



October 10, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In August, I wrote to address reports that Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, engaged in abusive sexual conduct while in ministry. Since my letter, other news about Church leadership has emerged, including the issuance of a deeply disturbing Grand Jury report of almost two months ago that detailed decades of the terrible sin and crime of sexual abuse of minors by priests of eight dioceses in Pennsylvania. These revelations have left me sickened, shaken, embarrassed, and heart-broken. I have heard from many of you, either directly or indirectly, that you are justifiably angry, discouraged, and saddened that Church leadership has breached your trust and failed to protect children, youth, seminarians, and vulnerable adults adequately.

I was gratified to learn that several days ago, at the Holy Father's direction, the Holy See Press Office announced that a thorough investigation into the matter involving Archbishop McCarrick would take place to "ascertain all of the relevant facts" and "follow the path of truth wherever it may lead." As the announcement stated, "Both abuse and its cover-up can no longer be tolerated and a different treatment for Bishops who have committed or covered up abuse, in fact represents a form of clericalism that is no longer acceptable." (Holy See Press Office Release, October 6, 2018) I am hopeful that this investigation will be an important step in identifying what went wrong so that we can prevent "the grave scourge of abuse within and beyond the Church." (Holy See Press Office Release, October 6, 2018)

In our Diocese, the Diocesan Review Board and my staff have diligently been continuing their work in evaluating our policies, procedures, and resources to ensure that we are doing all we can locally to prevent sexual abuse and other forms of abuse against minors and adults in the Church. Next month, I will be travelling to Baltimore, Maryland to meet with my brother bishops to discuss measures that we can take as a national body to hold Church leaders accountable for abuse of their authority, ensure justice is served, and attempt to repair the wounds to the members of the Body of the Church. I will take with me the concerns, thoughts, and suggestions provided to me by the many clerics and lay people who, in their desire to serve Christ and help to heal his wounded and broken Body, have expressed them to me in person, in writing, or indirectly through other people. These are only the first steps that I know I need to take, and I will rely on my consultation with you, the People of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to identify the best path forward.

As Jesus taught us, some things "can come out only through prayer [and fasting]." (Mk 9:29). Many of the pastors of the parishes in the Diocese of Manchester have offered in their parishes Holy Hours, prayer services, adoration, special Masses, or other liturgical moments in reparation for the evils that have been brought to light in the Church. I encourage these efforts because I believe it is critical that we pray together for healing of those who have been harmed in the Church, for an end to evil influences, for just punishment and restrictions upon perpetrators, for fidelity and courage for our clergy, and for healing for our Church. I have committed myself to the Act of Reparation to the Sacred Heart, and on Wednesday, October 17, 2018, I will be holding a prayer service at St. Joseph Cathedral at 7:00 pm. I invite you to join me at the Cathedral and to participate in any prayer services at your local parish.

While the reports about the abuse of power by some Church leaders are devastating, we know that it is Jesus Christ who founded the Church, and it is Jesus Christ through whom we find our reason for hope. I am confident that even in this dark time, if we avoid divisions and come together as a family would, the broken Body of Christ will yet again experience the effects of a holy resurrection through our conversion, healing, and the Holy Spirit's sanctification.

Please pray for me, and please be assured that you are always in my prayers.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.
Bishop of Manchester

If you or anyone you know has been abused by someone in the Catholic Church, we encourage you to contact law enforcement. For information about how to report abuse, harassment, or exploitation in the Church, to request counseling assistance and other services of the Office for Healing and Pastoral Care, or to learn more about how the Diocese of Manchester works to create a safe environment in all of our ministries, visit catholicnh.org/safety.