

ARCHDIOCESE OF AGAÑA

CHANCERY OFFICE

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Rome September 15, 2016

Archbishop Hon's Message to be read at Sunday Mass on September 18, 2016

Putting the house in order without burning it down

My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Heartfelt greetings of peace from Rome!

I write this letter to you from Rome on the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows, and to her I prayed for all of you before writing.

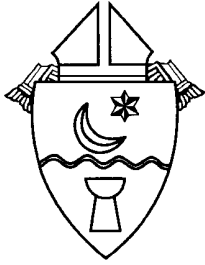
Allow me to address a number of issues that have arisen regarding the Archdiocese' response to accusations of sexual abuse in the priesthood on Guam.

I want you to know that I am in Rome to urge the Holy See to remove Archbishop Apuron as Archbishop of Agaña and to appoint a successor. I am reinforced in my efforts by the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Agaña which has presented two letters - the first asking Archbishop Apuron to resign and when that was unsuccessful, the second calling on the Holy See to remove him. I can assure you that the gravely serious allegations against Archbishop Apuron will continue to be dealt with by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, which will hold a canonical trial. His Holiness, Pope Francis, is monitoring the proceedings.

On behalf of the Church, I want to apologize personally to the survivors of sexual abuse everywhere who have suffered so much at the hands of clergy. We cannot undo the appalling betrayal of trust and faith and the horrendous acts (*graviora delicta* - more grave delicts) that clergy have committed against the youngest and most innocent among us. We are committed to helping them heal in body and soul. To that end, I have been working with our leadership in different sectors of the Archdiocese to create a fund to provide survivors with financial compensation for all they have gone through. I have also set up a Task Force to heighten the awareness of protecting children and continue to strengthen our policies and protocols in the Archdiocese to ensure that we do not harbor those who abuse children and to make certain that abusers are brought to account. I submit that we can and must do these things without destroying all the good being done for our community by our Church, both laity and clergy, today.

I understand that a Bill that has serious implications for the Archdiocese has now passed in the state legislature, Substitute Bill No. 326-33. The Bill lifts the time restriction on lawsuits

Celebrating our Golden Jubilee as a Diocese 1965-2016



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against institutions such as the Archdiocese that have employed those accused of child sexual abuse. I understand why the legislature passed this Bill. Clergy have been accused of committing grave delicts against children and have caused deep and lasting pain to the survivors, and one way to attempt to address that pain and suffering is to ensure that all victims have access to the courts. However, the Bill the legislature passed will have some very damaging unintended consequences, so much so that the Bill threatens vital parts of the Church mission here on Guam – a mission that is carried out by good lay people, members of religious orders and devoted clergy who have never done anything wrong. I want to address these issues now.

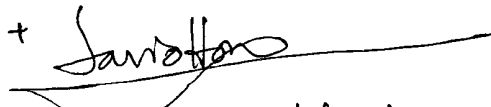
This Bill is retroactive, meaning that lawsuits against the Church may be brought for acts alleged to have occurred decades ago. In permitting lawsuits to be revived from decades ago, the Archdiocese will be exposed to unlimited financial liability. As happened in thirteen other dioceses in the U.S., the result will very likely be to drive the Archdiocese into bankruptcy. Bankruptcy will mean the forced sale of Church properties that currently house our schools and social services, and that will have a devastating effect on education and charitable work. In other states where similar laws were enacted, the results have been school closures and the cessation of vital services. Thus, one of the unforeseen side effects of the Bill will be to erase the good work of those in the Archdiocese who serve the neediest, who provide quality education to thousands of our children including the poor, and who themselves have made enormous and selfless sacrifices for the good of others.

In the coming days, Church leaders and members of the lay leadership will be speaking publicly about the unintended consequences that the Bill will have on the Archdiocese, our parishes, our schools and other community organizations. I encourage everyone to listen to those messages and to speak together about them so that the Governor is fully informed when he considers whether to sign the Bill into law.

I ask that this letter be read at Mass and distributed afterwards for the faithful to consider prayerfully in their hearts.

Thank you and May God bless you.

Yours in Christ,

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Apostolic Administrator

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