



September 17, 2020

His Holiness Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
Vatican City 00120

CC: Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Cardinal Marc Ouellett, P.S.S., Cardinal Timothy Dolan

Your Holiness,

We are the five founding members of the Buffalo Survivors Group, all Survivors of sexual abuse by the hands of clergy and religious in the Diocese of Buffalo, New York.

As you know, the Diocese of Buffalo has filed for bankruptcy because of the numerous lawsuits filed against them. This legal process has now become a battle between lawyers, the ones who will reap massive financial compensation.

As Survivors, we know that no matter what financial restitution we may receive, it will be miniscule in comparison to what is rightfully deserved. Because of our legal system, money is the compensation for lives ruined and we will never be made whole by this process. It appears that the root cause is not being properly addressed and corrected, and many perpetrators are essentially going unpunished.

From the time the apostolic administrator, Edward Scharfenberger, came to Buffalo, he stated on numerous occasions his willingness to meet with any Survivor and offered the opportunity to see the files of our offenders. To this date, even with our reaching out to him, he has never personally followed through to contact any of us, making his words as a representative of the Catholic Church ring hollow. As Survivors, we are forced to relive our past experiences of sexual abuse and being ignored retraumatizes us.

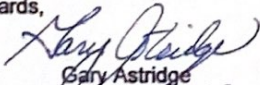
For many of us, our souls were torn out as children and our worlds went dark. Ever since, we have been going through life as the walking dead. Do you have any idea what that is like, Your Holiness?

To be direct, we put this question to you: why have you not taken swift and decisive action in putting an end to the sexual abuse of children and punish the perpetrators under your authority? Being God's representative on earth, please listen to him, any true Christian knows that Jesus Christ would never tolerate this. Matthew 18:6

We hereby request an audience on behalf of ourselves and Survivors worldwide. We are part of a large contingent of people worldwide that believe those representing the Church in this crisis cannot be trusted, therefore we look directly to you as we seek truth and closure. Though we are committed to stand up for justice for what was done to us, we would much prefer living our remaining years in peace. Let us discuss ways to extinguish this evil from the Catholic Church once and for all. Our meeting will cast a positive light on the Church and give renewed hope to all who have suffered and continue to suffer to this very day.

Thank you for seriously considering our request and for showing us the courtesy of acknowledging your receipt of this letter.

Sincere regards,


Gary Astridge


Kevin Koscielniak


Chris Szulita


Michael Whalen


Angelo Evolina

Buffalo Survivors Group

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