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**STATEMENT REGARDING ALLEGATION AGAINST
ARCHBISHOP JOHN NIENSTEDT**

December 17, 2013

The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis today announced that an allegation has been brought by a mandated reporter within the Church to the St. Paul Police of inappropriate touching of a minor male on the buttocks by Archbishop John Nienstedt. The single incident is alleged to have occurred in 2009 during a group photography session with the archbishop following a confirmation ceremony. Archbishop Nienstedt emphatically denies the allegation. Upon learning of the allegation last week, the archdiocese instructed the mandated reporter to make the matter known to the police. The archbishop and the archdiocese stand ready to cooperate fully with the St. Paul Police.

After consultation with the Holy Father's ambassador to the United States (the papal nuncio), the archbishop will voluntarily step aside from all public ministry while this matter is being investigated, effective immediately. Auxiliary Bishop Lee Piché, in his role as a vicar general, will cover all of the archbishop's public duties during this time. Father Charles Lachowitzer continues in his position as a vicar general and moderator of the curia.

The archdiocese is mindful of the due process concerns of those involved. There must be justice and due consideration of the rights and dignity of every human person, both the individual involved and the archbishop. This is not only the bedrock of our beliefs as Catholics, but also of the justice system of our country.

The steps taken in response to the allegation against the archbishop demonstrate and reaffirm the archdiocese's commitment to disclosure. These steps further confirm that all within the archdiocese will be subject to the internal policies we have established. This is the position of the archdiocese and the archbishop himself. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the individual involved and the archbishop as justice is pursued and all may move forward on a path toward healing.

The first priority of the archdiocese is to create and maintain safe environments where the Gospel of Jesus Christ can flourish. This starts with creating an environment for and implementing productive steps to promote a healthy clergy. It also means ensuring that clergy, employees, volunteers, and the young are aware of healthy boundaries and the societal problem of sexual abuse.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of sexual abuse in Church ministry, you are urged to call the police or other civil authorities. You are also invited to call the archdiocese's Director of Advocacy and Victim Assistance at 651-291-4497.

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