



## **Bishop Schlert Makes Personal Pledge of Accountability**

*He expresses strong support for new standards for all Bishops*

*The following is a statement from Diocese of Allentown Bishop Alfred Schlert:*

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' meeting in Baltimore ended without a vote on key issues of bishops' accountability, at the Vatican's request. Nevertheless, my brother bishops and I have provided strong direction to our leadership on this important topic, asking them to carry our proposals to Rome for their planned February meeting with Pope Francis.

In spite of the lack of a vote, I remain personally committed to preventing abuse, to keeping children safe, and to dealing swiftly and effectively with allegations of misconduct. Upon prayerful reflection, I believe that now is the time to put that commitment into writing, in the form of a pledge to victims and survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

### **My Pledge to Victims and Survivors:**

- 1. The Diocese of Allentown will not protect abusers.** No institution, Church or secular, should ever prioritize its own reputation over the safety of the innocent and the vulnerable.

2. **We immediately report all allegations to law enforcement.** We also will continue to act with transparency, in cooperation with law enforcement.
3. **Accused priests will be removed from ministry immediately** pending an investigation. I have never transferred an abuser to cover up the problem, and I never will.
4. **I am willing to meet with you at any time,** no matter how long your abuse occurred, to offer pastoral care and support, but mostly, to listen. I will treat all victims with dignity and respect.
5. **I will hold myself accountable to outside oversight.** Our past failures as Bishops must not be repeated. I welcome independent and objective scrutiny as I work to fulfill my grave responsibility to prevent abuse and to keep children safe.

*+ Alfred A. Schlert*  
Bishop of Allentown



Anyone who knows of incidents of abuse, in the Church or outside it, should report it to the State ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313, the State Attorney General's hotline at 1-888-538-8541, or to local law enforcement. The Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator is available to provide assistance to anyone who, as a minor, was abused by a priest, deacon, employee, or volunteer of the Diocese, or of its parishes. Her direct line is 1-800-791-9209.