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DIOCESE OF PEORIA

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Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious and Faithful of the Diocese of Peoria,

My greatest responsibility as your bishop is to preach the Gospel, celebrate the Sacraments, and to try my best to be a good shepherd for this local church. The saddest part of my ministry has been to deal with our part of the immense societal issue of sexual misconduct with minors. Where there have been credible accusations made against individuals and with the advice of my Review Commission, I have not hesitated to remove them from all active ministry. I have also tried to attentively follow the charter adopted by the American bishops that deals in a comprehensive manner with this painful subject. I have not discovered any evidence in this Diocese that priests guilty of misconduct were ever moved from assignment to assignment. Our Diocese normally offers counseling to victims rather than paying out large cash settlements. Not every allegation has been found to be credible by our Review Commission, and so our Diocese resists supporting those claims that simply cannot be sustained by the facts. I take very seriously my responsibility to protect all the children entrusted to our care, and I am absolutely convinced that today the programs of our Church now provide the safest possible environment in America for your children.

In these perilous economic times, I will work to be a prudent steward of the money you offer for the work of Christ. Attorneys representing some claimants and some "victims groups" obviously have a significant financial stake in trying to overturn our Diocesan policies. Recent decisions in the Illinois courts may make our legal situation even more difficult in the future. It should be noted that the sexual abuse of minors cuts across all socio-economic lines, ethnicities, ministries, and religions. It is important to remember that the State basically exempts its own institutions from civil litigation. Amid all the tensions of our nation's culture wars and in the face of the media's intense hatred for our Catholic Faith, I am increasingly concerned that our Church in effect no longer enjoys equal justice under the law. I will not be intimidated by choreographed demonstrations or the abuse that is sometimes personally directed against me. I remain immensely proud of the zealous and holy priesthood of our Diocese. May God guide and protect his Holy Church and bless us all in his service.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C. BISHOP OF PEORIA