



401/2019

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

In my pastoral letter to you this past October, I talked about the great suffering that many have endured as a result of the sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy. Once again I wish to express how profoundly sorry I am for the deep pain that resulted from that abuse. In that letter I also spoke of the need for the Church, in the interests of both justice and healing, to publicly acknowledge and identify those clergy who have sexually abused children and of the decision of my predecessors in April of 2002 to publish the names of those clerics removed from ministry as a result of the sexual abuse of children from that point forward. I told you that I had directed diocesan staff to compile this information in a more accessible format and to conduct a review of diocesan records relating to any allegations of child sexual abuse against a diocesan priest or deacon and to include on that list the names of any additional priest or deacon who was removed from ministry as a result of sexual abuse of a child or who is already deceased or no longer in ministry for any reason and against whom has been made a substantiated allegation of child sexual abuse.

With the help and counsel of an advisory committee, which I formed to assist me in this matter, I am now able to announce that this work has been completed and the updated list posted on the diocesan website. This updated list includes the names of additional diocesan priests and deacons, regardless of how long ago the abuse is alleged to have occurred, not previously identified on our website and against whom substantiated allegations have been made of sexual abuse of a child. The names of these clerics were added based on our belief, after a review of our records and other evidence available to us, that the allegations made against the clerics were more likely than not to be true. This updated list can be found on the website at: www.dioceseofcleveland.org/healing.

While the addition of new names to this list is certainly an occasion of profound sadness, inasmuch as it reminds us of the great harm experienced as a result of sexual abuse, I pray that it also may be an occasion for healing and a step towards restoring trust in the Church.

I also want to tell you about a number of things that our diocese will be offering to help foster healing and reconciliation for those affected by the sexual abuse of children by priests or deacons. First, this summer, we will offer the opportunity for those who have suffered abuse at the hands of a member of the clergy to participate in support groups guided by experienced facilitators. Then, in the fall, those who have suffered abuse will be invited to come for one of several days of retreat to be held in various areas of the diocese, with the hope that the power of prayer and the sacraments will be an instrument of God's grace and healing in their lives. Lastly, we will be preparing resources for parishes and parish cluster groups to use for prayer, reflection, and discussion for the benefit of all members of our diocesan Church who are seeking to deal with the many emotions and concerns arising from the abuse of children by clerics. It is my hope that, through these efforts, our local Church might continue to move forward together towards healing and a renewed commitment to live as faithful disciples of Christ.

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21 June 2019

I want to reiterate that, in accordance with diocesan policy, any allegation of child sexual abuse that becomes known to the Diocese is reported directly to civil authorities. Furthermore, if the diocese receives an allegation of child sexual abuse by an active member of the clergy, that allegation is sent to the diocese's Review Board in addition to being reported to civil authorities. A cleric will be permanently removed from ministry if it is established by an admission, a conviction in a criminal court, or by way of an appropriate canonical process that he has sexually abused a child.

Once again, I express my deepest sorrow and offer apologies on behalf of the Church for the harm done to those most vulnerable. Let us continue to hope in the Lord who can heal us from the effects of even the greatest wounds and who, through his own Passion and death, joins us in our pain and makes all things new.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend Nelson J. Perez, D.D.
Bishop of Cleveland