



August, 2012

Dear Friends,

I have asked your pastor to read this letter to you, and publish it in your bulletin, because of the importance of the issues I need to address. It is no secret that the Diocese of Helena is party to more than 200 claims of abuse against clergy and others who have served or worked for the wider Catholic Church within the Diocese's geographic boundaries, during a time-period between 1930 and 1980.

At this point, we are working with the Plaintiffs' attorneys in an attempt to find a negotiated resolution to avoid costly and destructive litigation. A portion of the resolution procedures includes identifying any remaining victims who have yet to come forward. You may have seen newspaper and other media advertisements asking victims to come forward. This is part of the resolution process.

As I have personally listened to survivors' heart-wrenching stories, I have been saddened by their reports of shattered innocence, broken trust and the spiritual and psychological toll that abuse takes on innocent victims. Words cannot adequately express our sorrow or convey the depth of our apology.

No victim of sexual abuse should suffer alone. If you are such a victim, please know we support you in your effort to find healing and we urge you to seek the help you need. If you know anyone who has suffered sexual abuse, please encourage them to come forward.

It is important to emphasize that for years the Diocese of Helena has in place an extensive Safe Environment Program, which trains all people who work with children to recognize the signs of abuse and how to deal with suspected instances of it. A recent independent audit shows that the Diocese is in full compliance with all national Church expectations.

As part of that program's goal to provide pastoral assistance to victims of clergy sexual abuse, I am willing to meet with victims individually. You can contact the Diocese by email at victimassistant@diocesehelena.org or by phone at 406-459-0513.

Please be assured that we will continue to reach out with compassion to those who have suffered abuse from church personnel, whether those personnel be Diocesan or church personnel who simply served within the boundaries of the Diocese.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend George Leo Thomas
Bishop of Helena