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investigated and why he decided not to charge those people. The regulations then call for the attorney general to report to Congress about the investigation.

An adviser to President Trump said there is palpable concern among the president's inner circle that the report might contain information about Trump and his team that is politically damaging,

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Survivors of abuse say Vatican must act

In Rome for bishops summit, they demand transparency

By Mark Arsenault
GLOBE STAFF

On the eve of an unprecedented Catholic Church conference on clergy sexual abuse, a dozen survivors from around the world urged greater transparency and zero tolerance for abusive priests in a frank, two-hour meeting with Vatican officials Wednesday, saying the scandal has left worshippers angry and betrayed and looking for the church to take action.

► Advocate for clergy abuse victims plans hunger strike to draw attention to Springfield. B4.

Bishops and Catholic leaders from around the world, including Cardinal Sean O'Malley, archbishop of Boston, have convened in Rome for the three-day summit, which begins Thursday, to address the scandal of sex abuse and coverups that continues to plague the Catholic Church.

The meeting comes just days after Pope Francis defrocked former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick for sexual abuse. In November, the Vatican abruptly ordered US Catholic Bishops to delay action on sexual abuse reforms, infuriating advocates and heightening expectations for the Vatican summit. But participants and the Vatican press office have been tamping down expectations for the conference, specialists say, and the meeting is not expected to immediately result in dramatic new policies.

"It's an education session for bishops from other parts of the world where survivors have not yet found their voices, so these bishops can be brought up to speed," said Phil Saviano, a prominent Boston advocate for victims of Catholic clergy abuse who attended Wednesday's meeting.

Saviano played a key role in the 2002 Globe Spotlight report that exposed abuse in the Boston Archdiocese. During the session Wednesday with church leaders, Saviano said, he urged an end to se-

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JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

veteran Clarence Smoyer the turret of a Sherman tank as the Charlestown Navy Yard on at left, Smoyer (without helmet) crew on their T26E3 Pershing ch 6, 1945, in Germany. was a member of the Third ision. He was in town to sign earhead" a new book about his

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THE BOSTON

Abuse survivors urge action

► **ABUSE**
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crecy over clergy abuse and called for the release of thousands of names of priests worldwide who have been accused. He cited two recent events that rocked US Catholics already weary from years of scandal — a 2018 Pennsylvania grand jury report that detailed abuse allegations against hundreds of priests, and the revelation that McCarrick, who was once archbishop of Washington and one of the most prominent Catholic Church officials in America, was a sexual abuser.

"I know formerly faithful parishioners who are now pulling their children out of parochial schools, who are signing up to be Episcopalians, who feel that they have wasted their lives being faithful to the Catholic Church," he told the conference organizers, according to a copy of the letter he left with them. US Catholics have reached their tipping point, and more troubles are on the way, he said.

"You saw the impact of the report on the state of Pennsylvania. Well, now you have 14 more attorneys general coming after you. The ship of Catholicism is going down. This would, indeed, be a good time to get real about transparency," the letter said.

Representing the Vatican at the meeting with survivors were: Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, archbishop of Chicago; Cardinal Oswald Gracias, archbishop of Bombay, India; Charles J. Scicluna, archbishop of Malta and a Vatican investigator of clerical sex abuse; the Rev. Hans Zollner, a German Jesuit and member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors; and the Rev. Federico Lombardi, the conference moderator, according to Saviano.

Saviano said he spoke directly with Scicluna. "He said, 'Yes, yes, yes, I agree with you and it's important to be transparent,'" Saviano said. "I am hopeful — and I can't believe I'm saying this — I am hopeful that some of these important issues

will be discussed. If it goes beyond discussion, that will be great, but none of us knows if it will get past the discussion stage."

Jamaican survivor Denise Buchanan, who attended the organizing meeting, demanded to know why the Vatican wasn't implementing zero-tolerance policies on sex abuse across the board, the Associated Press reported from Rome. The US bishops' conference is considered a model for requiring any priest who is found guilty of molesting a child to be removed permanently from ministry. "What is the holdup in implementing zero tolerance?" Buchanan said. "It is like, 'Oh, we already have the laws, we just need to implement the laws.' Obviously, the laws are not working because children are being raped right now."

In a statement after the meeting ended, the organizing committee thanked the victims for "sincerity, the depth and the strength of their testimonies." They said the survivors' input would help them to understand the "gravity and urgency" of the problem during the summit, the AP reported.

O'Malley and the Catholic bishops of Massachusetts — Robert J. McManus of Worcester; Mitchell T. Rozanski of Springfield, and Edgar M. da Cunha of Fall River — said in a statement that the conference "will seek to create a strong consensus throughout the universal church of zero tolerance of sexual abuse, to develop the programs which will implement this mandate and to put in place the programs of education and prevention needed to keep children safe throughout the world."

The Massachusetts bishops said these reforms should take place even in countries where "government and law enforcement may not be reliable partners in protecting children."

They also warned Catholics against expecting too much from a single conference.

"We ask your prayers for all

involved in the summit meeting and your appreciation that a three-day meeting will not produce a finished and final plan for a global church of 1.2 billion people," the bishops said.

O'Malley's spokesman, Terrence Donilon, said Wednesday that "the cardinal is hopeful for a successful conference as part of the Holy Father's commitment to survivors, clergy, and the global Catholic community. Cardinal Sean has been a force for change since his first experience with survivors of clergy abuse more than 25 years ago and he is pleased to provide whatever support is needed to the pope in leading the church."

Anne Barrett Doyle, a codirector of BishopAccountability.org, which researches and documents the abuse crisis in the Catholic Church, said from Rome Wednesday that US Catholics are likely to be disappointed in the summit.

"It is dismaying that in 2019, the Vatican is still at the awareness-building stage," Doyle said. "It is an indicator that the child sex abuse scandal is low priority."

Last November, US bishops were poised to vote on a proposal to subject themselves to accountability standards in sexual abuse cases, and to create a commission of lay people and clergy to investigate allegations.

But the Vatican hit the brakes on the plan to add the bishops to the new standards, and told the US bishops not to vote until after this week's global conference on sex abuse.

The delay raised expectations for February's meeting, said Zach Hiner, director of SNAP, an advocacy group for clergy abuse survivors. But by Wednesday, he said, it appeared that this week's conference "will be another week of prayer and conversation, but not action around the issue of accountability for the hierarchs."

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report. Mark Arsenaault can be reached at mark.arsenaault@globe.com.