and inter-religious dialogue. McCarrick was never a diplomatic agent of the Holy See. Although the international relations of the Holy See occasionally provide important context for McCarrick's activities, this Report avoids setting forth detailed information implicating foreign affairs, particularly as to ongoing or delicate matters.



While McCarrick's fundraising and gift-giving are discussed below, the Report does not provide an accounting of such activities, which took place over at least four decades. Overall, the record appears to show that although McCarrick's fundraising skills were weighed heavily, they were not determinative with respect to major decisions made relating to McCarrick, including his appointment to Washington in 2000. In addition, the examination did not reveal evidence that McCarrick's customary gift-giving and donations impacted significant decisions made by the Holy See regarding McCarrick during any period.

The citations set forth in the footnotes below refer to the *Acta* deposited in Holy See archives with the original of the Report. To protect the rights and interests of individuals and public and private entities involved, the *Acta* are not published with this Report. Nevertheless, the Report quotes critical documents in full. With respect to documents described or quoted in part, those descriptions and quotations accurately reflect the content of the document at issue. Emphasis in the quoted documents appears in the original unless otherwise indicated.

Preparation of the Report required extensive translation of documents, primarily from English to Italian and vice versa. With the notable exception of correspondence sent directly to McCarrick, most of the key documents from the Roman Curia and the Apostolic Nunciature were written in Italian, whereas most of the documents from the United States were written in English. Italian language documents are indicated by an asterisk when first cited. The source language of any given document is authoritative as to its meaning.

Although the passage of time and the complexity of the matter make it impossible to include all information, this Report should provide a significant contribution to the record. As Marc Cardinal Ouellet, the Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, wrote in an open letter on 7 October 2018, "I hope like many others, out of respect for the victims and the need for justice, that the investigation . . . in the United States and in the Roman Curia will finally offer us a critical, comprehensive view on the procedures and the



circumstances of this painful case, so that such events are not repeated in the future.”<sup>3</sup>

## **B. Executive Summary**

This section summarizes the key facts and decision-making regarding former Cardinal McCarrick, from his elevation to the episcopate in 1977 through the allegation in 2017 that he had sexually abused a minor during the early 1970s. To assist the reader, the summary references relevant sections of the Report for each topic.

### **1. Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to McCarrick During the Papacy of Paul VI**

Following an extensive examination of McCarrick’s background, Pope Paul VI appointed Monsignor Theodore McCarrick Auxiliary Bishop in New York in 1977. Most informants consulted during the nomination process strongly recommended McCarrick for elevation to the episcopate. No one reported having witnessed or heard of McCarrick engaging in any improper behavior, either with adults or minors.<sup>4</sup>

### **2. Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to McCarrick During the Papacy of John Paul II**

#### **a. Appointments to Metuchen and Newark**

Pope John Paul II appointed McCarrick as Bishop of Metuchen (1981) and Archbishop of Newark (1986). The decisions to appoint McCarrick were based upon his background, skills, and achievements. During the appointment process, McCarrick was widely lauded as a pastoral, intelligent and zealous bishop, and no credible information emerged suggesting that he had engaged in any misconduct.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 17 ACTA 14815.

<sup>4</sup> Sections II and III.

<sup>5</sup> Sections IV and VII; *see also* Section VI.



In Metuchen and Newark, McCarrick was recognized as a hard worker, active in the Episcopal Conference and on the national and international stage. He also became known and appreciated as an effective fundraiser, both at the diocesan level and for the Holy See.<sup>6</sup>

#### **b. Appointment to Washington**

Archbishop McCarrick was appointed to Washington in late 2000 and created cardinal in early 2001. The evidence shows that Pope John Paul II personally made the decision to appoint McCarrick and did so after receiving the counsel of several trusted advisors on both sides of the Atlantic.

At the time of his appointment to Washington, the allegations against McCarrick generally fell into four categories:

- (1) Priest 1, formerly of the Diocese of Metuchen, claimed that he had observed McCarrick's sexual conduct with another priest in June 1987, and that McCarrick attempted to engage in sexual activity with Priest 1 later that summer;<sup>7</sup>
- (2) a series of anonymous letters, sent to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Apostolic Nuncio and various cardinals in the United States in 1992 and 1993, accused McCarrick of pedophilia with his "nephews";<sup>8</sup>
- (3) McCarrick was known to have shared a bed with young adult men in the Bishop's residence in Metuchen and Newark;<sup>9</sup> and

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<sup>6</sup> Sections V and VIII.

<sup>7</sup> Sections X.C, XII and XIII. With regard to persons identified in this Report with a numbered pseudonym to protect their privacy, the Secretariat of State is aware of their true identities.

<sup>8</sup> Sections X.A, XII and XIII.

<sup>9</sup> Sections XII and XIII.



information regarding McCarrick's conduct led to the conclusion that it would be imprudent to transfer him from Newark to another See on three occasions, namely Chicago (in 1997),<sup>12</sup> New York (1999/2000)<sup>13</sup> and, initially, Washington (July 2000).<sup>14</sup> However, Pope John Paul II seems to have changed his mind in August/September 2000, ultimately leading to his decision to appoint McCarrick to Washington in November 2000.<sup>15</sup> The main reasons for the change in John Paul II's thinking appear to have been as follows:

- At the request of Pope John Paul II, in May to June 2000, Archbishop Montalvo, the Nuncio to the United States, conducted a written inquiry directed at four New Jersey bishops to determine whether the allegations against McCarrick were true. The bishops' responses to the inquiry confirmed that McCarrick had shared a bed with young men but did not indicate with certainty that McCarrick had engaged in any sexual misconduct.<sup>16</sup> What is now known, through investigation undertaken for the preparation of the Report, is that three of the four American bishops provided inaccurate and incomplete information to the Holy See regarding McCarrick's sexual conduct with young

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<sup>10</sup> Sections XII and XIII.

<sup>11</sup> Section XII.

<sup>12</sup> Section XI.

<sup>13</sup> Section XII.

<sup>14</sup> Sections XIII, XIV and XV.

<sup>15</sup> Section XVI.

<sup>16</sup> Section XIII.



(4) McCarrick was known to have shared a bed with adult seminarians at a beach house on the New Jersey shore.<sup>10</sup>

These allegations were generally summarized in a 28 October 1999 letter from Cardinal O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York, to the Apostolic Nuncio, and were shared with Pope John Paul II shortly thereafter.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Section XI.

<sup>13</sup> Section XII.

<sup>14</sup> Sections XIII, XIV and XV.

<sup>15</sup> Section XVI.

<sup>16</sup> Section XIII.



adults.<sup>17</sup> This inaccurate information appears likely to have impacted the conclusions of John Paul II's advisors and, consequently, of John Paul II himself.<sup>18</sup>

- On 6 August 2000, McCarrick wrote a letter to Bishop Dziwisz, the Pope's particular secretary, which was intended to rebut the allegations made by Cardinal O'Connor. In the letter, which was provided to Pope John Paul II, McCarrick affirmed: "In the seventy years of my life, I have never had sexual relations with any person, male or female, young or old, cleric or lay, nor have I ever abused another person or treated them with disrespect." McCarrick's denial was believed and the view was held that, if allegations against McCarrick were made public, McCarrick would be able to refute them easily.<sup>19</sup>
- At the time of McCarrick's appointment, and in part because of the limited nature of the Holy See's own prior investigations, the Holy See had never received a complaint directly from a victim, whether adult or minor, about McCarrick's misconduct.<sup>20</sup> For this reason, McCarrick's supporters could plausibly characterize the allegations against him as "gossip" or "rumors."<sup>21</sup>
- Priest 1, the only individual at the time to claim sexual misconduct by McCarrick, was treated as an unreliable informant, in part because he himself had previously abused two teenage boys.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the

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<sup>17</sup> Section IX.

<sup>18</sup> Sections XII, XIII, XV and XVI.

<sup>19</sup> Section XVI.

<sup>20</sup> Sections XII and XIII.

<sup>21</sup> Sections XII, XIII and XV.

<sup>22</sup> Sections XII and XIII.



Holy See did not receive any signed statement from Priest 1 regarding his allegations against McCarrick.<sup>23</sup>

- Although McCarrick admitted that his sharing of a bed with seminarians at the beach house was “imprudent,” he insisted that he had never engaged in sexual conduct and that claims to the contrary, including the anonymous letters, constituted calumnious and/or politically motivated gossip.<sup>24</sup> Though there is no direct evidence, it appears likely from the information obtained that John Paul II’s past experience in Poland regarding the use of spurious allegations against bishops to degrade the standing of the Church played a role in his willingness to believe McCarrick’s denials.<sup>25</sup>
- Over two decades of episcopal ministry, McCarrick was recognized as an exceptionally hard-working and effective bishop able to handle delicate and difficult assignments both in the United States and in some of the most sensitive parts of the world – including in the former Eastern Bloc and particularly Yugoslavia.<sup>26</sup>
- Pope John Paul II had known McCarrick for years, having first met him in the mid-1970s.<sup>27</sup> McCarrick interacted with the Pope frequently, both in Rome and during trips overseas, including at the time of the Pope’s visit to Newark in 1995 and during annual trips to Rome for the Papal Foundation.<sup>28</sup> McCarrick’s direct relationship with John Paul II also likely had an impact on the Pope’s decision-making.

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<sup>23</sup> Sections X.C, XII, and XIII.

<sup>24</sup> Section XVI.

<sup>25</sup> Section XVI.

<sup>26</sup> Sections V and VIII.

<sup>27</sup> Sections II and III.

<sup>28</sup> Sections V and VIII.



### 3. Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to McCarrick During the Papacy of Benedict XVI

At the beginning of the papacy of Benedict XVI, the information received by the Holy See related to McCarrick's misconduct was generally similar to the information that had been available to John Paul II at the time of the appointment to Washington.<sup>29</sup> Shortly after his election in April 2005, upon the recommendation of the Nuncio and the Congregation for Bishops, Pope Benedict XVI extended McCarrick's tenure in Washington, which was viewed as successful, by two years.<sup>30</sup>

Based upon new details related to Priest 1's allegations, the Holy See reversed course in late 2005 and urgently sought a successor for the Archbishopric of Washington, requesting that McCarrick "spontaneously" withdraw as Archbishop after Easter 2006.<sup>31</sup>

Over the next two years, Holy See officials wrestled with how to address issues regarding Cardinal McCarrick. While serving in the Secretariat of State, Archbishop Viganò wrote two memoranda, one in 2006 and the other in 2008, for the purpose of bringing questions related to McCarrick to the attention of Superiors.<sup>32</sup> The memoranda referred to the allegations and rumors about McCarrick's misconduct during the 1980s and raised concerns that a scandal could result given that the information had already circulated widely. Noting that the allegations remained unproven ("*Si vera et probata sunt exposita*") and recognizing that only the Pope could judge a cardinal under the canon law, Viganò suggested that a canonical process could be opened to determine the truth and, if warranted, to impose an "exemplary measure."

Viganò's Superiors, Secretary of State Cardinal Bertone and Substitute Archbishop Sandri, shared Viganò's concerns and Cardinal Bertone

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<sup>29</sup> Sections XIX.A, XIX.B and XIX.C.

<sup>30</sup> Sections XVIII and XIX.D.

<sup>31</sup> Section XIX.D.

<sup>32</sup> Sections XX and XXII.A.



presented the matter directly to Pope Benedict XVI. Ultimately, the path of a canonical process to resolve factual issues and possibly prescribe canonical penalties was not taken.<sup>33</sup> Instead, the decision was made to appeal to McCarrick's conscience and ecclesial spirit by indicating to him that he should maintain a lower profile and minimize travel for the good of the Church. In 2006, Cardinal Re, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, instructed Nuncio Sambri to convey these indications orally to McCarrick.<sup>34</sup> In 2008, Prefect Re transmitted the indications to McCarrick in writing.<sup>35</sup> While Cardinal Re's approach was approved by Pope Benedict XVI, the indications did not carry the Pope's explicit imprimatur, were not based on a factual finding that McCarrick had actually committed misconduct, and did not include a prohibition on public ministry.<sup>36</sup>

A number of factors appear to have played a role in Pope Benedict XVI's declination to initiate a formal canonical proceeding: there were no credible allegations of child abuse; McCarrick swore on his "oath as a bishop" that the allegations were false;<sup>37</sup> the allegations of misconduct with adults related to events in the 1980s; and there was no indication of any recent misconduct.<sup>38</sup>

In the absence of canonical sanctions or explicit instructions from the Holy Father, McCarrick continued his activities in the United States and overseas. McCarrick remained in active public ministry, continued his work with Catholic Relief Services (including foreign travel), traveled to Rome for various meetings or events, remained a member of Holy See dicasteries (Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See and Pontifical Councils), continued his work in the Middle East with the United States Department of State, and served on USCCB committees. McCarrick also

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<sup>33</sup> Sections XX and XXII.

<sup>34</sup> Section XX.

<sup>35</sup> Section XXII.B.

<sup>36</sup> Section XXII.

<sup>37</sup> Section XIX.D.

<sup>38</sup> Sections XIX, XX and XXII.



undertook other engagements with the approval of officials of the Roman Curia or the Apostolic Nuncio.<sup>39</sup> After mid-2009, Nuncio Sambini became the main point of contact for McCarrick and, with Sambini effectively taking charge of the situation, neither Pope Benedict XVI nor the Congregation for Bishops appears to have been kept apprised of McCarrick's activities in the United States or overseas.<sup>40</sup> Once Archbishop Viganò was appointed Nuncio to the United States in late 2011, McCarrick kept Viganò regularly informed of his travels and activities.<sup>41</sup>

Towards the end of the papacy of Benedict XVI, Priest 3, another priest of Metuchen, informed Nuncio Viganò of Priest 3's lawsuit alleging that overt sexual conduct between him and McCarrick had occurred in 1991.<sup>42</sup> Viganò wrote to Cardinal Ouellet, the new Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, about this in 2012 and Ouellet instructed Viganò to take certain steps, including an inquiry with specific diocesan officials and Priest 3, to determine if the allegations were credible. Viganò did not take these steps and therefore never placed himself in the position to ascertain the credibility of Priest 3. McCarrick continued to remain active, traveling nationally and internationally.<sup>43</sup>

#### **4. Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to McCarrick During the Papacy of Francis**

Given McCarrick's retirement and advanced age, Holy See officials during 2013 to early 2017 rarely addressed the indications originally given to McCarrick back in 2006 and 2008, which had been modified in their application during the papacy of Benedict XVI.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sections XXI and XXIII.

<sup>40</sup> Sections XXII and XXIII.

<sup>41</sup> Section XXIV.A.

<sup>42</sup> Section XXIV.B; *see also* Section IX.C.

<sup>43</sup> Section XXIV.

<sup>44</sup> Section XXV; *see also* Sections XXI, XXII, XXIII and XXIV.



Neither Pope Francis, nor Cardinal Parolin, nor Cardinal Ouellet lifted or modified the prior “indications” related to McCarrick’s activities or residence. McCarrick generally continued his religious, humanitarian and charitable work during this period, sometimes with renewed focus and energy, but also with increased difficulty due to his advanced age. In the 2013 to 2017 period, McCarrick did not act as a diplomatic agent for the Holy See, or with any official mandate from the Secretariat of State.<sup>45</sup>

On a few occasions, McCarrick’s continued activities, and the existence of prior indications, were raised with Pope Francis by Substitute Becciu and Secretary of State Parolin. Nuncio Viganò first claimed in 2018 that he mentioned McCarrick in meetings with the Holy Father in June and October 2013, but no records support Viganò’s account and evidence as to what he said is sharply disputed. Pope Francis recalled a brief conversation about McCarrick with Substitute Becciu and did not exclude the possibility of a similarly short exchange with Cardinal Parolin. Before 2018, the Holy Father never discussed McCarrick with Cardinal Ouellet, who was the Prefect of the dicastery with primary competence over the matter, or with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.<sup>46</sup>

Until 2017, no one – including Cardinal Parolin, Cardinal Ouellet, Archbishop Becciu or Archbishop Viganò – provided Pope Francis with any documentation regarding allegations against McCarrick, including the anonymous letters dating back to the early 1990s or documents related to Priest 1 or Priest 3. Pope Francis had heard only that there had been allegations and rumors related to immoral conduct with adults occurring prior to McCarrick’s appointment to Washington. Believing that the allegations had already been reviewed and rejected by Pope John Paul II, and well aware that McCarrick was active during the papacy of Benedict XVI, Pope Francis did not see the need to alter the approach that had been adopted in prior years.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Section XXV.

<sup>46</sup> Section XXV.

<sup>47</sup> Section XXV.



In June 2017, the Archdiocese of New York learned of the first known allegation of sexual abuse by McCarrick of a victim under 18 years of age, which occurred in the early 1970s.<sup>48</sup> Shortly after the accusation was deemed credible, Pope Francis requested McCarrick's resignation from the College of Cardinals. Following an administrative penal process by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, McCarrick was found culpable of acts in contravention of the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue involving both minors and adults, and on that basis was dismissed from the clerical state.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Section XXVI.

<sup>49</sup> Sections XXVI and XXVII.