



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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August 20, 2018
Memorial of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

I deeply regret that I must write to you about a subject so very disturbing and tragic within the Church. The Pennsylvania Grand Jury report detailing clerical sexual abuse of minors has been shocking and very upsetting to members within the Church and those who are not members of the Church. In the words of Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I share with you “my sadness, anger and shame” over these recent revelations of such immoral behavior, which are further worsened in the reports concerning Archbishop Theodore McCarrick. I cannot express adequately my sorrow for the pain, suffering and turmoil endured by the victims of child sexual abuse, especially when it is committed by the very ones who were trusted and so grievously betrayed that very trust.

Today, August 20, 2018, Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has written to the People of God, expressing the sorrow of the Chief Shepherd united to the sorrow of his flock, whom he is called to confirm in faith. Pope Francis writes: “Today we are challenged as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit. If, in the past, the response was one of omission, today we want solidarity, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history.”

Our Diocese renews its ongoing commitment to assist victims of sexual abuse so that we may provide care and support in healing the wounds suffered through sexual abuse. “We will never abandon those who have been hurt.” (Statement of the New York State Catholic Conference).

At the same time, we continue to follow diligently our Safe Environment policies, which are fully compliant with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, issued in June 2002 and just revised in June 2018. While assuring that these policies are thoroughly and conscientiously followed, we also cooperate fully with law enforcement in addressing these critical matters. These efforts were highlighted in the August issue of the *Catholic Courier* and can be accessed on line at <https://www.catholiccourier.com/articles/abuse-prevention-remains-highest-priority>.

I ask you to join me in praying that the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will bring us His peace and reconciliation. In particular, please pray that we be able “To see things as the Lord does, to be where the Lord wants us to be, to experience a conversion of heart in His presence. To do so, prayer, and penance will help. I invite the entire holy faithful People of God to a penitential exercise of prayer and fasting, following the Lord’s command.” (Pope Francis’ Letter to the People of God, August 20, 2018). Please also pray for our faithful priests who continue their priestly ministry in such difficult times as they too suffer the pain of seeing the vocation to which they have dedicated their lives so terribly scarred by those who were called to live the Gospel of Jesus.

In celebrating the *Year of the Eucharist* honoring the 150th anniversary of our Diocese, I intended that we focus upon Jesus Who comes to us in Holy Communion, His very person united to our person. So it is in all the Sacraments, Jesus comes to us and heals and consoles us. I pray that terrible human failures and gross acts of immorality will not separate us from the love of Jesus, Who alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is Christ Whom we honor, to Whom we pray as members of the Church, of which He is the cornerstone. Even in apostolic times at the Church's beginning, grave disappointment, hardship and turmoil were present causing Saint Paul to write these words to the Romans: "For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers, neither height nor depth nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord." (Roman 8: 38-39).

Pope Francis begins his letter with a perennial truth of our faith: "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26). We are now on the road to Golgotha, and heavy is the cross that has been placed upon our shoulders by those who should have lightened this heavy burden. We need to work together to support each other in prayer. After Good Friday, the Apostles were gathered together in fear behind bolted doors. Jesus did not abandon them. On that first Easter Sunday evening, He appeared to them and said: "Peace be with you." I must believe that as we feel sickened and despairing, Jesus will not abandon us, but again we will hear His words: "Peace be with you."

As Pope Francis asks, I will continue to address the tragic subject of the sexual abuse of minors and other forms of sexual misconduct. These efforts will continue with my full cooperation with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as we work together to serve you, the faithful, with undivided hearts. When I celebrate Holy Mass in your parishes or other diocesan communities, I look out on the faithful during the readings and become so very humbled by the deep faith I see before me: God's people so faithful even in turmoil, sadness, disappointment and confusion. How extraordinary the faith of those wearied by the sins of their ministers and yet continue to stand after the homily and profess: "I believe in God."

Begging your prayers and praying that we see the light of Easter, I remain

Devotedly yours in Christ,

+ Salvatore R. Matano
 The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
 Bishop of Rochester

Any victim of sexual abuse by clergy or other church personnel is encouraged to contact civil authorities. To receive help and guidance from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, contact Deborah Housel, victim assistance coordinator, at 585-328-3210, ext. 1555, or toll-free 1 (800) 388-7177, ext. 1555, or by e-mail to victimassistance@dor.org.