

**Statement from Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, on the formation of the
Lay Commission on Clergy Sexual Abuse of Minors in the Archdiocese of San Antonio**

We are striving to increase accountability and transparency in how the Church in the Archdiocese of San Antonio is addressing the scourge of sexual abuse of minors. In unity with Pope Francis, the bishop of Texas -- as well as nationally -- are working to further healing and restore trust; to take new actions to protect the vulnerable and offer support to survivors of clergy sexual abuse of minors. The Holy Father has spoken strongly and acted forcefully regarding these terrible sins and crimes, and we are called to do the same in our words and actions as well.

Therefore, today I am announcing the formation of the Lay Commission on Clergy Sexual Abuse of Minors in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Recently, I met with Tom Mengler, president of St. Mary's University, and we discussed ways to foster an atmosphere of more healing. He brought forward the concept of establishing a lay commission to review archdiocesan efforts to address clergy sexual abuse of minors and to advise me on ways to improve these efforts.

In our dialogue, we proposed to invite Judge Catherine M. Stone, retired Chief Justice of the Texas Fourth District Court of Appeals, to form and lead this commission.

This group will audit the report on clergy sexual abuse of minors currently being prepared by the archdiocese. Also, they will audit current practices and offer recommendations, if needed.

They will report to me on the handling of cases concerning sexual abuse of minors in the archdiocese since 1940. This will include a list of names of all clergy who have abused minors based on a preponderance of evidence during that timeframe and the years these clergy members ministered in the archdiocese. In addition, the report will include the number of priests against whom allegations were unverified.

This commission will also review current archdiocesan procedures and how they have functioned since 2002.

This entity will work in conjunction with the Archdiocesan Review Board, which was established following the adoption of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2002. The *Charter* is a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. That document includes guidelines for reconciliation, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse.

Actions such as these which we are currently undertaking in the archdiocese will be discussed at the November General Assembly of the U.S. bishops, and at the Vatican in February when the presidents of all bishops' conferences throughout the world will meet with the pope to address this issue internationally.

At the forefront of all of these efforts are our concern for the survivors of sexual abuse and their pastoral needs. We have to address this terrible sin of clergy sexual abuse of minors, and provide

victims with an opportunity to reach out for help. I cannot adequately express my sorrow to these survivors of clergy sexual abuse. I believe that by releasing these names it will contribute to healing. If these actions prevent even a single occurrence of sexual abuse, it is all worth it. #