



Contact: Erin Looby Carlson (989) 797-6630
ecarlson@dioceseofsaginaw.org

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Bishop Cistone Appoints Special Independent Delegate to Oversee Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Sexual Misconduct

SAGINAW — The Most Rev. Joseph R. Cistone, Bishop of Saginaw, today announced the appointment of the Honorable Michael J. Talbot of the Michigan State Appeals Court as a special independent delegate to assume full authority within the Diocese of Saginaw with regards to all matters involving the alleged sexual abuse of minors and sexual misconduct by clergy and diocesan representatives.

“It is my sincere hope that this step will bring renewed courage to victims — and their families — to come forward with a fuller expectation of fairness, justice, and healing,” Bishop Cistone said.

The announcement of a special independent delegate was shared with members of the media and diocesan employees during an 11 a.m. news conference at the diocesan Center of Ministry in Saginaw.

“It has become increasingly apparent to me that sexual abuse and misconduct issues have produced deep distress and serious doubt for the people of the Diocese of Saginaw, priests and parishioners alike, as well as the broader community,” Bishop Cistone said. “I believe we need what I will call a ‘fresh start’... a ‘reboot.’”

In an effort to signal a fresh beginning and establish greater trust on the part of the Catholic community and the general public, Judge Talbot will oversee procedures and responses to the sexual abuse of minors — and sexual misconduct issues — involving clergy and other diocesan representatives. He will establish specific roles and responsibilities for diocesan representatives including communications to the general public, as well as official responses to media inquiries, and will take the lead on any and all interaction with civil authorities.

Judge Talbot has been a judge since 1978 and, since 1998, a member of the State Appeals Court. In 2013, he was appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court to overhaul Detroit’s 36th District Court. In 2015, he was named Chief Judge of Michigan’s Appeals Court. Sixteen years ago — in 2002 — he was named chair of the newly constituted Board of Review on clerical sexual abuse complaints in the Archdiocese of Detroit. It is a position he still holds, and for which he has gained national recognition.

Although Judge Talbot’s current term runs until January 1, 2021, he has already announced his plans to retire this month on April 25. He will immediately take on his responsibilities as a special independent delegate in Saginaw. While the delegate is not a permanent position, Judge Talbot will remain in place for whatever length of time is needed.

“I intend to get to work right away,” Judge Talbot said. “I’m confident I can help the Diocese of Saginaw work towards the ‘fresh start’ needed. In the Archdiocese of Detroit, we open our Review Board meetings with a prayer from the Archbishop of Dublin,” he added. “It keeps us focused first and foremost on the victims. That will be my compass going forward — fairness, justice, and healing for victims, encouragement to come forward to civil authorities or the diocese.”

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